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VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF 19 APRIL 2023

(C/2024/819)

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2023-2024 SESSION

Sittings of 17 to 20 April 2023

STRASBOURG

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VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF 19 APRIL 2023

VORSITZ: OTHMAR KARAS

Vizepräsident

1. Opening of the sitting

(Die Sitzung wird um 9.00 Uhr eröffnet)

2. Composition of Parliament

Der Präsident. – Ich habe, bevor wir in die Debatte eintreten, drei Ankündigungen vorzutragen. Zum einen stellt das Parlament im Anschluss an den Rücktritt von Nikos Androulakis und auf Vorschlag des Rechtsausschusses gemäß der Geschäftsordnung das Freiwerden seines Sitzes mit Wirkung vom 3. Mai 2023 fest und informiert die zuständigen nationalen Behörden.

3. Composition of political groups

Der Präsident. – Die zweite Nachricht ist: Herr Alexis Georgoulis hat die Fraktion The Left verlassen und sitzt mit Wirkung zum 19. April 2023 bei den fraktionslosen Mitgliedern unseres Hauses.

4. Negotiations ahead of Parliament's first reading (Rule 71) (action taken)

Der Präsident. – Die dritte Nachricht ist eine etwas längere zu den Beschlüssen mehrerer Ausschüsse über die Aufnahme interinstitutioneller Verhandlungen gemäß Artikel 71 Absatz 1 GO, die bei der Eröffnung der Sitzung am Montag dieser Woche, den 17. April, bekanntgegeben wurden. Die Präsidentin hat von der ECR- und der ID-Fraktion sowie von fraktionslosen Mitgliedern, durch die mindestens die mittlere Schwelle erreicht wird, gemäß Artikel 71 Absatz 2 GO den Antrag zur Abstimmung über den Beschluss des LIBE-Ausschusses zur Aufnahme von Verhandlungen in Bezug auf die folgenden Verfahren erhalten:

— Verordnung zur Bewältigung von Krisensituationen und Situationen höherer Gewalt;

— Screeningverordnung;

— Verordnung über Asyl- und Migrationsmanagement;

— Verordnung über ein zentralisiertes System für die Ermittlung der Mitgliedstaaten, in denen Informationen zu Verurteilungen von Drittstaatsangehörigen und Staatenlosen vorliegen;

— Richtlinie über langfristig aufenthaltsberechtigte Drittstaatsangehörige.

Die Abstimmung über all diese Einzelpunkte findet morgen, Donnerstag, 20. April 2023, statt.

Zu den anderen Beschlüssen über die Aufnahme interinstitutioneller Verhandlungen hat die Präsidentin keine Anträge auf Abstimmung im Parlament von Mitgliedern oder einer oder mehrerer Fraktionen erhalten, durch die mindestens die mittlere Schwelle erreicht wird. Die Ausschüsse können daher die Verhandlungen umgehend aufnehmen.

5. Children forcibly deported from Ukraine and the ICC arrest warrant for Vladimir Putin (debate)

Der Präsident. – Als nächster Punkt der Tagesordnung folgt die Aussprache über die Erklärungen des Rates und der Kommission zum Thema „Aus der Ukraine verschleppte Kinder und der Haftbefehl des IstGH gegen Wladimir Putin“ (2023/2640(RSP)).

Jessika Roswall, *President-in-Office of the Council.* – Mr President, honourable Members, Commissioner, when 12-year-old Sasha was forcibly removed from his home in Ukraine to a Russian prison camp, he was separated from his mother. ‘They said that no one needs me, that I would get a new family, a Russian family,’ he said. There are at least several hundred, perhaps thousands of Ukrainian children like Sasha who have become victims of a war crime. The Council is firmly committed to ensuring full accountability for war crimes and the most serious crimes committed in connection with Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine.

As the European Council underlined, Russia must immediately ensure the safe return of Ukrainians forcibly transferred or deported to Russia, in particular children. In March, the European Council took note of the arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court a few days earlier. These arrest warrants involved not only Russia’s President Vladimir Putin, but also his commissioner for children’s rights, Maria Lvova-Belova, for the alleged war crime of the unlawful deportation and transfer of Ukrainian children from occupied territories of Ukraine to Russia. To investigate these war crimes the ICC needs sufficient means and resources. Therefore, over the last year, EU Member States have provided additional support to the Court as its workload has increased.

At a conference for justice ministers in London in March, many Member States indicated that they will continue to provide extra support in the near future. They also stated their intention to assist the ICC in setting up a field office in Kyiv.

While the arrest warrants show how proceedings are progressing in the ICC, I want to stress that the fight against impunity cannot solely rely on the International Criminal Court. For instance, the discussions about the establishment of a mechanism to prosecute the crime of aggression are well under way. The International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression in The Hague, which will be supported by Eurojust, is an important first step towards accountability for the crime of aggression. We hope to inaugurate the Centre before the end of June.

In its Conclusions from December last year, the Council insisted on the need to maintain our efforts on several other aspects related to the core international crimes committed in Ukraine. This includes the support of national prosecutors and investigations both by Ukrainian authorities and by the authorities in the Member States. The Joint Investigation Team and the new Core International Crimes Evidence Database are two concrete examples of these efforts. I would also like to point out that Eurojust support for cooperation between the national level and the ICC seems to be working well. The Swedish Presidency will, together with the Commission, continue working to ensure a good coordination of all efforts to ensure accountability for the crimes committed in Ukraine.

Thank you very much for your attention. I’m looking forward to the debate.

Věra Jourová, *Vice-President of the Commission.* – Mr President, honourable Members, thank you for organising this debate on a painful and urgent matter.

On 17 March this year, the Pre-Trial Chamber II of the International Criminal Court issued warrants for the arrest of Vladimir Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova, the Russian Commissioner for Children’s Rights for the war crime of unlawful forced deportation and transfer of Ukrainian children to the Russian Federation.

The fact that the Court singled out the acts of unlawful forced deportation and transfer of Ukrainian children as the war crimes, as a base for the first arrest warrants since the start of the Russian invasion, illustrates both the urgency and severity rightly attached to the issue.

Using the pretext of evacuation, Russia has started forcibly transferring and deporting Ukrainian children from non-government controlled territories of Ukraine to Russia just before the launch of Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022. The acts of deportation, or forcible transfer of children, have been reported by several international and Ukrainian organisations, including the International Commission of Inquiry, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Bureau in Russia and the National Information Bureau of Ukraine.

While the number of forcibly deported or transferred Ukrainian children varies according to the source, the National Information Bureau of Ukraine has received information of over 16 000 children concerned, as of last Friday. The scale is, in other words, massive.

The Hague Conference on Private International Law, of which Russia is a member, has issued a statement recalling that international and national adoption procedures for children citizens of Ukraine, shall not be carried out in any country of the world during the duration of martial law in Ukraine, without due regard to the legislation of Ukraine or pending the approval of the Ukrainian authorities.

UNICEF has issued a similar statement and Ukraine has suspended its inter-country adoption programme until further notice in light of the Russian war of aggression. Adoption as a consequence of illegal deportation is a crime and shall not be tolerated.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees' office in Russia and the independent Russian TV channel Dozhd have also identified Ukrainian orphans in Russian orphanages, some of which submit the children to the so-called military and patriotic education. The incidents identified by the International Criminal Court's Office of the Prosecutor to base the arrest warrants on include the deportation of at least hundreds of children taken from orphanages and children's care homes. In many cases, adoption of these children by Russians has allegedly followed.

The prosecutor alleges that these acts, amongst others, demonstrate an intention to permanently remove these children from their own country. At the time of these deportations, the Ukrainian children were protected persons under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The Court also underlined that most acts in this pattern of deportations were carried out in the context of the acts of aggression committed by Russian military forces against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, which began already in 2014.

As a result of the issuance of the arrest warrants, the International Criminal Court may transmit a request for the arrest and surrender of the suspects to any state of the territory of which those persons may be found and shall request the cooperation of that state in the arrest and surrender of the suspects. States Parties to the Court, including all EU Member States, have an obligation to comply with requests for arrest and surrender.

Russia's public reaction to these arrest warrants has further exemplified its blatant disrespect towards the international rules-based order. The EU has already publicly noted the arrest warrants against Vladimir Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova, and welcomed and encouraged all further efforts to ensure full accountability for war crimes and the most serious crimes in connection with Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, towards the enforcement of international justice.

We will continue our support to the International Criminal Court. Since the start of this horrific war, the Commission has provided over EUR 10 million to the Court to strengthen its investigation and prosecution capacities. We are also dedicated to support national investigations opened into international crimes committed in Ukraine. In particular, the Commission has extended the mandate of Eurojust to collect and store evidence and strengthened it to be well equipped to support the joint investigation team uniting Ukraine and six EU Member States, in which the Court's Office of the Prosecutor participates as well.

Eurojust is competent to coordinate criminal investigations and prosecutions of individuals in cases where the deportation or transfer of population amounts to international crimes. Following the request by the Office of the Prosecutor, competent national authorities participating in the joint investigation team have already shared information and evidence on deportations of children and can continue to do so in the future. This is crucial for case-building, such as regarding the cases against Vladimir Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova.

The chief prosecutor, Karim Khan, acknowledged that the participation of his office in the team, under the auspices of Eurojust, has facilitated the swift coordination on relevant information and evidence. Established in the framework of the joint investigation team and hosted by Eurojust, the International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine will provide a structure to coordinate investigations and exchange relevant evidence relating to the crime of aggression.

With the prompt support of the European Parliament, the regulation on Eurojust has been amended, which allowed the agency to set up a database to store and analyse evidence of international crimes committed in Ukraine. And we work closely with the Office of the Prosecutor General in Ukraine, including to make sure they have all means at their disposal to conduct the investigations.

Honourable Members, the EU also imposed sanctions against 16 individuals responsible for the deportation and forced adoption of Ukrainian children from areas occupied by Russian forces since 2022, including Maria Lvova-Belova. The EU continues its efforts to identify perpetrators for possible further measures.

Looking ahead, we remain fully committed to make all efforts to ensure that those responsible for the crime of unlawful forced deportation or transfer of Ukrainian children are held accountable and that the children of Ukraine are returned safely to their families and communities.

In March 2023, President von der Leyen announced a joint European Commission-Poland initiative, in partnership with Ukraine, aiming at bringing back these children. The starting point will be a conference to pull together international pressure to take all possible measures to establish the whereabouts of these children and bring them back home. According to the Ukrainian Children of War platform, only 361 children have so far returned to Ukraine.

In this light, the EU supports the mandate of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict to engage with Ukraine and Russia on the issue of deportation and children and child protection.

We hope that information and data on Ukrainian children and their status can be swiftly established and a returns mechanism instigated. As always, we will keep the well-being and best interests of the children at the forefront of all our actions. Honourable Members, thank you very much for your attention.

Rasa Juknevičienė, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – Mr President, dear colleagues, the horrifying crimes the Russian regime is committing in Ukraine are not new. This is history repeating itself once again.

My mother was nine years old when Stalin's communists deported her and her family to Siberia, just because her parents were teachers. Only half the family returned. She could not have imagined that the deportations would return to the European continent in her eyes again. Deportations returned because the crimes of the USSR were not condemned, the perpetrators never convicted internationally; they lied to the world until the fall of the USSR that they were deporting prostitutes and criminals and this was somehow justified.

The same lies accompany the war against Ukraine now. We have been repeating for a long time, 'never again'. That is why the ICC arrest warrant for Putin is also a hope that this time the crimes will be evaluated so that the 'never again' will not remain just words.

However, this warrant is only the beginning. Those who behead prisoners will also be sentenced, and there must be a special tribunal for the crime of aggression against Ukraine for Putin and his regime.

By the way, I invite everyone to save the date: 14 June here in Strasbourg on the Louise Weiss Agora, the Parliament will commemorate forced Soviet deportations by reading the names of those deported. We will also pay respect to victims of deportations from Ukraine of today.

Pedro Marques, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – Mr President, Commissioner. Council colleagues, are there more hideous and repulsive crimes than those committed against children? Not in my moral code. Not in the moral code of any decent person.

The ICC took no notice of the Russian actions and acted.

So from here, I say, Mr Putin, you crossed so many lines with this war that you will be remembered for the worst reasons, but do not add one more horrible chapter to the history books, not one on kidnapping children. They are only children. Certainly not your enemies, not soldiers, for sure. They are innocent children that will be marked for life for your actions. If there is a shred of humanity in you, do something decent for once. Stop the kidnappings and return the children to their families. Even the Russian people that you are manipulating and repressing will be against you when they know what you have been doing. And rest assured, we will make sure that they know.

Petras Auštrevičius, *on behalf of the Renew Group*. – Mr President, Madam Commissioner, Presidency, dear colleagues, war crime perpetrator Putin is determined to destroy Ukraine's sovereignty, the lives of Ukrainian people and the future of Ukrainian children.

The Russian occupation authorities have forcibly and fraudulently deported or, to be more precise, kidnapped more than 20 000 Ukrainian children. These innocent children are being illegally adopted on an accelerated basis and re-educated into Russian citizens.

The Russian Government, which is still a member of the United Nations Security Council, unfortunately, is falsifying personal stories of Ukrainian children, changing their names and erasing their identities. None of us would like to find ourselves in the shoes of the parents of these children.

I call on the European Union and the international community to use all possible means to locate, identify and return Ukrainian children to their families, as well as to their homeland, Ukraine.

Sergey Lagodinsky, *im Namen der Verts/ALE-Fraktion*. – Herr Präsident! Der 16-jährige Ihor aus Cherson wollte zum ersten Mal in seinem Leben in Urlaub fahren, und deswegen hat seine Mutter das Angebot der russischen Besatzer angenommen und hat ihn nach Anapa geschickt. Doch als Cherson befreit wurde, steckte der Junge fest, genauso wie Tausende andere Kinder in diesem Camp. Nach Wochen konnte die Mutter ihn erst sehen, nachdem ihm schon gesagt wurde, er würde adoptiert werden.

Wenn ich höre, mit welcher Selbstverständlichkeit die Kinderrechtsbeauftragte der Russischen Föderation über die Adoption und Russifizierung – de facto oder real – der ukrainischen Kinder spricht, zeigt es, wie wichtig der Haftbefehl des Internationalen Strafgerichtshofs ist. Es ist nicht nur ein Zeichen, es ist ein Instrument. Das ist ein Instrument gegen die Straflosigkeit, aber auch gegen das absolut fehlende Unrechtsbewusstsein in der Russischen Föderation – Unrechtsbewusstsein bezüglich Verschleppung und Zwangsadoption der ukrainischen Kinder, denn das bleibt ein Verbrechen. Und gemäß Artikel 2 der Völkermordkonvention ist das auch möglicherweise Bestandteil eines Genozids gegen das ukrainische Volk. Das muss man aussprechen. Das müssen die russischen Behörden und die russischen Bürgerinnen und Bürger auch hören.

Denn dieser Angriff, der perverse Angriff auf die Ukraine, dauert an. Erst haben uns diese Handlungen die Sprache verschlagen. Aber je länger das andauert, desto mehr stumpfen auch wir ab. Und das darf nicht passieren. Dieser Haftbefehl ist eine Erinnerung an uns alle. Verbrechen bleiben Verbrechen, Verbrecher bleiben Verbrecher, straflos darf keiner werden. Deswegen wird auch dieses Parlament die Untersuchung der Straftaten und die Strafverfolgung der Schuldigen immer unterstützen. Inhumanität und Kriminalität dürfen nicht normalisiert werden.

Nicola Procaccini, *a nome del gruppo ECR*. – Signor Presidente, questo dibattito è stato messo in agenda pochi giorni prima che il mondo ascoltasse le parole di alcuni mercenari della compagnia Wagner, che cito testualmente: «Ho eseguito l'ordine con questa mano, ho ucciso i bambini, compresi quelli di cinque anni».

Probabilmente non era necessario aggiungere queste parole all'orrore scatenato da Vladimir Putin, ma possono aiutarci a comprendere l'abisso di ciò che sta accadendo in Ucraina. Non esiste violenza più ignobile di quella perpetrata ai danni dei bambini.

Per questo bisogna fare piena luce sulle accuse di deportazione di minori dalle aree occupate dell'Ucraina da parte della Federazione Russa. Tutti sappiamo che i mandati d'arresto internazionale spiccati nei confronti di Vladimir Putin e della Belova rappresentano dei meri strumenti di pressione politica, nulla di più. E purtroppo sappiamo che nella storia dell'umanità tutto questo è già successo altre volte e probabilmente accadrà di nuovo.

Ciò che ha fatto e farà sempre la differenza è tra il rimanere indifferenti oppure no. Lasciatemi citare in conclusione Edmund Burke, il padre del pensiero conservatore: «Perché il male trionfi è sufficiente che i buoni non facciano nulla».

Jaak Madison, *on behalf of the ID Group*. – Mr President, good morning, dear colleagues, first of all, we have to check on the facts when we're talking about the kids who are forcibly deported to Russia. There are numbers between 16 000, at least, to 300 000 of the kids who are forced to be deported to Russia.

So it's a terribly huge amount of kids. And the main reason why they are being deported to Russia is to make them Russians, in the new Russian families. It has been several times in history at the same time, so it's repeated again. Just, for example, like in the 40s, by the same Russians there were forcibly deported kids and women to Siberia – over 30 000 from Estonia. And 75 % of them were kids and children, and women.

Secondly, there are hundreds of evidence how the same soldiers have raped kids in the age from three. There are hundreds of evidence how those kids are raped and killed.

And, of course, now the outcome finally is that there is warrants by the ICC. But now the question is how we can force all the member states of the ICC to really follow the arrest warrant. There are member states 123 all over the world, except China and some other countries. But now we have heard by some member states that even if Vladimir Putin will go to their country, that they will not arrest this man.

There are some kind of difficult signals from South Africa, who should keep the BRICS meeting in August and they are still shaking that, oh, maybe if the Putin will come, maybe we will not arrest him.

There has to be consequences by the EU and by the Commission. If some of the member states of the ICC will not follow the arrest warrant, there has to come economic sanctions and there has to be really the outcome that we will limit our own donations to the all of the member states who we are donating, especially in Africa and the third countries, and who are responsible to follow the ICC rules. And if they are not following the rules and if they will not follow the arrest warrant, there has to be consequence economically there directly, because otherwise there is no point for the ICC or for international rules. Why we should follow them, if there are no consequences.

Malin Björk, *för The Left-gruppen*. – Herr talman! Att den internationella brottmålsdomstolen ICC åtalat Putin är en viktig markering om att det inte råder straffrihet för de fruktansvärda krigsbrott som begås sedan mer än ett år i Ukraina.

De konkreta brott som Putin och hans medarbetare åtalas för är bortförandet av tusentals ukrainska barn till Ryssland. Ukrainska myndigheter rapporterar att det rör sig om tusentals barn som har tagits från Ukraina till Ryssland och att bara strax över 300 av de här barnen faktiskt har fått komma hem till Ukraina igen.

Vi ska reagera med alla medel som står till buds, och de internationella instrument som vi har – inklusive ICC – måste användas. Samtidigt som den här brottmålsprocessen pågår måste vi se till att få hem de bortförda barnen. Därför ska de här familjerna få allt vårt stöd, men också de organisationer och institutioner som jobbar för att få hem barnen måste få vårt stöd och vi måste vara aktiva i den processen. Barnen ska hem.

Jag hoppas att det här åtalet mot Putin följs av andra åtal, för det här är inte de enda krigsbrott som det brutala anfällskriget har medfört i Ukraina. Vi vet att kvinnor har utsatts för sexuellt våld och övergrepp i Ukraina av ryska armén. De här brotten måste man också ställas till svars för. Kvinnorna, precis som barnen, ska få upprättelse och de ska få vårt stöd. Vi ska också fokusera på dem som utsatts och på offren.

Jag tycker att det är viktigt att höra från kommissionen och rådet att vi också stöttar ICC. Det ska vara en stark institution – EU har alltid varit en stark aktör bakom ICC – så att den får resurser och legitimitet att utreda sådana här brott. Nu visar domstolen att man går på Putin, som är den högsta ansvariga för det här brutala anfällskriget och som begår krigsbrott – och vi vet det. ICC ska stärkas ytterligare. Vi ska få med fler länder och vi ska se till att inga krigsbrott som begås i Ukraina i dag kommer att bli ostraffade.

Márton Gyöngyösi (NI). – Elnök Úr! A gyermekek tömeges deportálása a népirtás egyik formája. Ezért üdvözlöm a Nemzetközi Büntetőbíróság döntését, és úgy gondolom, hogy minden civilizált embernek egyet kell vele értenie. Az Orbán-rezsim képviselőinek, a Fidesz-KDNP politikusaiknak azonban semmi problémájuk nincs Vlagyimir Putyin népiertó politikájával. Ők azok, akik miközben magukat családbarátoknak nevezik, külföldön pedig magukat a konzervatív politika letéteményesének hazudják, minden követ megmozgatnak, hogy Vlagyimir Putyint és barátait kimentsék a szankciók alól, külügyminiszterük pedig szinte hetente jár ki Moszkvába.

Meglehet, hogy a gyermekjogok védelme terén van még tennivaló a nyugati világban, ám az orosz világban a gyermekeknek most lebombázott otthonok, megerőszakolt anyák, tömegsírba lőtt apák és deportálások jutnak. Orbán és hívei szerint pedig ez rendben is van. Van azonban egy másik, egy normális Magyarország, amely az áldozat mellett áll, és elítéli az orosz agressziót.

Michael Gahler (PPE). – Herr Präsident! Ich bin dem Internationalen Strafgerichtshof und insbesondere auch Karim Khan sehr dankbar, dass er seine Aufgabe wahrnimmt, russische Kriegsverbrechen registriert und die Verantwortlichen benennt. Wladimir Putin und Marija Lwowa-Belowa sind auch in diesem speziellen Fall persönlich und politisch verantwortlich für die Verbrechen, die wir hier heute speziell diskutieren.

Es ist infam, wenn ausgerechnet der Aggressor den Eindruck erwecken will, Kinder durch die illegale Deportation zu retten. Wir sehen Fernsehberichte, wo ukrainische Kinder feierlich russisch eingebürgert werden oder in anderer Form russifiziert werden. Einige der 361 Kinder, die bisher in die Ukraine zurückgebracht werden konnten, haben Details hierzu berichtet. Russifizierung heute – als Deutscher erinnere ich mich mit Scham an die Zeit der deutschen Besatzung – nicht nur in der Ukraine –, wo man ähnliche Praktiken angewandt hat, „arisierbare“ Kinder deportiert hat und dann zu Deutschen gemacht hat oder es zumindest versucht hat. Schrecklich, dass sich Geschichte wiederholt.

Ich erwarte, dass alle Staaten, die das Statut des ICC ratifiziert haben, ausgestellte Haftbefehle auch umsetzen. Aber bevor das möglich wird, müssen wir unseren Beitrag zur Verhinderung von Straflosigkeit leisten, und das heißt, die zuständigen ukrainischen Behörden und die Ermittler des Internationalen Strafgerichtshofs dabei zu unterstützen, die Fälle von Deportation und anderer Verbrechen zu registrieren und Beweise zu sichern. Ich hoffe auch, dass viele der 141 Staaten der UNO, die sich gegen den Angriffskrieg ausgesprochen haben, hierbei aktiv Beiträge leisten.

Nacho Sánchez Amor (S&D). – Señor presidente, en materia de exigencia de responsabilidad por la guerra de agresión de Rusia contra Ucrania, se ha hecho ya un notable esfuerzo en cuanto a las bases jurídicas para la persecución penal. La recopilación y custodia de pruebas ya está en marcha en la Corte Penal Internacional de La Haya para este caso de los niños deportados y para otros paralelos.

Pero esta persecución penal tiene que ir acompañada de una perspectiva a medio plazo: la debida reparación de los perjuicios, incluidos los daños personales, no solo físicos. Por eso quiero llamar la atención de los colegas sobre un proyecto de nuestra organización vecina, el Consejo de Europa. Este va a crear en un mes un registro de daños con vistas a reclamar su reparación a Rusia. Financiado con aportaciones de los Estados miembros, muchos de los nuestros, y creo que la Unión Europea debería sumarse, van a recolectar en una oficina en La Haya y en otra oficina en Kiev las declaraciones de daños sufridos por los ciudadanos que las instituciones ucranianas consideren oportunas.

Y reitero que el proyecto incluye no solo daños físicos o daños en la propiedad, sino también daños personales. Y aquí deben estar comprendidos, por supuesto, los casos de los niños que deben ser devueltos, claro, y cuyas familias deben ser compensadas por el Estado responsable de tantas brutalidades.

Hilde Vautmans (Renew). – Mr President, dear Commissioner, dear Minister, children are the most vulnerable in wartime. But what we now see is madness. Russia has deported over 20 000 innocent children from Ukraine. As a mother of two, I wonder, what if it was my son? What if it was my daughter taken away from me? And we know the brutal facts of Russian officials forcing young children in re-education camps to ratify them. Let's be crystal clear. Deporting children of war is a war crime. And I therefore welcome the arrest warrant by the International Criminal Court against Putin.

I also welcome the initiative of President von der Leyen to organise a conference on this tragedy, and as Co-Chair of the Intergroup on Children's Rights, I can only say 'you have our full support'. Organise it – we will help you. Colleagues, the most important thing we have to say here today, as the European Parliament: we know where a lot of children are so bring them home. Take them back to their families. That's our duty.

Markéta Gregorová (Verts/ALE). – Mr President, dear colleagues, Commissioner, the war does not have a human face nor spare the lives of anyone, including children. However, after the atrocities of the 20th century, we made a social contract and set the lines of international law that shouldn't be crossed.

Nevertheless, it seems that for the Kremlin, history is not something we should learn from. Children are forcefully taken and deported to Russian camps. Then their fate lies either in forced adoption into Russian families, pro-Russian re-education programmes or military training. And all this is sanctified by the Russian Government as its officials of all levels are involved in removals, camp operations and the prevention of their return to Ukraine.

To be frank, international law has been a challenging and often ineffective tool. However, it is our responsibility to ensure that these and any other deplorable actions will be punished and not repeated. When we find culprits of criminal offences, the case is usually closed. Why block the door here?

Witold Jan Waszczykowski (ECR). – Panie Przewodniczący! Rosyjskiej agresji na Ukrainę towarzyszą liczne zbrodnie wojenne. Najbardziej haniebne są: porwanie, deportacja dzieci i ich rusyfikacja. Polska zna to ze swojego doświadczenia z II wojny światowej i okupacji niemieckiej. Stąd podjęliśmy inicjatywę wspólnie z Komisją.

Co należy robić? Kontynuować wyroki Trybunału, aby identyfikować sprawców, ludzi, instytucje, a takie zapewnić dostęp i obecność w Rosji Międzynarodowego Czerwonego Krzyża, Lekarzy bez Granic i, przede wszystkim, UNICEF-u, który może nam dostarczać informacji o sytuacji tych dzieci.

I wreszcie kwestia dzieci musi znaleźć się w 11. pakiecie sankcji wobec Rosji.

Anna Bonfrisco (ID). – Signor Presidente, grazie signora Commissaria per le Sue parole.

Dalla coscienza morale collettiva dello Statuto di Roma della Corte penale internazionale, che richiama l'eredità condivisa che scaturisce dalle culture dei popoli della terra, conseguono i due mandati di arresto per Vladimir Putin e Maria Lvova-Belova per i presunti crimini di deportazione di bambini dai territori occupati dell'Ucraina nella Federazione Russa.

È vietato dal diritto internazionale alle potenze che occupano di trasferire civili dal territorio in cui vivono ad altri territori, e i bambini godono di una protezione speciale ai sensi della Convenzione di Ginevra, ma il loro arresto dipenderà dalla cooperazione internazionale.

Se il presidente Putin si recherà in Sudafrica per il vertice dei BRICS nel prossimo mese di agosto, quel paese avrà davanti a sé la sfida di scegliere se stare con la comunità internazionale, rispettando le regole comuni di convivenza tra i popoli, o proteggere un uomo ricercato per gravissimi crimini. L'adesione del Sudafrica allo Statuto di Roma ci incoraggia a rafforzare tutti gli strumenti necessari al rispetto dell'ordine internazionale basato sulle regole.

L'Unione europea contribuisca a salvare quei bambini che sono parte del futuro dell'Europa.

Clare Daly (The Left). – Mr President, all war is criminal and children its most innocent of victims. Exaggeration isn't necessary. Even one case of the mistreatment of children is deadly serious. The UN, which deals only in facts, has verified that 16 000 children have been horribly mistreated and concludes that this amounts to a war crime. In an ideal world, all war crimes would be investigated and prosecution cases developed as quickly as this one. But we don't live in that world.

How many Palestinian children's lives have been ruined and traumatised by Israel in the West Bank and Gaza? How many Yemeni children have been orphaned and starved? These are war crimes, too. But naming them in here makes you a voice in the wilderness. Of course, the rank hypocrisy of the West is no justification for Russia's violation of the rights of thousands of innocent children and their families. And neither do Russian crimes justify ours. The inconsistent application of justice is not justice: it just erodes the rule of law and makes might being right.

There's been a lot of triumphalism about the ICC warrant, but there's zero chance of that being served. Russia, like the US, isn't a party to the Rome Statute. There's going to be no justice from that for the victim. The only way we can help the victims of this war is to use all our strength to bring it to an end and allow these innocent victims to rebuild their destroyed lives.

Kinga Gál (NI). – Elnök Úr! Elítéljük az emberi jogi, gyerekjogi jogsértéseket, a háborús bűncselekményeket és a nemzetközi jog sorozatos megsértését. A háborús bűnöket senki sem tudja meg nem történné tenni. A magyar álláspont a háború kezdetétől egyértelmű. Elítéljük Oroszország katonai agresszióját, az erőszakot, amely nemcsak a nemzetközi jog alapján jelent súlyos jogsérelmet, de morális szempontból is igazolhatatlan. Magyarország mindig a nemzetközi jog talaján állt, elismerte Ukrajna önvédelemhez és területi szuverenitáshoz való jogát, és humanitárius segítséget nyújt Ukrajnának, Kárpátaljának.

Most az életek mentése és a szenvedők megsegítése a legfontosabb. Ezt csak béke garantálhatja a háború elhúzódásával szemben. Ezért szükséges tűzszünet, a tárgyalások megkezdése, egy tartós, igazságos béke érdekében. Elutasítjuk az embertelenséget és az igazságtalanságot. Háborús bűncselekmény nem maradhat kivizsgálatlanul és büntetlenül. Az igazságnak ki kell derülnie!

Sandra Kalniete (PPE). – Mr President, Commissioner, colleagues, the ICC warrant for Putin confirms what we have known for a while: Putin's terrorist regime uses barbaric methods of war similar to what Ukraine and the Baltic States endured during the Soviet occupation. The arrest warrant, just like Russia's war crimes, has no statute of limitations. Putin will now wear this badge for the rest of his life.

Putin also will have to answer for the atrocities ordered against Ukrainian children by Russian and Wagner commanders giving clear orders to shoot and kill children. The world has now received a signal, loud and clear, that the Russian regime is criminal, toxic. The ICC warrant once and for all strips the credibility of any remaining efforts to normalise relations with Putin and to go back to business as usual.

As for the future of deported Ukrainian children, the path towards their liberation and return begins with a Ukrainian military victory. We must give Ukraine everything it needs to win the war.

Heléne Fritzon (S&D). – Herr talman! "De sa att ingen behöver mig, att jag ska få en ny familj, en rysk familj." Det sa en tolvårig pojke som fördes bort till Ryssland – ett av tusentals barn som uppskattas ha förts bort till Ryssland. Barn dödas, barn förs bort och kvinnor våldtas och utsätts för sexuella övergrepp.

Var och en som har begått brott i Rysslands krig mot Ukraina måste ställas inför rätta. För ett år sedan tog vi socialdemokrater initiativ till en resolution om EU:s skydd av barn och ungdomar som påverkas av kriget. Redan då krävde vi förebyggande åtgärder för barn som riskerar att föras bort. Vi kommer att fortsätta att ta den kampen. Det handlar om barns rättigheter och vuxnas skyldigheter. Det här handlar om barn.

Katalin Cseh (Renew). – Mr President, colleagues, as we speak, thousands of Ukrainian children are held hostage in camps, have been kidnapped and taken to foster care homes against their will. Thousands of parents are in unimaginable despair. So I really hope that no part of this House would like to look the other way. Sadly, many of our own EU citizens are oblivious to this fact because all they hear is Russian propaganda. And this is the reality: 43 camps have already been discovered and who knows how many more will be found.

If there was one thing that should unite every single EU government it's that we cannot let these war criminals go unpunished. We must hold them accountable in front of a tribunal. But yet again, Russia's Trojan horse reared its head. When asked about the ICC's arrest warrant, Viktor Orbán's head of office said that, in Hungary, Putin would not be arrested. Colleague Gál just spoke about how the truth has to be uncovered. So please, colleague Gál, convince the Hungarian Government to execute the ICC arrest warrant should the need arise. This is what we owe these innocent children; this is what we owe Ukraine; and this is what we owe the entire humanity as Europeans.

Mounir Satouri (Verts/ALE). – Monsieur le Président, chers collègues, Vladimir Poutine, à la tête d'un système où règne son arbitraire, se croit au-dessus des lois. Au-dessus des lois en Russie, pour les crimes qu'il commet contre les opposants, les journalistes. Au-dessus des lois qu'il ordonne en Ukraine.

La différence avec d'autres périodes sombres de l'histoire, c'est l'existence de la Cour pénale internationale. Déporter des enfants en masse en Ukraine constitue un crime de guerre et Vladimir Poutine doit en répondre. En l'espèce, le mandat d'arrêt de la Cour à l'encontre de Vladimir Poutine est juste. Cette Cour est un acquis précieux et j'appelle tous les pays qui ne l'ont pas encore fait, y compris les États-Unis, à y adhérer. J'appelle aussi tous les États membres à remplir leurs obligations et à appliquer ce mandat d'arrêt. Personne ne doit être au-dessus des lois, qui veillent sur notre humanité. En Ukraine, au Yémen, au Xinjiang, en Palestine, nul ne doit pouvoir commettre des atrocités sans en répondre devant la justice.

Elżbieta Rafalska (ECR). – Panie Przewodniczący, Szanowni Państwo! Rosja konsekwentnie realizuje swój plan wynarodowienia Ukraińców, celując w grupę najbardziej wrażliwą – dzieci, często tak małe, że nie mają świadomości, w jakiej sytuacji się znajdują. Odbiera im się ukraińskie obywatelstwo, utrudnia kontakty z bliskimi, wpaja kulturę rosyjską i zabiera poczucie przynależności z Ukrainą.

Oficjalne dane mówią o 16 tys. deportowanych, jednak w rzeczywistości może to dotyczyć setek tysięcy dzieci. Rosja przedstawia ten haniębny proceder jako ratunek lub wręcz wybawienie ukraińskich dzieci, podczas gdy w rzeczywistości dopuszcza się międzynarodowej zbrodni wymierzonej w cały naród ukraiński na kolejnej płaszczyźnie, celując w przyszłość całego narodu. Międzynarodowy Trybunał Karny zbadał sprawę i wydał dwa nakazy aresztowania w związku z deportacją ukraińskich dzieci, jednak ich wykonanie zależy od współpracy międzynarodowej.

Thierry Mariani (ID). – Monsieur le Président, «les soldats irakiens ont arraché les bébés des couveuses et les ont laissé mourir sur le sol froid». Ce témoignage d'une infirmière en octobre 1990 a ému le monde entier. Il n'y avait plus de doute. La guerre contre l'Iraq était un devoir moral. Quelques mois après, on découvrira que ces couveuses étaient aussi imaginaires que les armes de destruction massive. Car les crimes contre les enfants en période de guerre, c'est l'horreur absolue. C'est ce que personne ne peut admettre. Et je pense bien sûr à toutes ces familles, quel que soit le pays, qui cherchent désespérément leurs enfants.

«Déportation des enfants». Le choix des mots n'est pas innocent. «Déportation des enfants»: on pense immédiatement aux déportations organisées par le régime nazi. Mais si on disait simplement «évacuation», cela peut-être serait beaucoup moins choquant. Mais dans la propagande en période de guerre, le choix des mots est quelque chose de capital. Car le premier devoir d'un soldat trouvant un enfant sur une zone de combat, c'est de l'évacuer pour le protéger. Oui, il faut favoriser le retour de ces enfants. Et les Russes ont commencé à les rapatrier quand les familles sont clairement identifiées. Si on veut aujourd'hui qu'ils rentrent rapidement, organisons une conférence de paix, c'est le meilleur moyen.

Francesca Donato (NI). – Signor Presidente, l'accusa alla Russia di deportazione dei bambini ucraini è stata mossa per la prima volta dal difensore civico ucraino Lyudmila Denisova, poi licenziata dal governo di Kiev per le troppe menzogne propagate.

Purtroppo però le sue accuse, mai dimostrate, sono state riprese da altri politici ucraini e diffuse da diversi media. In realtà la cosiddetta deportazione riguarda bambini orfani accolti presso famiglie russe al sicuro, oppure bimbi affidati ai russi dai genitori e portati in Russia temporaneamente e poi restituiti alle famiglie.

Quei bimbi sono diventati orfani perché le forze armate ucraine usano la popolazione civile come scudo umano, come riportato anche da Amnesty International. Ma il presidente russo Putin è additato come responsabile per queste presunte deportazioni e quindi colpito dal mandato di arresto della Corte penale internazionale, mai riconosciuta dalla Russia, ma nemmeno dagli Stati Uniti e dalla stessa Ucraina. Non si vede come questa misura possa sortire alcun risultato, tranne quello di inasprire ancora i rapporti tra Europa e Russia e inibire ogni possibile tentativo di soluzione negoziata del conflitto.

Smettiamola con le accuse strumentali e faziose, lavoriamo piuttosto per la pace se vogliamo salvare i bambini.

Александър Александров Йорданов (PPE). – Г-н Председател, много са престъпленията на кремълския режим, но военното престъпление, което обсъждаме – принудителното депортиране в Русия на украински деца и насилственото им русифициране – е връх на античовешкостта и нарушаването на човешките права. То е сравнимо само с престъпленията на Хитлер, Сталин и Мао Цзедун.

Решението на съда в Хага да издаде доживотна заповед за арест на президента Путин трябва да бъде изпълнено от всички европейски държави. След това решение Владимир Путин може да встъпи в Европейския съюз само на път към Хага. Това решение е закъсняло, но е справедливо. То е морална победа на храбрия украински народ. Заповедта за арест на руския президент е предупреждение и към всички останали диктатори и агресори по света.

Tonino Picula (S&D). – Mr President, of course it's of great importance to address this revealing topic today. We continue to witness horrendous war crimes executed by the Russian forces as well as continuously forced deportations of thousands of Ukrainian children. Officially, 16 000 Ukrainian children were abducted, but the true number might be even higher.

We had a resolution on the special tribunal for the crime of aggression in January, and we strongly welcome the ICC arrest warrants of 24 March too, but in reality, this is the only one way to end these horrific practices: to end the war by defeating the Russian invaders. Therefore, with the upcoming Ramstein conference, we cannot lose the momentum to continue our full support to Ukraine.

Forceful abductions cannot change the identity of the nation. Whenever the war ends, it must be imperative that all those responsible are held accountable for their actions. Only full justice can bring healing and enable the recovery of Ukraine.

Catharina Rinzema (Renew). – Voorzitter, meer dan 16 000 levens zullen nooit meer hetzelfde zijn. Dit is het aantal Oekraïense kinderen dat onder dwang naar Rusland is gebracht. Deze gedwongen deportatie is in strijd met internationaal humanitair recht en is een absolute oorlogsmisdaad die niet onbestraft mag blijven.

Afgelopen maand heb ik via een brief de heer Borrell opgeroepen om strenger op te treden tegen deze daders en sancties op te voeren. Daarin heeft Nederland een hoofdrol. Met Den Haag als internationale stad vertrouw ik erop dat naast het bestaande Internationaal Strafhof mijn land bij uitstek de plek is voor de oprichting van een Oekraïnetribunaal. Ik sta volledig achter het arrestatiebevel tegen Poetin. Alle EU-lidstaten hebben de plicht dit bevel tot arrestatie uit te voeren.

Ook moeten we via de diplomatieke route helpen de kinderen terug te brengen. Ieder kind verdient het om veilig thuis te komen. Meer dan 16 000 keer ging het al mis. Iedere deportatie is er één te veel. Dit mag nooit meer opnieuw gebeuren.

Viola von Cramon-Taubadel (Verts/ALE). – Herr Präsident, Frau Kommissarin, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Völkermord ist per Definition die gewaltsame Verbringung von Kindern einer Gruppe in eine andere Gruppe. Russland hat mehr als die Hälfte der ukrainischen Kinder vertrieben und viele getötet. Diejenigen, die den Raketen entkommen konnten, aber Putins Mördern nicht entkamen, wurden als Geiseln genommen und gewaltsam nach Russland deportiert. Einige wurden zu Zwangsadoptionen freigegeben, als wären sie eine Trophäe und keine menschlichen Wesen. Andere wurden in Umerziehungslager gesteckt, ganz in der russischen Völkermordtradition. Die Kinder, die Putins neue Kinderzulags überlebten, offenbaren die gesamte Unmenschlichkeit Russlands. Sie wurden einer Gehirnwäsche unterzogen, psychisch missbraucht und regelmäßig geschlagen.

Und doch hatten diese Kinder fast Glück, denn die Grausamkeit der russischen Soldaten ist grenzenlos. Das widerliche Videogeständnis eines Wagner-Kämpfers ist ein Beweis dafür. Ich zitiere: „Sie schrie, ein kleines Mädchen. Ich weiß nicht, ob sie fünf oder sechs Jahre alt war“, gibt er zu, „aber ich habe sie erschossen. Ein kontrollierter Schuss in den Kopf.“ Wir in der EU haben verdrängt, dass solche Unmenschlichkeit überhaupt möglich ist. Putin und seine Mörder werden einen hohen Preis bezahlen.

Beata Szydło (ECR). – Panie Przewodniczący! Pani Komisarz! Szanowni Państwo! Masowe porwania ukraińskich dzieci przez Rosjan do złudzenia przypominają to, co działo się w czasie II wojny światowej w Polsce. Tysiące polskich dzieci były wywożone przez Niemców, przez okupanta, i oddawane do niemieckich rodzin w celu germanizacji.

Teraz Rosjanie próbują zrusyfikować dzieci ukraińskie. I dobrze, że Międzynarodowy Trybunał Karny przeciwstawił się temu i postawił w stan oskarżenia Putina oraz wydał międzynarodowy nakaz jego aresztowania.

Ale my wszyscy musimy być konsekwentni. Z jednej strony, musimy pomóc i ratować te ukraińskie dzieci i zrobić wszystko, żeby wróciły do swoich rodzin. I tutaj przyłączam się do tego, o czym mówił pan minister Witold Waszczykowski: wszystkie międzynarodowe organizacje, które mogą pomóc w tym, aby te dzieci wróciły całe i zdrowe do swoich rodzin, muszą być w to mocno zaangażowane.

Ale z drugiej strony, Szanowni Państwo, nie może być też tak, że wobec Putina zaczynają się próby wybielania czy odchodzenia od tego, ażeby uznać go za zbrodniarza. To, co dzieje się chociażby ze sportowcami rosyjskimi dopuszczanymi do międzynarodowych zawodów, jest skandalem i powinniśmy się temu również przeciwstawić.

Milan Uhrík (NI). – Vážení pán predsedajúci, myslím, že zatykač na ruského prezidenta Putina, vydaný tzv. - Medzinárodným trestným súdom, dokazuje skôr slabosť tohto súdu ako jeho silu. Veď všetky veľmoci sveta, všetky veľmoci sveta tento súd neuznávajú, či už je to Ruská federácia, alebo aj Spojené štáty americké, Čína, India, a dokonca ani samotná Ukrajina. Spojené štáty zašli v opovrhovaní týmto súdom dokonca tak ďaleko, že prijali zákon, takzvaný *Hague Invasion Act*, ktorý dáva americkej vláde kompetenciu vojensky zasiahnuť proti sídlu tohto súdu v Haagu v prípade, ak by tento súd zadržoval amerického občana alebo amerického vojaka alebo prijal nejakú politicky motivovanú obžalobu, napríklad zatykač, vydal zatykač na amerického prezidenta. Nulová autorita tohto súdu len poukazuje na to, že medzinárodné právo je v totálnych troskách a veľmoci si robia, čo chcú. A o to viac potrebuje svet návrat k novému medzinárodnému poriadku.

Miriam Lexmann (PPE). – Mr President, dear colleagues, nearly 20 000 children have been forcefully deported from Ukraine to Russia, and hundreds killed, wounded as a result of Russia's war aggression. These forced deportations and crimes against humanity committed by the aggressor smack of the worst Stalinist excesses.

I welcome the recent initiative of the Commission and the Polish Government to ensure the return of these children.

We must do all in our power for these children to be returned to their loved ones; that these crimes are thoroughly documented, investigated, and then Putin, Russia's so-called Human Rights commissioner, and all responsible are one day brought to justice. It is our moral duty.

Udo Bullmann (S&D). – Herr Präsident, werte Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Putin hat nicht nur einen verbrecherischen Angriffskrieg gegen die Ukraine angezettelt, er versucht, die Identität eines ganzen Volkes zu zerstören. Weit mehr als 16 000 Kinder wurden seit Kriegsbeginn von ihren Familien getrennt und nach Russland verschleppt. Jeder einzelne Fall ist ein Kriegsverbrechen. Jeder einzelne Fall ist ein Versuch, Familien zu zerstören, Kinder ihrer Identität zu berauben und eine Nation auszulöschen. Lasst uns das allen sagen, die da beschwichtigen, da seien irgendwie zwei Kriegsparteien aneinandergeraten, und lasst uns das allen sagen, die Unsinn erzählen – verwirrten Unsinn –, auch in diesem Haus.

Liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen, der Internationale Strafgerichtshof hat aufgeräumt mit diesen Lügen. Wir müssen seine Entscheidung umsetzen und dafür sorgen, dass diese Kinder wieder unversehrt in ihre Familien zurückkehren können. Das ist unsere gemeinsame Verpflichtung.

Frédérique Ries (Renew). – Monsieur le Président, Madame la Commissaire, «je suis si heureux, tellement heureux d'être de retour à la maison». Ce sont les premiers mots à sa maman de Bogdan, de retour à Kiev après six mois de déportation. Parce que le scénario est presque toujours le même: la veille des vacances, les jeunes Ukrainiens sont envoyés «en colonie» en Crimée, et, souvent, ils ne reviennent jamais. Le camp de vacances est tout simplement devenu un camp de rééducation. Seize mille enfants – officiellement – encore en Russie ou dans les territoires annexés, pratiquement kidnappés par Moscou, pour certains déjà officiellement adoptés. La commissaire aux droits de l'enfant – on rêve à entendre ce titre – s'est empressée de modifier la loi russe en ce sens. C'est un crime de guerre, qui justifie le mandat d'arrêt émis par la Cour pénale internationale contre Vladimir Poutine et Maria Lvova-Belova. Une première à l'encontre d'un membre du Conseil de sécurité des Nations unies.

Alors, dérisoire, Madame Daly? Je ne pense pas, non. Insuffisant, certainement. Mais essentiel et nécessaire. Ces enfants sont un butin de la guerre sale menée par Vladimir Poutine. Les retrouver, les ramener à la maison, c'est notre devoir impératif d'Européens.

David Lega (PPE). – Mr President, Commissioner, ever since the beginning of the war, more than 16 000 Ukrainian children have been abducted and forcibly transferred to Russian institutions. The aim is to get children Russified and prepared to be adopted by Russian families. This attempt of forced Russification is indeed part of a wider plan of Putin that aims to erase Ukrainian identity and amounts to a full-scale war crime. Putin is stopping at nothing to destroy Ukraine as a nation.

One of the darkest pages of our history is repeating itself, and it's now unfolding before our eyes. This forced displacement of people takes us back to Stalin times and the Soviet Union. The issuance of an arrest warrant on Vladimir Putin from the ICC marks the first step in the right direction towards ending these crimes: accountability and justice. Putin must be punished. The EU must stand united and explore all tools at our disposal to take these children back home – home to Ukraine, home to Europe.

Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D). – Señor presidente, vicepresidenta Jourová, la Duma de la Federación Rusa ha decidido tipificar como delito cualquier forma de cooperación con la Corte Penal Internacional, a la que Putin no reconoce.

No es solamente un paso más en su galopada frontal contra la legalidad internacional, sino una señal clara de que la Unión Europea tiene también aquí una razón para apoyar a la Corte Penal Internacional, que ha decidido una orden de detención contra Putin como responsable de delitos de guerra, genocidio y lesa humanidad, así como contra la comisaria de los Derechos del Niño vinculada a la administración de Putin. Y la razón es que, además de los crímenes de guerra, se suma la deportación forzosa de al menos 1 400 niños, artificialmente declarados como huérfanos, de los más de 6 000 que han sido trasladados a Rusia como consecuencia de la guerra y sustraídos de sus familias.

La Unión Europea está apoyando enteramente el esfuerzo de la Fiscalía de la Corte Penal Internacional por el restablecimiento de la legalidad internacional. También en este ámbito, en el ámbito de la persecución implacable contra todos los crímenes de guerra que se vienen perpetrando, particularmente contra las personas más vulnerables, los niños desplazados.

Dita Charanzová (Renew). – Mr President, Madam Vice-President, Putin's regime keeps attacking the most vulnerable civilians: the children. The official Ukrainian data speaks about already hundreds of dead children, but NGOs assume this number is much, much higher. At the same time, Ukrainian children are being deported to Russia. We have been receiving horrible stories about Russian soldiers stopping cars and trains, and picking out children and taking them to unknown places. Children being indoctrinated and young boys trained as soldiers. Children being forcibly adopted by Russians. This is a genocide, and those responsible for these horrible crimes must be brought to justice and punished.

Riho Terras (PPE). – Mr President, Madam Vice-President, dear colleagues, the tragedy that Russia's war against Ukraine has brought along, comes in very different forms. We all have witnessed the unspeakable level of violence that Russia has used against the peaceful citizens of Ukraine. In addition to the killings, torture and targeting the civilian population, Russia has used the deportation of Ukrainian children as a tool of ethnic cleansing from the very beginning of this full-scale attack against a neighbouring country.

Russian leadership, as well as the regional leaders participating in the forced resettlement schemes, must be held accountable. The arrest warrant issued by the ICC against Putin and his children's commissioner are just the tip of the iceberg. Everyone responsible should be brought to the justice and the eventual trial against Putin must end up with him convicted of the crime of aggression.

Radka Maxová (S&D). – Vážený pane předsedající, za přímý dohled nad únosy ukrajinských dětí byl před měsícem vydán zatykač Mezinárodního trestního soudu na ruského prezidenta Vladimira Putina a jeho komisařku pro práva dětí Mariji Alexejevnu Lvovovou-Bělovovou. Podle ukrajinské vlády počty násilně odvlčených dětí do Ruska rostou. Hovoříme už o šestnácti tisících dětech, které se nevrátily domů k rodičům a které jsou zbaveny své národnosti. Pro ukrajinské rodiče je velmi těžké či nemožné získat své děti zpět. Potřebují k tomu přesně vědět, kde se jejich děti nacházejí, potřebují pasy a finanční prostředky. Některé dětské tábory se nacházejí na Sibiři, kam se prakticky nikdy nedostane. Skrze lepší monitorování ukrajinských dětí při překročení hranic Ukrajiny můžeme zabránit těmto nekalým praktikám, které velmi poškozují duševní zdraví a vývoj dětí a mohou napáchat nevratné změny na jejich duši.

Proto chci velmi ocenit práci Mykoly Kuleby, nově zřízené pracovní skupiny Komise a všech bojovníků za práva ukrajinských dětí, kteří je z rukou Rusů zachraňují nebo se neúnavně zasazují o to, aby vynesli pravdu o nucených adopcích na světlo.

Andrius Kubilius (PPE). – Mr President, dear colleagues, it is so important that the ICC issued an arrest warrant to President Putin with suspicions in this terrible war crime of children deportations. Not only the ICC, but also a special tribunal for crime of war aggression should do its job of justice. For that reason, a special tribunal should be established without delay, and the EU needs to play a leading role in implementing what this Parliament is demanding.

Putin and Lukashenko also are perpetrating crimes against humanity when they are persecuting – in the most brutal ways – their domestic opponents. This is a conclusion of a recent report of the United Nations Human Rights Council. The crimes against humanity which Russian and Belarussian people are facing should be also investigated by the ICC or a special tribunal.

The consequences of the ICC arrest warrant are clear. Nobody in the West should go for the dialogue with a war criminal and nobody from business or political elite around the war criminal in the Kremlin should expect an end of international isolation. Justice is coming, Mr Putin.

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D). – Pirmininke, pone vicepirmininke, kolegos. Šiandien jau surinkta daugiau negu pakankamai įrodymų apie Ukrainos vaikų grobimus ir jų prievartinę deportaciją į Rusiją. Rusija vykdo genocidą Ukrainos tautos atžvilgiu, pasinaudodama bejėgiškais vaikais. Ir tai yra pasibaisėtinas žiaurumas. Tai yra nepateisinama jokiais argumentais, nes tai ypatingai sunkūs karo nusikaltimai ir nusikaltimai žmogiškumui, už kuriuos turi būti baudžiama griežčiau. TBT arešto orderis privalo būti įgyvendinamas. Ir dar sunkiai suvokiama, kad valstybė Rusija, kuri vykdo tokius sunkius nusikaltimus, yra nuolatinė Saugumo Tarybos narė. Todėl raginu Europos Sąjungos lyderius telkti politinę paramą, kad Rusija būtų pašalinta iš visų tarptautinių organizacijų, kad kuo skubiau būtų įsteigtas specialus tribunolas dėl Rusijos vykdomų karo agresijos nusikaltimų ir kad jame būtų teisiami visi asmenys, kurie dalyvauja vykdamas nusikaltimus prieš Ukrainos vaikus ir prieš Ukrainos žmones.

Spontane Wortmeldungen

Michaela Šojdrová (PPE). – Pane předsedající, zatykač na Putina a Mariji Alexejevnu Lvovovou-Bělovovou je důležitým krokem k potrestání zločinu. Chci poděkovat všem, kteří se všemi prostředky i finančně podílejí na vyšetřování ruských zločinů, protože je to jasný signál, že tyto zločiny budou jednou potrestané.

Co můžeme, respektive musíme: musíme udělat více, protože každý den pro tyto unesené a rusifikované děti je dlouhý. Musíme podporovat všemi prostředky Ukrajinu v jejím odporu proti ruské agresi. Všechny mezinárodní organizace i ukrajinské neziskové organizace musíme podporovat v tom, aby se jim dařilo tyto děti vyhledávat a vracet do ukrajinských rodin. Je to náš velký závazek a já jsem ráda, že zde slyším velkou podporu napříč politickým spektrem. Budeme pokračovat do té doby, dokud jediné dítě bude zůstat v ruských rukou.

Barry Andrews (Renew). – Mr President, this month, the Russian Federation has the presidency of the United Nations Security Council. The Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It is surely an extraordinary indictment of the UN that its main body, the Security Council, charged with this cherished objective, is led by an alleged war criminal.

That is why the ICC arrest warrant is so important. Putin now stands accused of operating and directing a large-scale, systematic network of camps and facilities holding thousands of Ukrainian children in Russian territory.

And while it might seem a long shot that their warrant will be executed and that an arrest will follow, as soon as the warrant was issued, the world became a significantly smaller place for Vladimir Putin. And it may be our best hope that a future leader of Russia will extradite Putin in return for relief from sanctions and isolation, and that Putin will be held accountable for his crimes.

Beata Mazurek (ECR). – Panie Przewodniczący! Szanowni Państwo! Dzieci to nie łupy wojenne. Tymczasem jaka jest rzeczywistość? Ponad 16 tys. ukraińskich dzieci z okupowanych przez Rosję terenów zostało deportowanych. Niewiele ponad 300 wróciło do domów. „Niszczycielski wpływ wojny Putina na ukraińskie dzieci będzie odczuwalny przez pokolenia” – napisano w oświadczeniu Departamentu Stanu USA.

Jesteśmy świadkami rusyfikacji narodu ukraińskiego. Złamany został artykuł 8 Konwencji o prawach dziecka, który mówi między innymi o prawie dziecka do zachowania jego tożsamości, w tym obywatelstwa, nazwiska, stosunków rodzinnych zgodnych z prawem, z wyłączeniem bezprawnych ingerencji. Państwo polskie wielokrotnie nawoływało do tego, aby Międzynarodowy Trybunał Karny zajął się sprawą zbrodni wojennych na Ukrainie. Dlatego jego decyzję o nakazie aresztowania prezydenta Putina możemy skomentować jednym słowem: nareszcie! Dzieci są deportowane, odbierane rodzicom. Sytuacja jest dramatyczna. Musimy wspierać naród ukraiński. Oby jak najszybciej za decyzjami szły konkretne czyny, bo bez czynów, prośbę państwa, decyzje są nieskuteczne i puste.

Mick Wallace (The Left). – Mr President, war is horrific. The idea of the mistreatment of thousands of children is horrific and unthinkable. Any war crimes that Putin is responsible for, it is absolutely vital that he is held to account for them.

Just as those over 45 countries were part of the coalition of the willing in the illegal war in Iraq, which led to the death of over a million citizens and the displacement of over 9 million. Those who committed war crimes in Iraq should be held accountable.

In 2019, the then-Chief Prosecutor of the ICC, Bensouda, announced an investigation into Israeli war crimes. The Americans threatened her. Later, she declared her intention to investigate US war crimes and Taliban war crimes in Afghanistan. They sanctioned her and revoked her US visa.

Benjamin Ferencz, the last living Nuremberg prosecutor, died two weeks ago. He once said there are some people who do not trust the rule of law and they prefer to use military power to achieve their goals. War will make mass murderers out of otherwise decent people. Say no to all war.

Ljudmila Novak (PPE). – Gospod predsednik. Zločini nad otroki so najhujši in najtežji zločini, dogajajo pa se pod krinko dobronamernosti. Putinov režim izvaja najhujše zločine nad Ukrajinci, laže in zavaja pa tudi lasten narod.

Kazen za to mora priti. Če danes še to ni na vidiku, se mora to zgoditi jutri. In jutri se bo to zagotovo zgodilo.

Sočustvujem z Ukrajinci, z materami in očeti odvzetih otrok. Moja podpora pa gre tudi vsem tistim ruskim disidentom, ki se upirajo Putinovemu režimu in se borijo za resnico za ceno svojega življenja.

Velika naravna bogastva Rusije uporablja Putinov režim za lastne potrebe, za velike količine smrtonosnega orožja in za razkošno življenje njegovih podpornikov. Kaj pa ruski narod?

Želim si, da bi tudi ruski narod postal osvobojen in del družine evropskih narodov.

(Ende der spontanen Wortmeldungen)

Věra Jourová, *Vice-President of the Commission*. – Mr President, honourable Members, thank you very much for the discussion on this extremely painful and urgent matter. And thank all of you who said that this is our common moral obligation to do everything to help Ukrainian children to come back home.

The practice of illegally and forcibly deporting or transferring Ukrainian children to Russian territory is a violation of international law and has affected tens of thousands of Ukrainian children. The issuance of arrest warrants against the Russian President and commissioner for children's rights is an important step towards ensuring accountability for those responsible for these horrendous acts. The EU will continue to support the International Criminal Court, the joint investigative teams and the Ukrainian authorities in the investigation, prosecution and adjudication of this matter. It is also looking to develop other means of cooperation to ensure the children concerned are returned to their families and communities. And we will keep the Parliament informed of the developments of the joint European Commission-Poland initiative aimed at the return of illegally deported or transferred Ukrainian children.

This is a terrible crime inflicting unimaginable suffering. And we will do everything in our power to ensure accountability and that these children are returned to where they belong.

Jessika Roswall, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Mr President, honourable Members, Madam Vice-President Jourová, we can all agree on one thing: there must be no impunity for war crimes. When it comes to the arrest warrant that has been up for discussion today, it is clear that all countries that are party to the ICC have an obligation to execute the warrant. Therefore, as President von der Leyen recently pointed out, and was also mentioned here in the plenary just now, this has indeed made the world a smaller place for Vladimir Putin. In the meantime, the EU institutions and Member States will and must continue our efforts to ensure full accountability for war crimes and for the crime of aggression.

Sasha, the 12-year-old boy that I mentioned in my introductory remarks, was thankfully reunited with his mother thanks to human rights organisations. But not all of the unlawfully deported Ukrainian children have been so lucky. For their sake, we must hold those responsible to account, and the children have to be brought home.

Thank you very much for arranging this very important debate and thank you for your attention.

Der Präsident. – Die Aussprache ist geschlossen.

Schriftliche Erklärungen (Artikel 171 GO)

Joachim Stanisław Brudziński (ECR), na piśmie. – Jeszcze tak niedawno tyle osób było przekonanych, iż wojna, ludobójstwo, otwarty konflikt zbrojny tu w Europie, zwłaszcza na tak dużą skalę, to coś, co nie ma prawa się wydarzyć. Szokujące jest to, że najgorsze scenariusze, które znamy z czasów II wojny światowej, znowu wracają, a jednym z nich jest proceder przymusowej deportacji ukraińskich dzieci do Rosji. Podczas II wojny światowej Niemcy podobnie starali się wyniszczyć naród polski, wywożąc tysiące dzieci w głąb Niemiec, a teraz rosyjski agresor robi to samo z dziećmi ukraińskimi. Polska również pamięta, jak rusyfikowano polskie dzieci, gdy ta okupowała polskie terytorium w XVIII wieku. To nie pierwszy raz Rosja napada i dopuszcza się zbrodni, jednocześnie udając demokratyczny i praworządny kraj. Polski naród doświadczał tych zbrodni, ostrzegał przed nimi i nadal ostrzega: nie może być dla nich przyzwolenia, a zbrodnie należy nazywać po imieniu, zaś sprawców i rozkazodawców należy ścigać i rozliczyć z ich czynów. Musimy chronić wszystkie dzieci, również te z Ukrainy, to oczywiste. Skoro Rosja nie cofa się przed niczym, by osiągnąć swoje zbrodnicze cele, społeczność międzynarodowa musi zmaksymalizować wszelką możliwą presję, by tę rosyjską agresję jak najszybciej zakończyć, a napadniętym pomóc, począwszy od tych najbardziej bezbronych.

Ewa Kopacz (PPE), na piśmie. – Ogłaszając wydanie nakazu aresztowania dla Władimira Putina i Marii Lwowej-Bielowej, prokurator Khan potwierdził to, co już od wielu miesięcy mówiliśmy na forum Parlamentu Europejskiego – dzieci z Ukrainy są tysiącami nielegalnie wywożone przez rosyjskiego agresora do Rosji. Jest to systemowo zaplanowane przez rosyjski reżim rozdzielanie rodzin, często podstępem i pod pretekstem pomocy humanitarnej. Nie mamy żadnych złudzeń – rosyjskie władze wiedzą, jak to robić. Od czasów Rosji carskiej, a później stalinowskiej, przesiedlenia całych grup narodowych były częścią planu rządzenia i zarządzania ludnością. To samo dziś robi Putin ze swoimi poplecznikami. Od miesięcy wiele organizacji międzynarodowych raportuje, że wywózki i tzw. reedukacja ukraińskich dzieci w Rosji i na terytoriach okupowanych, to najlepiej obecnie udokumentowana zbrodnia przeciw ludzkości popełniona przez Rosję podczas wojny w Ukrainie. I mam nadzieję, że już wkrótce odpowiedzialni za te zbrodnie staną przed Międzynarodowym Trybunałem Karnym.

Jednak najważniejsza w tej chwili jest koordynacja pomocy dla ukraińskich dzieci i wsparcie dla organizacji i instytucji, które z wielkim trudem każdego dnia starają się połączyć ukraińskie rodziny. To zadanie niebezpieczne i wymagające wielu działań, które często powinny być bardzo dyskretne. Dlatego wzywam, byśmy wspierali je mądrze, by nie zniweczyć tego wysiłku.

Janina Ochojska (PPE), na piśmie. – Liczby dotyczące zaginionych dzieci, które zostały porwane i są przetrzymywane wbrew ich woli na terytorium Rosji, często w odległych jej częściach, i są poddawane rusyfikacji, są zatrważające. Zrozpaczeni rodzice i krewni robią wszystko, by odzyskać swoje dzieci, ale, jak pokazują dane, tylko niektórym się to udaje. Niespełna czterysta z kilkudziesięciu tysięcy uprowadzonych dzieci wróciło do domu. Chcę zwrócić szczególną uwagę na dzieci, które były sierotami lub znajdowały się pod opieką instytucji państwowych. Nie wolno nam o nich zapomnieć. One również muszą wrócić do swojego kraju po zakończeniu wojny. Proces powrotu będzie jeszcze trudniejszy ze względu na zmianę narodowości i danych osobowych porwanych dzieci, której dokonują władze rosyjskie. Nie wszystkie po latach będą pamiętały swoje prawdziwe imię i nazwisko czy pochodzenie. Zgadzam się, że głównymi zbrodniarzami odpowiedzialnymi za porwania są Władimir Putin i Maria Lwowa-Bielowa. Sami jednak nie byłiby w stanie tego dokonać. Dlatego pamiętajmy i rozliczmy wszystkich tych, którzy w jakikolwiek sposób przyczynili się do uprowadzenia dzieci, brali czynny udział w procesie zmiany danych osobowych, transportu czy ich rusyfikacji.

Ramona Strugariu (Renew), in writing. – Crimes committed against children are abhorrent. Stealing another nation's children should not – under any circumstances – be tolerated in the 21st century. The ICC arrest warrant against Vladimir Putin for unlawful deportation of children and unlawful transfer of population from occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian Federation offers a glimmer of hope that justice will be done. It should also send a clear message that giving orders to commit, committing or tolerating serious crimes against civilians may lead to a prison cell.

Exactly one year ago, I was in Bucha and Borodyanka and I saw for myself the magnitude of the destruction and suffering caused by Putin's senseless war. I heard the stories of those brave Ukrainian people resisting the aggression, of how the Russian forces kept shooting, how they didn't spare maternity wards, pharmacies, elderly people with shopping bags in their hands coming out of the supermarket. Countless other stories of civilian suffering emerge every day. We must continue fighting for accountability for every victim.

We have the responsibility, as the European Union, to contribute to and support the efforts to bring Putin and all the authors of all the crimes committed in Ukraine to justice.

(Die Sitzung wird um 10.25 Uhr unterbrochen)

PRESIDENZA: ROBERTA METSOLA

President

6. Resumption of the sitting

(The sitting resumed at 10.51)

7. This is Europe – Debate with the Prime Minister of Luxembourg, Xavier Bettel (debate)

President. – Good morning, we have with us today the Prime Minister of Luxembourg, Xavier Bettel. Prime Minister, dear Xavier, welcome to the European Parliament, and thank you for accepting our invitation to be part of our ‘This is Europe’ series of debates.

I take this opportunity to thank you and the people of Luxembourg for your steadfast belief in Europe and your resounding commitment to our shared values; for your leadership in pushing our project forward; and for showing that the limitations of geography are no limit to the potential of a people.

We will not forget your unwavering support for Ukraine, for welcoming displaced Ukrainians to your homes, schools and communes and for earmarking almost one fifth of your defence budget to help Ukraine defend itself against the Russian invasion. Allow me to praise you, Prime Minister, for your strong position on holding perpetrators of war crimes to justice.

The European Parliament will always push for peace – a real peace, with justice and accountability. And we know that for there to be a peace, there must be a Ukraine. As your government said in a statement earlier this year, Luxembourg ‘will never resign itself to a world in which force prevails over law’. And that is why we have also been able to count on Luxembourg to show firm support for Ukraine on its path to EU membership.

For this, Prime Minister, and for so much more, I would like to thank you and assure you that this Parliament will continue to stand for these causes and for our common values with Luxembourg and with you.

Xavier Bettel, Premier ministre du Luxembourg. – Madame la Présidente, chers membres du Parlement européen, je dois vous dire que c’est un grand honneur de me retrouver encore une fois parmi vous dans cette assemblée. J’aimerais vraiment remercier la Présidente de m’avoir invité. Et je remercie aussi la Commission d’être présente ce matin, et surtout quelqu’un que je connais bien.

C’est la troisième fois en l’espace de cinq ans que je parle ici devant votre assemblée. Et je dois vous dire que, pour moi, cette assemblée est l’épicentre de la démocratie européenne, et mon pays est fier d’accueillir depuis maintenant plus de soixante-dix ans son Secrétariat général.

Quand, en 2018, j’ai eu l’occasion de m’adresser ici devant vous lors d’un débat similaire, il semblait pour beaucoup d’entre nous que l’Union européenne venait tout juste de traverser une période de doutes, que l’on pourrait qualifier de «quasi existentiels», ou tout du moins de questionnements internes quant à son avenir proche. La crise de l’euro et la période d’intense pression migratoire de 2015 avaient créé des clivages qui étaient très, très importants au sein des États membres, mais aussi au sein de votre propre assemblée. Le résultat du référendum de 2016 au Royaume-Uni ainsi que la montée des courants xénophobes et identitaires dans un certain nombre d’États membres ont même amené certains à annoncer que c’était la fin de l’Union européenne, qu’on allait faire marche arrière, que le Brexit n’était que le premier et que d’autres suivraient les uns après les autres, qu’on était incapables d’agir et que nous risquions tous une implosion de notre Union européenne. Et je dois vous dire que, cinq ans après, je constate le contraire – et j’en suis très heureux.

L'Union européenne a eu des crises historiques, et c'est vrai qu'on a tendance, à chaque fois, à dire que c'est encore pire qu'avant. Mais on a connu, ces cinq dernières années, des crises encore plus intenses que celle de 2018. Et nous avons montré que nous étions à la hauteur des défis.

Je dois aussi vous dire, Madame la Présidente, que votre institution a plus que jamais assumé son rôle crucial dans le rouage institutionnel de l'Union européenne. À la suite du Brexit, nous avons été solidaires avec l'Irlande et unis pour préserver l'intégrité de notre marché intérieur. Face à la COVID-19 – et nous avons eu quelques difficultés, je l'avoue, au début –, nous avons réussi à garder la libre circulation des citoyens et des biens et tenté de limiter les dégâts. Et je sais de quoi je parle, avec 200 000 frontaliers qui travaillent au Grand-Duché de Luxembourg – et je l'ai déjà dit tout à l'heure lors de la conférence de presse –, un pays où, si on avait fermé les frontières, je n'aurais pas eu de personnel dans les hôpitaux, les gens seraient morts les uns après les autres. Et c'était un réflexe. On a vu les tensions. Certains ont pensé que la fermeture des frontières allait stopper le virus. Grand bien leur fasse. On a bien vu que ce n'était pas le cas.

Nous avons vu aussi que nous avons réussi en tant qu'Union européenne à avoir des contrats. Alors on peut discuter, les uns ou les autres ont leur position, mais imaginez si on avait laissé les vaccins au libre marché. Je peux vous avouer, je l'avoue, budgétairement, le Luxembourg aurait pu s'en sortir pour acheter six cent mille vaccins. Mais comment aurait-on expliqué à d'autres membres de l'Union européenne que, parce qu'ils n'ont pas les moyens, eh bien la COVID-19, pour eux, c'est pas de chance. Et c'est grâce à la Commission, grâce à cet achat commun, que nous avons réussi à répartir ces vaccins de manière équitable et que le même jour, qu'on soit bulgare, qu'on soit roumain, qu'on soit luxembourgeois, qu'on soit maltais, qu'on soit irlandais, on avait la chance de pouvoir se faire vacciner. C'est ça l'Europe. Et pourtant, on l'oublie trop facilement.

(Applaudissements)

Nous avons aussi réussi une émission de dette commune servant à financer justement la relance post-COVID-19 à travers le programme de NextGenerationEU. Et je dois le dire, sans l'aide de votre Parlement, nous n'aurions peut-être pas réussi à avoir un mécanisme de conditionnalité liant aussi le budget européen et les plans de relance au respect de l'état de droit dans les États membres.

Par ailleurs, notre unité face à la guerre en Ukraine sur le plan politique, économique, en matière de sanctions, d'aide humanitaire et militaire, mais aussi d'accueil des réfugiés, a montré que l'Union européenne était aussi un acteur géopolitique crédible.

Face à la double crise climatique et énergétique – on a trop souvent tendance à l'oublier –, nous avons également réussi à réduire considérablement notre consommation tout en accélérant la transition vers un système énergétique reposant essentiellement sur les énergies renouvelables. Il ne s'agit pas seulement d'un impératif moral et environnemental; il s'agit d'une nécessité sur les plans économique, mais aussi géopolitique, et de l'héritage que nous voulons laisser aux générations futures. Si, pour certains, c'est «après moi, le déluge», ne faites rien. Mais si nous voulons laisser la qualité de vie que nous apprécions aujourd'hui aux générations futures, il est plus que temps d'agir.

Et je dois vous dire merci, Madame la Présidente, aussi pour le leadership de votre assemblée, justement dans ce débat et cette volonté de lutte contre le changement climatique. Vous êtes élus par les citoyens, vous représentez les citoyens. Et très souvent, on a l'impression que les citoyens sont plus frileux que nous, alors que c'est faux. Je viens de présenter, avec nos ministres de l'environnement, de l'énergie et de l'économie, lundi, les résultats d'une consultation citoyenne que nous avons menée auprès de cent citoyens. Ces cent citoyens ont formulé des propositions dont un grand nombre se retrouve dans le plan national – le PNEC, comme on l'appelle chez nous, pour l'énergie et le climat – qui sera donné à la Commission européenne. Et croyez-moi, nos citoyens vont plus loin que ce que nous nous imaginions et que ce que nous-mêmes nous osons. Les citoyens s'attendent à ce que nous apportions aussi des réponses à leurs attentes. Ainsi, ce n'était plus de haut en bas, des idées sont venues d'en bas, justement pour influencer la politique. De temps en temps, nous avons peur de nos citoyens. Ne les découvrez pas tous les cinq ans à l'occasion des élections. N'ayez pas peur du contact, n'ayez pas peur de les consulter. Même si nous sommes élus, même si nous sommes dans une représentativité parlementaire, laissez aussi parler vos citoyens de temps en temps. Vous serez surpris du courage qu'ils ont par rapport aux hésitations que nous pouvons avoir.

Donc, l'objectif de ces piqûres de rappel, c'est aussi de dire que nous ne devons pas nous reposer sur nos lauriers. Je sais que mon temps est imparti, donc je vais être plutôt bref sur certains sujets. Mais je voudrais juste mettre l'accent sur le besoin de rester ouverts, au sein de notre Union et sur le monde, dans une époque où les tensions augmentent et où les protectionnismes sont plutôt le premier réflexe des uns et des autres dès qu'on parle d'ouverture, sur les valeurs européennes et les droits fondamentaux, ainsi que sur la nécessité pour notre Union de continuer à être à la hauteur du défi d'une guerre qui est à nos portes.

Lors des moments les plus difficiles de la pandémie, je vous ai dit que nous avons montré que travailler ensemble était la solution. Et je vous l'ai dit tout à l'heure, avec les vaccins comme avec les frontaliers. Mais le petit Luxembourg a pris des patients français. C'est ça, pour moi, l'Union européenne: voir comment on peut construire quelque chose ensemble. Grâce au personnel qui venait de l'autre côté de la frontière, nous avons pu prendre des patients qui venaient de l'autre côté de la frontière. C'est ça, l'Union européenne: ne pas se refermer sur soi-même et dire que ce n'est pas son problème. Nos problèmes sont communs, et la meilleure solution pour résoudre des problèmes communs, ce sont des solutions communes, et non le nombrilisme et le repli sur soi-même.

Quand on parle de frontières, aujourd'hui, c'est devenu un sujet, je dois vous dire, qui me surprend. Je fais partie d'une génération qui n'a pas connu de guerre. Beaucoup d'entre nous n'ont pas connu de guerre. Mais dans votre assemblée, Madame la Présidente, un grand nombre de vos élus et aussi dans mon Conseil ont connu un rideau de fer. Ils ont connu un mur. Ils ont su ce que cela voulait dire d'être divisés. Est-ce que nous, l'Union européenne, voulons maintenant laisser le message que la volonté politique serait de reconstruire des murs? Pour moi, l'Europe, c'est de détruire les murs qui existaient sur notre continent. Ne reproduisons pas les erreurs du passé.

(Applaudissements)

Madame la Présidente, j'aimerais aussi évoquer le marché commun à l'occasion de son anniversaire. D'après une étude des services du Parlement européen, le marché intérieur a permis la création de 56 millions d'emplois au sein de l'Union européenne et une augmentation structurelle du PIB de l'Union d'environ 9 %. Il ne nous apporte pas seulement prospérité, mais est aussi à l'origine de nos règles et standards communs en matière sociale, environnementale, de protection des consommateurs et aussi de sécurité alimentaire.

Alors que des aides d'État peuvent faire figure de «ponts», qui permettent à notre tissu industriel et nos PME de traverser des périodes troubles, ce sera le marché intérieur et son environnement réglementaire qui leur permettront de rester compétitifs de manière durable, surtout aussi au niveau mondial.

Gleichzeitig kann sich aber eine wettbewerbsfähige EU-Wirtschaft nicht nur auf den Binnenmarkt stützen. Wir brauchen Offenheit zum Rest der Welt, auch was Investitionsflüsse anbelangt. Es ist wichtig, dass wir als EU uns auch weiterhin die Mittel geben, uns gegen wirtschaftlichen Zwang sowie gegen Investitionen zu schützen, die ein Sicherheitsrisiko darstellen. Vieles wurde in den letzten Wochen und Monaten zum Konzept der strategischen Autonomie Europas gesagt.

Lassen Sie mich hier dazu ganz klar sagen: Strategische Autonomie bedeutet für mich weder Protektionismus noch Abkehr von Freunden und engen Partnern noch Äquidistanz zwischen Alliierten und dem Rest der Welt. Und ich habe bislang auch noch bei keinem der vielen und ständigen Gespräche mit den Kollegen im Europäischen Rat den Eindruck gehabt, dass auch nur eine oder einer von ihnen das Konzept der strategischen Autonomie in dieser Weise auslegt. Wir sollten uns von künstlichen, aufgebauschten Polemiken fernhalten und ergebnisorientiert weiterarbeiten.

Ursula von der Leyen und Thierry Breton haben mit dem *Net Zero Industry Act* sowie dem *Chips Act* und dem *Critical Raw Materials Act* vorgelegt. Es liegt nun am Rat und am Parlament, Verantwortung zu übernehmen.

Für uns – Luxemburg – soll Offenheit ein wesentlicher Bestandteil unserer Bemühungen für mehr strategische Autonomie sein. Offene Märkte, gekoppelt mit einem *level playing field* speziell bei Umwelt-, Klima- und Menschenrechtsfragen, waren und werden auch in Zukunft die Grundlage unseres Wohlstands sein. Protektionismus macht arm. Aber nicht nur das. Protektionismus macht in letzter Konsequenz trotzdem auch noch abhängig.

Strategische Autonomie heißt im Gegenteil Diversifikation der Lieferketten – gerne und bevorzugt auch in Richtung derer, die unsere Werte teilen und die, genau wie wir, das Erreichen der Ziele des Pariser Abkommens ernst nehmen. Strategische Autonomie heißt auch, eine proaktive europäische Industriepolitik zu führen, um Herstellung und Wertschöpfung in Europa, besonders im Kontext der grünen und digitalen Transition, zu fördern, die Bezugsquellen von kritischen Rohmaterialien sicherzustellen und zu diversifizieren, anstatt alles oder zu viel auf eine selbe Karte zu setzen, sich aus der Abhängigkeit von fossilen Energieträgern zu befreien und europäische Strom- und auch Wasserstoffproduktions- und –verteilungsnetze aufzubauen und sich auch auf erneuerbare Energien zu basieren sowie schließlich auch Technologieentwicklung und Innovationen *Made in Europe* zu fördern und zu schützen. In diesem Sinne rede ich am liebsten von offener strategischer Autonomie.

And when I'm talking about openness, ladies and gentlemen, I cannot avoid touching upon the issue of a truly common European migration policy. I agree that, in order for Schengen to work, we need to be in a position to better regulate and control access to the Schengen Area. However, for me, that does not and can in no way imply that we Europeans do not have a legal obligation and a moral duty to offer those who seek international protection a realistic possibility to do so, and to grant international protection to those who qualify for it.

As I told my colleagues at the February European Council, border walls are not only costly and questionable from a political point of view, but they are not effective in stopping irregular migration. We have to improve the surveillance of our external borders and engage with international partners on issues like returns or the management of migratory flows, or addressing the root causes of irregular migration and setting up possibilities for regular migration.

At the same time, the respect for fundamental rights, as well as international humanitarian law, should be the guiding principle for common European migration policy that preserves and strengthens our credibility with our neighbours and other third party countries. The external dimension can only be complementary to the internal dimension. A common European migration policy needs to be fair, resilient, rules-based and characterised by the right balance between solidarity and responsibility.

For me, the European Asylum and Migration Pact and the related preparatory work by the successive French, Czech and Swedish presidencies represents the only solution on the table with the potential to achieve this balance. Let us not give up on the pact and let us try to hammer out an agreement before the end of this legislature, using the joint roadmap of the European Parliament and the Council as our compass to this end.

For me, one of the central characteristics of the European project has been the fact that it's always been solidly anchored in the respect for fundamental rights and rule of law. This was my main theme of my speech before this plenary last November. And as I told you in the press conference, I had a speech prepared about technical matters, et cetera, et cetera, but, Roberta, you showed us the video of Simone Veil and this changed my whole speech. You know who Simone Veil was, but we are remembering today. You have this yellow star on you. Simone Veil had not only a yellow star or flower; she was marked for life – she was Jewish. She fought, during her political engagement, for women's rights and, for me, she represents Europe. This peace project. This project of respecting people how they are. And so that is the reason I want to apologise officially to all my team, who usually prepare long speeches and I don't very often stick to them. But it was for me important to recall that. For me, you have to continue to fight for these rights, for this rule of law and for these human rights.

Madame la Présidente, la défense de l'état de droit et des droits fondamentaux du citoyen doit rester l'épine dorsale de cette Union européenne, et on ne peut pas changer les règles en fonction de qui se trouve au pouvoir. Le Parlement européen est actif sur le terrain en la matière, et je voudrais surtout souligner le rôle que vous avez justement joué dans la mise en place d'un mécanisme de conditionnalité liée à l'état de droit pour le cadre financier pluriannuel et pour NextGenerationEU.

Les développements des derniers mois nous ont bien montré que ce mécanisme est certes perfectible, mais qu'il fonctionne. Ajoutons à cela les fonds suspendus dans le cadre de la soumission de certains plans de relance nationaux jusqu'à l'accomplissement de certains objectifs de mi-parcours en matière d'état de droit, les fonds suspendus dans le cadre du règlement financier ainsi que les procédures d'infraction que la Commission a lancées, dont notamment celle de la loi anti LGBT+ hongroise, soutenue par quinze pays auprès de la Commission.

Moi, j'ai été, Madame la Présidente, au Conseil européen juste après que Viktor Orbán nous a annoncé la loi qu'il voulait faire sur les médias, à la suite de laquelle il n'est plus possible de parler d'homosexualité ni à la télé, ni à la radio, ni dans l'éducation. On ne peut plus en parler. Si quelqu'un dans cette assemblée pense qu'on devient homosexuel parce qu'on a regardé la télé... Si quelqu'un pense qu'il est devenu homosexuel parce qu'il a écouté une chanson... Vous n'avez rien compris. Le plus dur pour un homosexuel, c'est de s'accepter soi-même.

(Applaudissements)

On ne demande pas de pitié, on ne demande pas de solidarité, on ne demande pas de compassion, on demande juste du respect. Alors, donner l'impression parce qu'on est né comme ça qu'il vaut mieux avoir une double vie, ou alors le cacher, et ne pas pouvoir vivre... Est-ce que l'on sait combien de jeunes gens se suicident parce qu'ils n'arrivent pas à communiquer sur leur propre homosexualité? Les stigmatiser et leur dire que c'est de la faute de l'éducation, de la culture, de l'audiovisuel, c'est pour moi contraire à ce qu'est l'Union européenne, à son ouverture et à sa tolérance...

Le jour où j'ai compris ce que j'étais et que je me suis accepté, mes amis m'ont dit: «Enfin!» Ma famille m'a dit: «Enfin!» Mais, me dire que dans d'autres pays, je n'aurais même pas le droit de le dire sans risquer une peine – dans certains pays, pas en Union européenne – de prison ou même la peine de mort! Et me dire que dans l'Union européenne, bientôt, je ne pourrais plus en parler avec quelqu'un d'autre, sauf dans l'anonymat, car je risquerais de pervertir les jeunes générations!...

J'ai honte, Madame la Présidente, que certains collègues veuillent gagner des voix sur le dos de minorités. Ça déjà commencé comme ça, dans notre histoire...

(Applaudissements)

Je pense, Madame la Présidente, qu'il faut compléter notre boîte à outils concernant les droits de l'homme et les droits des minorités. Au vu des défis – financier, climatique, sécuritaire, industriel et social – qui nous attendent dans les années qui viennent, je demanderai aussi plus de solidarité et de moyens, qui détermineront aussi notre action politique.

Permettez-moi, Madame la Présidente, de terminer mon discours par cette agression, cette guerre d'agression lancée par la Russie contre l'Ukraine. Elle se déroule devant nos portes déjà depuis plus d'un an, et je pense que la plus grande surprise, ça été notre unité. Beaucoup s'attendaient à ce que, dès le départ, ça parte en sucette et que chacun aille de son côté. Notre force, c'est notre unité. L'Union européenne n'est jamais aussi forte qu'en union. Les États individuels ne représentent pas grand-chose – ne le prenez pas mal –, mais l'Union européenne est forte.

Je vois que, actuellement, elle n'est pas à notre portée, la paix que l'on aimerait avoir tout de suite. Je suis très honnête avec vous: je ne l'envisage pas là, maintenant, tout de suite. On voit bien que la charte des Nations unies est violée, et vous l'avez dit, Madame la Présidente: le Luxembourg ne veut pas d'impunité. On ne peut pas dire qu'une partie du deal sera l'impunité par rapport à ce qui se passe aujourd'hui en Ukraine. Et laissez-moi citer Robert Schuman, natif du Luxembourg, dans sa déclaration de 1950: «La paix mondiale ne saurait être sauvegardée sans des efforts créateurs à la mesure des dangers qui la menacent.» Ces mots résonnent encore fort aujourd'hui, et c'est notre devoir historique de les engager, de les poursuivre aussi, de les accomplir, et donc de réagir de façon unie face à l'inacceptable agression russe. Sanctionner l'agresseur, continuer de soutenir financièrement l'Ukraine, de lui livrer des armes. Vous l'avez dit: nous-mêmes, nous avons débloqué une grande partie de notre budget pour l'Ukraine, pour qu'ils puissent eux-mêmes prendre ce dont ils ont besoin.

Il faudra aussi des efforts créateurs, ensuite, et utiliser la politique d'élargissement comme un outil géopolitique, en accompagnant l'Ukraine en tant que candidate sur le long et difficile chemin vers l'adhésion. Un autre effort créateur consistera à mener une discussion sérieuse sur le fonctionnement, d'un point de vue institutionnel certes, mais aussi surtout d'un point de vue budgétaire et financier, d'une Union européenne qui s'élargira dans les deux décennies à venir. Derniers efforts créateurs: ceux qui permettront de mobiliser les ressources nécessaires pour reconstruire l'Ukraine et pour bâtir un ordre européen qui mettra un terme aux guerres sur notre continent une fois pour toutes.

Nous ne pouvons pas décevoir, Madame la Présidente, nos citoyens une fois de plus. Nous devons être à la hauteur de ces efforts qui nous attendent, que ce soit au niveau du respect de l'état de droit, du climat, de l'engagement pour l'Ukraine, de cette volonté de construire quelque chose qui nous permette, ensemble, d'aller plus loin. Je crois que c'était Churchill qui avait dit: «Seul on va plus vite, ensemble on va plus loin.»

En tant que premier ministre du Luxembourg depuis dix ans bientôt, je sais que sans cette Europe je ne serais peut-être pas aujourd'hui devant vous, ici, libre, libre de m'exprimer librement sans risquer de sanctions. Que vous soyez d'extrême gauche ou d'extrême droite, ici vous vous battez, mais sur des idées et avec des mots, pas avec des armes, pas avec des poings, pas avec des menaces. Merci de tenir fort les valeurs de cette démocratie dans cette maison et de ne pas tomber sous les sirènes du populisme.

Isabel Wiseler-Lima, *au nom du groupe PPE*. – Madame la Présidente, Monsieur le Premier Ministre, l'Union européenne, et en son sein le Luxembourg, continue à être un havre qui attire et accueille. Notre force aujourd'hui réside en cela. Mais l'Union européenne se trouve également à la croisée des chemins. Nous avons besoin de plus d'Europe pour faire face à un monde devenu beaucoup plus hostile aux démocraties et qui a vu le retour de la guerre sur le continent européen, dû à une Russie autocratique et hégémonique qui a envahi l'Ukraine.

Nous avons besoin de plus d'Europe pour plus d'autonomie, notamment par rapport à la Chine, et les crises qui se suivent depuis quelques années ont aussi amené cette certitude chez nos concitoyens. La pandémie de COVID-19 a suscité chez les citoyens de l'Union la volonté d'une Union européenne de la santé. Il me semble d'ailleurs, dans ce contexte, Monsieur le Premier Ministre, que le Luxembourg devrait jouer un rôle moteur, d'autant que nous avons l'Agence exécutive européenne pour la santé et le numérique à Luxembourg.

La pandémie a également eu pour conséquence des pénuries et a montré que pour les biens essentiels, que ce soit les médicaments, la nourriture ou la technologie vitale, nous ne pouvions dépendre d'autres continents. Nous devons ramener des productions en Europe, aussi au Luxembourg, tant pour garantir notre autonomie qu'en ayant à l'esprit la protection de l'environnement. Et il en va de même pour notre sécurité. Nos concitoyens savent que la paix n'est pas une évidence et qu'une défense européenne est devenue indispensable. Nous avons besoin d'une Union militairement capable de prendre des décisions, et des décisions autonomes. Les dépendances dans lesquelles nous sommes empêtrés – énergétique, économique et militaire – nous fragilisent. Nous avons besoin d'autonomie de décision et d'autonomie de fait. Cela se fera – ou ne se fera pas – ensemble.

Dans l'Union européenne, chaque pays a une voix qui importe. Nous attendons du Luxembourg que sa politique étrangère prenne en compte ces réalités et que, au sein de l'Union européenne, pour notre sécurité et la paix, nous agissions en faveur d'une Union puissante.

Iratxe García Pérez, *en nombre del Grupo S&D*. – Señora presidenta, señor Bettel, bienvenido al Parlamento Europeo. Comparece usted ante esta Cámara como representante de un país, Luxemburgo, tradicionalmente a la vanguardia de la integración europea. Más de siete décadas después de que Luxemburgo pusiera en pie los cimientos del Benelux, nuestra Unión afronta uno de los mayores cambios en nuestra historia.

Señor Bettel, como usted ha relatado en su intervención, ha llegado la hora de decidir cómo queremos seguir construyendo Europa. Y yo voy a añadir algo a mayores: con quién queremos seguir construyendo Europa. Los últimos episodios demuestran que la Unión Europea asiste a un momento en el que algunos abandonan su moderación y la extrema derecha, con políticas de odio contra la ciencia, las mujeres, las personas LGTBI y los inmigrantes, deteriora los avances conquistados. En Polonia hay mujeres perseguidas y condenadas por defender sus derechos. La señora Meloni en Italia asfixia los derechos de las personas LGTBI para el registro de los hijos de parejas homosexuales y declara el estado de emergencia para eliminar cualquier protección para los inmigrantes.

Hablando de otro desafío fundamental al que usted se ha referido, el clima, en España el Partido Popular y la extrema derecha de VOX ponen en peligro el futuro de una joya natural como es Doñana, y dirigentes políticos como el vicepresidente de mi región, Castilla y León, dicen que dejemos en paz a los niños, que ya decidirán de mayores si el CO₂ es un gas contaminante o no. Por todo esto, es el momento de elegir en qué lugar de la historia queremos estar.

Señorías, en el contexto de la guerra de Putin contra Ucrania, nuestros ciudadanos y ciudadanas luchan por encontrar un trabajo decente, por comprar una vivienda asequible o por garantizar la educación a sus hijos. Y al mismo tiempo, el número de millonarios aumenta. ¿Cómo podemos pedir a los ciudadanos que resistan cuando hay empresas multinacionales que apenas pagan impuestos en la Unión Europea? Señor Bettel, también debemos comprometernos con una política fiscal justa.

Los socialdemócratas sabemos hacia dónde vamos. Continuaremos liderando la respuesta a todos estos desafíos. Continuaremos en la defensa del Estado de Derecho para proteger a las minorías de los ataques de las fuerzas de extrema derecha. Ha llegado el momento de comprometerse.

Yo, como usted, también agradezco a quienes me ayudan a escribir unos estupendos discursos. Tenía una forma de terminar en la que le iba a preguntar de qué lado quería usted estar en esta construcción europea. Tras su intervención, no me hace falta preguntárselo y, por lo tanto, le voy a agradecer su compromiso por seguir construyendo esa Europa más justa, más social y más igualitaria.

Stéphane Séjourné, *au nom du groupe Renew*. – Madame la Présidente, c'est un véritable plaisir d'accueillir ici, dans notre hémicycle, le Premier ministre luxembourgeois. Monsieur le Premier Ministre, votre pays a, depuis les prémices de la construction européenne, contribué de manière très substantielle à notre Union européenne. J'ai même envie de dire que si, proportionnellement à la taille des pays, tous les pays européens avaient autant contribué, à la fois à la construction et à notre organisation, peut-être que nous aurions passé un certain nombre d'étapes – que nous sommes encore en train de discuter.

Je voudrais d'abord vous dire, Monsieur le Premier Ministre, que vous avez été personnellement fidèle à l'histoire de votre pays. Vous avez défendu avec force au Conseil européen votre communauté de valeurs. Vous l'avez fait encore une fois dans votre discours devant le Parlement européen. Notre groupe, Renew Europe, sait qu'il peut compter sur vous pour porter nos projets, la conditionnalité des fonds au respect de l'état de droit, le pacte vert, la souveraineté européenne – vous l'avez également évoqué en parallèle.

Nous sommes avec vous, comme bon nombre d'ailleurs de mes collègues dans d'autres groupes politiques, quand vous dénoncez les outrances de Viktor Orban, les absurdités des populistes. Votre voix porte, et à travers vous celle des défenseurs des démocraties libérales partout en Europe. L'Union européenne est bien le bouclier de la démocratie libérale, mais nous connaissons également ses imperfections en matière de démocratie et d'efficacité de la décision. Vous qui siégez au Conseil européen êtes d'ailleurs bien placé pour voir ces difficultés, à la fois dans le temps et dans la manière de décider, aujourd'hui, en Europe.

Alors l'Europe a certes montré sa flexibilité – vous l'avez également évoqué dans le cadre constitutionnel que nous connaissons – dans le cadre des crises, avec des réponses fortes sur la COVID-19, sur la crise économique, sur l'invasion russe en Ukraine; avec une efficacité, une détermination à agir à la fois ici, au Parlement européen, et en même temps au sein du Conseil. La Conférence sur l'avenir de l'Europe a posé les bases d'une réflexion. Mon groupe regrette que nous ne puissions pas aller encore un peu plus loin, mais, certes, les urgences économiques, environnementales et géopolitiques ont la priorité.

Je souhaiterais peut-être vous interpeller sur un sujet. Il est temps pour nous d'aller vers des élections et, vous le savez, avec des listes transnationales et également avec un droit d'initiative au Parlement européen. Je sais que vous poussez également ces sujets. Alors, Monsieur le Premier Ministre, merci pour votre confiance, merci pour vos valeurs, et une question: êtes-vous prêt, et comment faire pour aller plus loin dans notre organisation et notre logiciel institutionnel européens?

Philippe Lamberts, *au nom du groupe Verts/ALE*. – Madame la Présidente, moiien léiwen Premier Minister, léiwen Xavier, moiien et bienvenue! Je suis un peu ému parce que j'ai toujours eu une petite tendresse et même une tendresse affirmée pour le Grand-Duché. Il faut savoir que pendant dix ans, dans ma vie précédente, j'étais représentant commercial pour une grande firme, et mon principal client se trouvait à Colmar-Berg, au Grand-Duché. Vous devinez de qui je parle? Et pour eux, j'étais *den Belsche vertrieeder*, vous savez. [...] Pardon? [...] Non, ce n'était pas le grand-duc. C'est juste à côté.

Mais quel bonheur ! Quel bonheur de vous avoir ici et d'avoir pu entendre votre triple plaidoyer! Plaidoyer d'abord pour notre Union. Alors, c'est sûr que, pour des petits pays comme les nôtres, la souveraineté au xxi^e siècle ne peut se construire qu'ensemble. Mais, comme le disait un de vos prédécesseurs, qui fut ensuite président de la Commission européenne, Jean-Claude Juncker, en Europe, il y a deux sortes de pays: les petits pays et ceux qui n'ont pas encore compris qu'ils sont petits. Je pense qu'il avait raison là-dessus. Et je me réjouis en effet que, dans l'Union, l'unité ait prévalu face à la pandémie, face à la guerre, et je crois que c'est cela qui nous rend forts.

Mais cette Union, ce n'est pas n'importe quelle union. C'est une union d'abord fondée – et vous l'avez dit – sur des valeurs. Je n'oublie jamais la boussole que représente pour nous l'article 2 des traités, qui énumère les valeurs sur lesquelles est construite l'Union européenne, à commencer par le respect de la dignité humaine. Pas de la dignité des citoyens européens. De la dignité humaine. Quel que soit son genre, son orientation sexuelle, son origine, ses croyances, un être humain est un être humain et il a droit au respect. Je trouve que votre plaidoyer là-dessus a été particulièrement émouvant. Et de pouvoir compter sur vous comme défenseur de ces valeurs au Conseil, j'ai envie de dire que, en fait, cela ne devrait pas être extraordinaire. Mais je constate que, au sein du Conseil, ce n'est pas unanimement partagé. Et donc d'avoir des champions des valeurs fondamentales de l'Union au sein du Conseil, pour nous cela a une importance absolument centrale.

Enfin, concernant votre plaidoyer pour la transition écologique, je me disais souvent: «Mais finalement, au sein des vingt-sept chefs d'État ou de gouvernement, qui est vraiment le champion du pacte vert?» À part vous, je ne vois pas grand-monde. Vraiment, qui comprend la centralité de ce défi, son importance cruciale pour notre avenir, évidemment, face à une planète qui peut devenir inhabitable, et pour notre avenir économique? Et vous l'avez compris. Ça ne m'étonne pas que nos deux familles politiques soient associées au sein du gouvernement luxembourgeois. Et pourvu que ça dure!

En tout cas, je voudrais vous remercier pour tout cela. Continuez, ne lâchez rien. Vous savez que nous sommes à vos côtés. Nous défendons les mêmes valeurs.

Nicola Procaccini, *a nome del gruppo ECR*. – Signora Presidente, signor Primo ministro, benvenuto. I meravigliosi castelli del Lussemburgo ci ricordano la storia del nostro continente. Una storia ultra millenaria che ha prodotto una civiltà di cui siamo fieri, da amare e conservare.

So di non dirle nulla di nuovo nel ricordarle che il Lussemburgo è famoso anche per alcune pratiche fiscali troppo aggressive. Questo consente a molte aziende di ridurre o evitare di pagare le tasse nei propri Stati di appartenenza, generando una concorrenza sleale all'interno dell'Unione europea.

Sono convinto che Lei converrà con me che, se vogliamo garantire un corretto sviluppo economico, è necessario difendere l'economia reale rispetto all'economia fondata solo sulla finanza.

In Lussemburgo si trova anche Schengen, località in cui ha preso vita l'accordo che ha istituito uno spazio comune di libera circolazione, abbattendo le frontiere interne all'Unione. Senza dubbio uno dei risultati più importanti nella cooperazione fra Stati europei. L'atroce paradosso di oggi è che la circolazione interna non è più libera come dovrebbe essere, a differenza di quella esterna.

Da un lato vengono realizzate frontiere per contrastare i movimenti secondari dei migranti illegali tra uno Stato europeo e l'altro, tra la Francia e l'Italia per esempio. Dall'altro lato si pretende l'apertura delle frontiere esterne all'immigrazione illegale, trasformando gli Stati di primo ingresso in enormi campi profughi o in centri d'accoglienza a cielo aperto.

Molto spesso si accompagna questo indirizzo anche con esternazioni pubbliche di critica severa nei confronti delle nazioni alla frontiera esterna dell'Unione europea, perché non sono sufficientemente accoglienti. Però se un migrante illegale riesce a varcare la frontiera interna viene catturato come un animale dalla polizia e deportato nello Stato in cui è sbarcato per la prima volta. È questa ipocrisia che noi denunciavamo da tempo e che combattiamo con fermezza, realismo e umanità.

L'Europa in cui crediamo noi conservatori ha il respiro delle grandi storie nazionali che la compongono. Per questo facciamo nostro il motto del Lussemburgo: «Vogliamo rimanere ciò che siamo».

Harald Vilimsky, *im Namen der ID-Fraktion*. – Frau Präsidentin, meine sehr geehrten Damen und Herren! Es gehört schon ein gehöriges Maß an schwarzem Humor dazu, hier ans Rednerpult zu schreiten wie meine Vorredner und den Zustand Europas in den Himmel zu loben. Faktum ist, dass die beiden großen Fraktionen des Hauses hier in veritablen Problemen stecken. Bei den Sozialdemokraten marschieren die Behörden ein, verhaften quasi Mandatäre mehr oder minder aus dem Plenarsaal. Es werden zu Hause Bargeldbestände gefunden – in Plastiksackerln – und konfisziert. Bei der anderen großen Fraktion, der Europäischen Volkspartei, ermittelt die Europäische Staatsanwaltschaft wegen dieser Impfstoffbeschaffung rund um Corona. Ich komme darauf zurück.

Bei Debatten wie der heutigen wäre es doch gut, so etwas wie Selbstreflexion zu üben und nicht in einer Art und Weise sich selbst zu beweihräuchern, dass es schon ins Humorvolle abgleitet. Wann immer große Entscheidungen zu treffen waren, wann immer der richtige Pfad gesucht werden sollte und wollte, sind Sie falsch abgelenkt. Es hat begonnen im Jahr 2016, als die Briten gesagt haben: Danke, es reicht uns, *goodbye*, wir gehen! Sie hätten damit reagieren sollen, mehr Kompetenzen in die Mitgliedstaaten zu verlagern, die Briten nicht dafür zu schelten, dass sie gesagt haben, dass sie gehen, sondern ihnen mit Respekt und Würde zu begegnen. Das haben Sie verabsäumt.

Sie haben genauso verabsäumt, bei der Migrationskrise 2015, die bis zum heutigen Tag anhält, hier die richtigen Entscheidungen zu treffen. Nicht nur Arbeitsmarktprobleme, nicht nur soziale Probleme, nicht nur Kulturprobleme haben diesen Kontinent erreicht. Wir haben auch – weil wir heute schon beim Gedenken sind – jede Menge an Terror und Kriminalität auf den Kontinent gelassen. Ich darf Sie nur daran erinnern: Brüssel, die Hauptstadt Europas, wo der Flughafen in die Luft gesprengt wurde, mit über 30 Toten, hier in Straßburg der Weihnachtsmarkt vor wenigen Jahren, als es ein islamistisches Attentat gab, oder auch – weil wir in Frankreich sind – Paris und das Bataclan-Theater. Erinnern Sie sich nicht mehr daran? Ziehen Sie die richtigen Schlüsse aus dieser verfehlten Politik.

Corona: Sie haben alle Regeln eines freien Europas beerdigt und eine Politik betrieben, wo mit Lockdowns Konkurse und psychische Probleme ausgelöst wurden und der ganze Kontinent hier in eine Problemsituation manövriert wurde – völlig unnötig, wie wir heute wissen. Es gäbe noch viele Beispiele, wo Sie auch in der Ukraine-Russland-Frage falsch abbiegen, statt Frieden herbeizuwünschen den Krieg befeuern.

Ich sage: Viel zusammengebracht haben Sie nicht. Wir haben jetzt Insekten im Essen. Bravo dieser Europäischen Union ...

(Die Präsidentin entzieht dem Redner das Wort.)

Manon Aubry, *au nom du groupe The Left*. – Madame la Présidente, Monsieur Bettel, j'ai une devinette pour vous. Quel est le point commun entre Tiger Woods, Brad Pitt, la famille Hermès, Shakira, le prince d'Arabie saoudite, Bernard Arnault, la mafia italienne et la pègre russe? Ils ont tous une étonnante passion pour votre pays, le Luxembourg. On y croise du beau monde par chez vous, vous me dites. Enfin, la réalité, c'est qu'ils n'y sont pas vraiment. Parce que la réalité, aussi, c'est qu'on y croise seulement leurs sociétés écrans, qui sont domiciliées, par exemple, au 6 rue Eugène Ruppert. C'est un bâtiment somme toute ordinaire, Monsieur Bettel. Et dans ce bâtiment, on y trouve pas moins de 1 810 entreprises, qui arrivent comme par magie à se partager ces locaux. Monsieur le Premier ministre, vous pourrez peut-être nous expliquer par quel miracle le Luxembourg échappe ainsi aux lois de la physique. La réponse, en réalité, vous la connaissez. Scandale après scandale, on retrouve ces entreprises, qui ne sont en fait que des boîtes aux lettres dont le seul rôle est de permettre l'évasion fiscale à grande échelle.

La réalité, Monsieur Bettel, c'est que vous êtes à la tête d'un paradis fiscal. Un paradis fiscal qui organise au cœur de l'Europe un véritable vol en bande organisée, et qu'aujourd'hui encore personne ne peut ou ne veut vous canaliser.

Monsieur Bettel, vous avez beaucoup parlé d'ouverture des frontières. Je le partage, pour le coup. Mais, étrangement, quand il s'agit d'argent des riches ou des multinationales, c'est une ouverture à sens unique. Il entre au Luxembourg, mais ne sort jamais. La conséquence de ce casse du siècle, c'est la casse sociale, la casse de nos services publics, la casse de nos retraites. Car, bizarrement, ceux qui sont si prompts à faire des économies sur tout sont aussi ceux qui ne cherchent jamais à récupérer les milliards volés des évadés fiscaux.

Alors permettez-moi en conclusion, Monsieur Bettel, de vous dire que votre vibrant plaidoyer pour une Europe de la coopération et de la solidarité pourrait nous émouvoir, je dois le reconnaître, s'il n'était pas souvent, dans les faits, une coquille aussi vide que les entreprises fictives au 6 rue Eugène Ruppert.

Tatjana Ždanoka (NI). – Madam President, dear Mr Bettel, you told in your speech about the rule of law in the European Union. But do you agree that the rule of law toolbox, recently introduced, is not working? By my opinion, just the disappearance of the resolutions of rule of law in Spain, Malta and Greece in this plenary is approval of this fact.

We commemorate today the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto. My grandparents were thrown into the Riga Ghetto – I am from Latvia – and then killed. Therefore, for me, a problem of big concern is the growing number of political prisoners in the Baltic states. In my statelet, the series of trials of 14 journalists started last week. They are accused of violating EU sanctions and facing up to four years in prison. In neighbouring Lithuania, another journalist, is imprisoned for six years. The same happens in Estonia ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Paulo Rangel (PPE). – Madam President, dear Prime Minister, Commissioner, first, let me thank you and congratulate you for reinforcing the tradition of Luxembourg, Commissioners, Presidents of Commission and Prime Ministers in fighting for rule of law, for human rights, for the rights of minorities. Because I remember that, even against the first steps of wrongdoing of Orbán, Viviane Reding was always with the red alarm, and not by chance, Juncker was not voted by Orbán as President of the Commission. And so this is Luxembourg always giving the example and you keep this tradition and reinforce it.

Then let me say as a Portuguese, that we experienced the European Union before we were Members because of the experience of our citizens in Luxembourg. They were so well received, that this was the true European spirit.

And then let me put a political question, because at some time, at some moment, you said that peace could be obtained in Ukraine if there was a meeting between Xi Jinping and Biden. And I have to say that I am quite sceptical about this statement and I would like to know how do you envisage a peace process when you try to design this new formulation? Because I see with President Lula now what he is saying and these are not good news for us and not good news for Brazilian external policy. So I would like your comment on this.

Marc Angel (S&D). – Madame la Présidente, Monsieur le Premier Ministre, je me souviens vivement de notre temps commun en politique luxembourgeoise, parfois au sein de la même coalition, parfois séparés par les rapports de force politiques, mais toujours unis dans l'ambition d'améliorer la vie des gens. Merci d'être parmi nous aujourd'hui.

Je suis fier que le Luxembourg, membre fondateur, ait toujours soutenu un projet européen ambitieux et agi comme moteur de l'intégration européenne, et ce, en dépit de sa petite taille. Monsieur le Premier ministre, la solidarité, l'état de droit et nos valeurs fondamentales sont plus importants que jamais dans un monde en mutation. Je compte sur vous pour continuer à défendre ces principes, en Europe et ailleurs, comme vous l'avez d'ailleurs toujours fait.

La population ukrainienne mérite notre pleine solidarité dans sa lutte contre l'agresseur russe et dans la défense de nos valeurs. Il est indispensable, comme vous l'avez dit, de préserver l'unité européenne sur cette question. La solidarité demande également une lutte déterminée contre les inégalités sociales. L'approfondissement de la dimension sociale de l'Europe, comme l'ont d'ailleurs revendiqué les citoyens lors de la conférence sur l'avenir de l'Europe, est crucial. Et la conférence était un formidable exercice, à l'occasion duquel nous avons laissé parler des milliers de citoyens.

La solidarité européenne doit également se manifester sur les questions fiscales. Si je salue les réformes considérables mises en œuvre au cours de la dernière décennie au Luxembourg et au sein de l'UE, j'espère que ces efforts seront poursuivis.

Il faut également étendre notre solidarité à ceux et celles qui fuient la guerre et la persécution. Mon groupe des Socialistes et Démocrates se félicite que le Luxembourg continue à défendre une position humaine dans un débat dont le ton ne cesse de durcir au Conseil. Il est d'ailleurs d'une importance capitale, comme vous l'avez souligné, de trouver un accord sur le pacte migratoire avant les élections européennes.

Monsieur le Premier Ministre, l'Union européenne se dote d'objectifs ambitieux, que ce soit en matière de lutte contre le changement climatique, de numérisation ou de défense. Et, pour cela, elle doit se renouveler, adapter ses règles de fonctionnement, sa gouvernance économique et sociale, redéfinir le cadre de ses ressources budgétaires et, le cas échéant, modifier les traités. J'espère que le Luxembourg sera prêt, une fois de plus, à soutenir et à promouvoir des approches ambitieuses dans l'intérêt européen.

Charles Goerens (Renew). – Madame la Présidente, permettez-moi de commencer par une citation de notre ami Philippe Lamberts en vous adressant, Monsieur le Premier Ministre, un chaleureux «*Gudde moien*» à vous et à votre équipe.

On peut s'interroger sur la valeur ajoutée d'un petit pays dans un monde où tout semble se réduire à un rapport de force: Chine-USA, pays agresseurs contre pays opprimés, régimes autoritaires contre démocraties libérales... Eh bien, la valeur ajoutée d'un petit État, c'est son refus de s'accommoder d'un monde dans lequel comptent essentiellement le nombre de coups de canon, la capacité de désinformation ou ses moyens d'intimidation. Entendons-nous bien: un pays n'est pas forcément vertueux parce qu'il est plus petit, loin s'en faut! Un pays n'est pas forcément exemplaire parce qu'il ne dispose pas des moyens pour écraser les autres. Mais un petit pays peut être utile, voire très utile parce qu'il sait appréhender à un stade précoce des menaces existentielles que font peser sur lui les petites, moyennes et grandes puissances.

Le Premier ministre d'un petit État sait donc de quoi il parle lorsqu'il essaie de convaincre les autres (qui, pour ainsi dire, sont tous plus grands que lui) du caractère indispensable de l'intégration européenne. Comme ses concitoyens, il éprouve le besoin de s'unir, de coopérer, de mutualiser les efforts des 27 et, surtout, d'alerter ses partenaires sur les conséquences de la non-action, de la non-Europe.

L'intégration européenne est donc une réponse? Non, c'est la réponse à toutes ces inquiétudes. Vous en voulez une preuve? Eh bien, Robert Schuman, ministre des affaires étrangères d'un grand pays, a vécu ses vingt premières années dans le pays qui est le mien, qui est celui de Xavier, qui est celui de ses prédécesseurs Jean-Claude Juncker, Jacques Santer, Gaston Thorn et Pierre Werner. Croyez-vous qu'il s'agisse d'un hasard si nous les avons tous vus ou si nous les voyons tous tiquer de la même façon, privilégier en toutes circonstances le droit plutôt que la force, le frottement aux dures réalités d'un monde où seuls semblent compter les rapports de force?

Il me semble judicieux de rappeler à ceux qui sont grands au sein de l'Union européenne qu'il y a encore plus grand qu'eux à l'extérieur de celle-ci.

Tilly Metz (Verts/ALE). – Madame la Présidente, Monsieur le Commissaire, cher Premier Ministre – *moien, léiwe Xavier* –, c'est toujours un plaisir de te voir au Parlement européen. Historiquement et encore aujourd'hui, le Luxembourg est au cœur du projet européen, et nous devons faire honneur à notre rôle en tant que l'une des trois capitales européennes.

Dans notre Union de 27, même un petit pays comme le nôtre a sa place dans les négociations et peut changer la donne. Je suis bien sûr fier de l'engagement du gouvernement luxembourgeois contre le nucléaire, qui, nous sommes d'accord, n'est ni vert, ni sûr, ni renouvelable. Merci, donc, pour le soutien que tu apportes à notre ministre de l'énergie, M. Claude Turmes, et à la plainte contre la taxonomie.

Alors parlons de finance: en tant qu'un des plus grands marchés financiers en Europe, nous avons une responsabilité particulière pour mettre en œuvre la transition écologique et promouvoir la justice sociale aussi au-delà de l'Union. C'est pourquoi je souhaiterais que le Luxembourg joue un rôle précurseur en ce qui concerne le devoir de vigilance des entreprises. Est-ce que le Luxembourg soutiendra finalement l'inclusion du secteur financier dans cette directive? La directive est justement l'occasion pour le Luxembourg de se positionner clairement en tant que leader en matière de finance réellement durable, respectueuse des droits de l'homme et du droit de l'environnement.

Jorge Buxadé Villalba (ECR). – Señor presidente, señor Bettel, es usted presidente de un país fundador de la Comunidad Europea. ¿Por qué traicionar el Tratado constitutivo?

Europa son sus naciones; es el progreso económico y social de los Estados miembros, no un poder secuestrado por las élites al servicio de una agenda globalista.

Europa es un espacio de libertad, no una ciénaga de colectivos autoproclamados vulnerables que quieren imponer su dictadura particular sobre la mayoría de los europeos.

Europa es un espacio de seguridad, no un lugar donde se asaltan las fronteras y se aplaude a los asaltantes.

Europa es el esfuerzo por la constante mejora de las condiciones de vida y de trabajo, los intercambios comerciales equilibrados, la competencia leal y el desarrollo económico sostenible, y no la aprobación de normas que mutilan el crecimiento de nuestras empresas y les impiden competir en condiciones de igualdad con la excusa climática.

Europa es solidaridad entre naciones europeas y no criminalizar a Hungría, a Polonia, a Italia, mientras riegan de dinero europeo a Marruecos para que sus productos invadan de forma ilegal nuestros supermercados.

Europa es el respeto a la Carta de las Naciones Unidas, la vida, la familia y la dignidad de todos los hombres.

Europa es libertad de pensamiento y no cultura de cancelación. Es una cruz en cada pueblo, desde el cabo Norte hasta Ceuta y Melilla... *(la presidenta retira la palabra al orador).*

Anders Vistisen (ID). – Fru. formand! Hr. premierminister! Flygtninge- og migrantkrisen i Europa er igen på vej fuldstændig ud af kontrol. Vi oplever kvinder, mænd, ja endda børn drukne i Middelhavet hver eneste dag. Vi oplever gang på gang, at menneskesmuglerne og despoterne, der bor i vores nærområde i Tyrkiet, i Nordafrika, kun bliver rigere og rigere. Og vi oplever den kulturelle indvirkning, som så mange velfærdsmigranter – hvilket de fleste af dem, der kommer til Europa, jo er, når vi ser på asylraterne – har her på kontinentet, har på de europæiske landes befolkninger, har på samhørigheden og på fællesskabet. Derfor har vi i Dansk Folkeparti og ID-gruppen længe haft en løsning, som løser problemet. Vi ved det: Den australske model, hvor man har en push-back, og hvor man har asylbehandling i tredjelande, vil effektivt løse udfordringerne med kriminalitet, med ulovlig migration og med den kulturelle påvirkning, det har på det europæiske kontinent. Vi er i Dansk Folkeparti glade for, at den danske regering, der jo består af gode kollegaer her fra Europa-Parlamentet som de danske socialdemokrater, Venstre og Moderaterne, der sidder hos Renew, nu officielt går ind for at indføre en form for australsk model på europæisk plan. Derfor håber vi også, at den danske regerings forslag kan nyde fremme i Rådet, fordi vi ved, hvor håbløst dette Parlament er, når det kommer til at tackle de virkelige problemer, når det kommer til den europæiske migrantudfordring. Problemet er, at de svageste flygtninge, dem, der har det allerværst, dem, der ikke har midlerne til menneskesmuglere, dem, der ikke kan klare sig igennem ørkenen, alle dem, der virkelig har brug for vores beskyttelse, dem efterlader vi i lejrene, hvor imod de stærke, dem, der har midlerne, dem, der kan hjælpe menneskesmuglerne med deres modbydelige forretningsmodel, de får i alt for høj grad adgang til Europa. Jeg håber i det mindste, at Luxembourg vil vågne op og følge det danske eksempel.

Marc Botenga (The Left). – Madame la Présidente, Monsieur le Premier Ministre, bonjour, bienvenue. Nous appartenons à des camps politiques différents. Nous défendons le camp de la classe travailleuse. Vous êtes plutôt du côté de l'évasion fiscale des banquiers, mais vous avez donné une leçon importante, je pense, à la Commission européenne et à certains de mes collègues, et je vous en remercie. Parce que vous savez que la Commission européenne a parlé d'interdire TikTok, qui «collecte des données» ont-ils dit. Bon, c'est sans doute vrai, on n'a aucune confiance dans cette multinationale, mais Google, Facebook ne font pas mieux. Moi, hier soir, j'ai essayé d'acheter des chaussures sur Google. Ce matin, je me suis retrouvé avec un fil d'actu rempli de pubs pour les nouvelles chaussures. Bon voilà, on ne peut pas non plus faire confiance à ces gens-là. Mais, bizarrement, la Commission européenne n'appelle pas à interdire Facebook, Google et autres.

En fait, soyons honnêtes, quand la Commission appelle à interdire TikTok, elle obéit aux États-Unis. Les États-Unis ont peur de TikTok parce que beaucoup de gens, notamment des jeunes, préfèrent aujourd'hui TikTok à Facebook et autres. Et les États-Unis aimeraient bien que nous nous limitions à utiliser des produits américains, que nous nous limitions à consommer de l'information américaine pour nous rendre complètement dépendants d'eux. Or, dans une vision d'auto-économie stratégique européenne, cette vision-là n'a effectivement pas sa place. La Commission obéit, mais vous, vous avez dit, je n'interdis pas TikTok juste parce que c'est chinois. Vous avez raison, il faut protéger nos données de tous les réseaux sociaux. On ne va pas se faire donner la leçon par des boomers américains qui ne savent pas si TikTok se connecte ou pas à un WiFi. Franchement, l'Europe vaut mieux que cela.

Tamás Deutsch (NI). – Elnök Asszony! Luxemburg az európai közösség egyik alapítója. Különös tisztelettel viszonyulunk ezért Önökhöz. Megtisztelő, Miniszterelnök Úr, hogy eszmét tudunk cserélni itt, az Európai Parlamentben. Tisztelt Miniszterelnök Úr, mindig jó hallgatni, amikor a megtalált és vállalt önzonosságáról beszél, és részben ezzel összefüggésben szót emel a megbélyegzés ellen.

Tisztelt Miniszterelnök Úr, én arra kérem Önt, hogy az Öntől eltérő önzonossággal, eltérő meggyőződéssel, az Öntől eltérő hittel, az Öntől eltérő politikai véleménnyel bírókat ne bélyegezze meg. Tisztelettel arra kérem Miniszterelnök Urat, hogy – valótlanságot állítva – a magyar gyermekvédelmi törvényt ne minősítse homofób törvénynek, mert a magyar gyermekvédelmi törvény egyetlen egy dologról szól: hogy lehet megvédeni a szülők gyermekek nevelésére vonatkozó, elidegeníthetetlen jogát.

Ioan-Rareș Bogdan (PPE). – Doamna președintă, Luxemburg este statul cel mai eurooptimist din UE, iar România este acum, după decizia nedreaptă din decembrie pe extinderea Schengen, cel mai europesimist, după ce timp de 15 ani a fost în top 5 cele mai optimiste țări pro-europene. Nimeni nu poate anticipa decât o stare de îngrijorare care crește la București.

România au fost loviți cumplit de eurosistem prin neacceptarea lor în spațiul Schengen. Asta după ce au fost tratați ca popor european de mâna a doua, prin subvențiile mult mai mici pentru fermieri. Sunt doar două exemple, dar lista e lungă. Cred că se produc niște negocieri subterane peste capul cetățenilor europeni din Est, ignorând dorința lor de demnitate. În fotbal, acestea se numesc blaturi. Când se vor termina aceste negocieri scandaloase care ignoră aspirația românilor? Cine decide peste capetele lor, în numele lor, că legislația europeană Schengen trebuie ignorată cu brio?

Dacă în loc de România ar fi fost Germania sau Franța sau Olanda sau Austria, tot așa s-ar fi petrecut lucrurile? Ei bine, România nu este o țară de mâna a doua și face față cu brio în criza geostrategică declanșată de Putin. Refugiații ucraineni au găsit ajutor în România și asta înainte ca Uniunea să deblocheze banii pentru ei. România este principalul sprijin al Republicii Moldova pentru a rezista șantajului Moscovei. Dacă nu ieșim din era ipocriziei, dacă nu ne întoarcem cu fața către problemele reale ale cetățenilor europeni, dacă nu realizăm că Rusia aplică principiul *divide et impera*, ne va costa scump și nu vom mai putea decât să constatăm că Uniunea Europeană este slăbită în primul rând din interior, prin indecizia unora și decizia ticăloasă a altora.

Instituțiile reprezentative ale Uniunii Europene trebuie să-i trateze pe cetățeni în mod egal. Acum nu o fac. Aud discursuri despre o politică comună în privința frontierelor și despre garduri. Despre ce politică comună vorbim? Există garduri chiar acum în interiorul UE, de care transportatorii români nu pot trece decât după cozi kilometrice la granițele Schengen. Domnul Bettel a spus că Uniunea Europeană este puternică doar dacă este unită. Sunt de acord, dar fără România în Schengen, Uniunea ...*(Președinta a retras cuvântul vorbitorului)*.

Gabriele Bischoff (S&D). – Frau Präsidentin! Herr Premierminister Bettel, Ihre Rede hat gutgetan. Ein Jahr vor der Europawahl – ich meine, bei einigen geht da schon wieder der Populismus-Booster an. Andere reden von Selbstreflexion und wissen noch nicht einmal, wie man das buchstabiert. Sie haben mit einer Selbstreflexion angefangen, den Lehren, die wir aus COVID gezogen haben: erst Grenzen dichtmachen, dann Impfstoffe gemeinsam beschaffen – das ist der Weg. Aber das heißt auch, dass wir mehr Kompetenzen brauchen für zukünftige Pandemien, um diese grenzüberschreitend zu bekämpfen.

Mir hat auch gefallen, dass Sie noch einmal dafür plädiert haben, keine Angst vor den Bürgern zu haben. Wir haben die Zukunftskonferenz gehabt. Ich glaube, niemand hier im Raum hat Angst vor den Vorschlägen der Bürgerinnen und Bürger. Im Gegenteil: Wir sind dabei, sie umzusetzen. Aber ich würde mir wünschen – ich glaube, es ist notwendig –, im Rat noch stärker die Ängste zu nehmen vor den Vorschlägen der Bürgerinnen und Bürger. Wir brauchen auch einen Konvent, um die Herzammer der Demokratie zu stärken. Wie schätzen Sie das ein, dass man doch noch eine Mehrheit dafür gewinnen kann?

Ilhan Kyuchyuk (Renew). – Madam President, as I promised, I will stick to my two minutes, and Prime Minister, great to be here with you and to discuss Europe's issues and I want to thank you for your great leadership. Finally you will have the opportunity to speak in front of the full plenary in a couple of minutes and we will hear your final conclusions.

The think tank of the Liberals – ‘Overview’ – this month is entitled ‘Facing Permacrisis: to Stay the Same, the EU Needs to Change’. I couldn’t agree more. This impact of the coronavirus, inflation crisis, energy crisis, certainly the war in Ukraine: only those events in the last three years are enough to shake up our perceptions of Europe of tomorrow.

Let me start by thanking you on your leadership on migration. You spoke at length about migration. After years of deliberation, compromises, redrafting, we need to make sure that we finally have a place where clear, fair and humane rules of migration are in place for Europe. Building higher walls only provides a false sense of security.

Another extremely important and long-awaited segment that finally needs to find resolution is achieving full integration of Europe: a better integrated single market capable to resist the competitive distractions; a strong and completed euro-zone; but most importantly, the Schengen Area – we simply cannot continue talking about equality in the Union if we don’t have all the Member States part of the Schengen Area. And third, necessary is to making a full use of the rule of law framework.

Lastly, we cannot punish the countries aspiring to join the European Union for our need of reforming its infrastructure. Europe is not complete without having the Balkans, and Europe is not going to be complete without having Ukraine. Together, we can move forward with our friends and partners, with aligning to the European policies and thank you again for taking leadership on many of them.

Rasmus Andresen (Verts/ALE). – Frau Präsidentin! Sehr geehrter Herr Premierminister, in Ihrer letzten Rede hier bei uns im Parlament vor einigen Monaten erinnerten Sie uns alle an unser gemeinsames europäisches historisches Erbe. Sie haben in deutlichen Worten gemahnt und verurteilt, dass der Faschismus in Europa normalisiert und verharmlost wird.

Und in der Tat befinden wir uns zurzeit in einer sehr grundsätzlichen Auseinandersetzung. In einigen Mitgliedstaaten entstehen Bündnisse unter Einbeziehung von Parteien, die einen faschistischen Ursprung haben oder die geschichtsvergessen unsere europäische Demokratie bekämpfen. Sie wollen ein Europa der Nationen, von denen nur wenige profitieren und fast alle verlieren. Sie beginnen mit Angriffen auf Minderheiten und auf Medien – so wie wir es aktuell in Italien erleben, wo Regenbogenfamilien diskriminiert werden, absurde nationalistische Sprachgesetze eingebracht und wo freie Journalistinnen und Journalisten unter Druck gesetzt werden. Es muss unsere gemeinsame demokratische Aufgabe sein, dagegen aufzustehen. Deshalb ist es umso schockierender, dass Konservative und leider auch einige Liberale Bündnisse mit diesen Parteien planen. Die Brandmauer gegen rechts darf nicht fallen!

Dominik Tarczyński (ECR). – Madam President, this is a very important debate about the future of Europe. This is a very important debate and I cannot hear the answer for the very fundamental question: what kind of future do you want for Europe? Do you want to build on the foundation of the European history, on Greek philosophers, Roman law, Christian culture, or do you want to continue with your politics, which led us to no-go zones in Sweden, burning suburbs in Paris, terrorist attacks in Germany and Spain?

So maybe you should focus on the legacy of John Paul II, Copernicus, Chopin. Maybe you should go back to the roots before we’re going to discuss the future. So maybe you should be like Poland – with the lowest unemployment in European Union. Maybe you would like to be number one as the safest place in Europe. So if you want to have a future for Europe, be like Poland, because Poland is the future.

Jörg Meuthen (NI). – Frau Präsidentin! Herr Premierminister, mein Respekt für Ihre Rede. Das war erfrischend freiheitlich – da habe ich mich gefreut. Die Vielzahl von Krisen in der Welt wirft gleichwohl Fragen auf, wie sich Europa in Zukunft außenpolitisch aufstellen soll. Die Kernfrage lautet: Wie muss die EU gestaltet sein, um auf diese Krisen erfolgreich zu reagieren? Die reflexartige Antwort – auch von Ihnen, Herr Bettel – heißt stets: mehr EU, mehr Zentralismus und zugleich eine blindwütige Haltungs- und Bekenntnisattitüde, wo doch allein Realpolitik und Pragmatismus gefordert wären.

Die EU ist – sehen wir der Wahrheit ins Auge – heute wirtschaftlich ein kranker Riese, der global immer weiter an Boden verliert, und politisch ein Zwerg, den niemand mehr wirklich ernst nimmt. Das hat Frau von der Leyen ja vor zwei Wochen erst in Peking schmerzhaft und bis ins Peinliche reichend erfahren und wenige Tage später die deutsche Außenministerin, die international sowieso nur belächelt wird, am gleichen Ort dann ebenfalls. Die EU muss endlich lernen, eine von Interessensausgleich und pragmatischem Realismus geleitete Außenpolitik zu betreiben. Es muss Schluss sein mit Belehrungen, Moralpredigten und gänzlich unangebrachter europäischer Arroganz. Sonst macht die EU sich international zum Gespött. So sollte ...

(Die Präsidentin entzieht dem Redner das Wort.)

Benoît Lutgen (PPE). – Madame la Présidente, Monsieur le Premier Ministre – *gudde moien*, cher Xavier –, d'abord bravo, évidemment, pour vous inscrire dans la tradition du Grand-duché de Luxembourg de défense des valeurs européennes et de l'esprit européen, et de défense des minorités, notamment. Cela étant, Monsieur le Premier Ministre, je pense qu'il est vraiment essentiel que vous vous inscriviez aussi dans une autonomie stratégique non pas ouverte mais ferme, solide, dans différents secteurs pour l'Europe: l'alimentation, l'énergie, la défense – trois secteurs qui sont essentiels pour le développement de l'Europe entière.

Je ne vous ai pas entendu, Monsieur le Premier ministre – et j'en suis déçu –, je ne vous ai pas entendu parler de la politique agricole, essentielle. Comment pouvons-nous réussir la politique de changement climatique sans parler des agriculteurs, des hommes et des femmes qui se battent chaque jour pour nous nourrir? Je pense qu'il est vraiment important que, au-delà des valeurs que nous défendons, nous défendions chaque Européen, que, où qu'il se trouve géographiquement, chaque Européen considère l'Europe comme une chance, et que nous leur apportions tout notre soutien là où ils se trouvent. C'est comme cela que nous défendrons l'Union européenne.

Alex Agius Saliba (S&D). – Sinjura President, grazzi Prim Ministru li tinsab maghna llum.

Sabiex il-proġett Ewropew jibqa' wiehed relevanti, irridu nitkellmu fuq il-prijoritajiet tan-nies. U wahda mill-akbar pri-joritajiet illi n-nies qeghdin, u ċ-ċittadini qeghdin jirkellmu dwarha hija l-prijorità li nsahhu l-qasam soċjali fuq bażi Ewropea, f'sitwazzjoni fejn għandna rati ta' inflazzjoni għoljin hafna, prezzijiet għoljin tal-enerġija u tal-ikel, zieda tal-qgħad, zieda fil-faqar u zieda fl-inugwaljanzi soċjali u l-gwerra fl-Ukrajna.

Allura huwa importanti li l-prinċipji tal-Pilastru Ewropew tad-Drittijiet Soċjali, l-SDGs, ikomplu jkunu l-boxxla li tigg-wida r-riformi u l-investimenti.

Id-drittijiet soċjali għandu jkollhom l-istess importanza bhall-miri makroekonomiċi u ambjentali bil-għan komuni illi jittiejeb il-benesseri taċ-ċittadini Ewropej tagħna.

U allura nixtieq ukoll nistaqsik x'inhuma u x'għandhom ikunu l-prijoritajiet tagħna bhalissa bhala Ewropej ukoll, fejn għandu x'jaqsam ukoll il-qasam soċjali, anke illi koinċidentalment għandna wkoll Kummissarju responsabbli mill-qasam soċjali li qed jagħmel biċċa xogħol tajba, li huwa Lussemburgiz ukoll.

Carles Puigdemont i Casamajó (NI). – Madame la Présidente, Monsieur le Premier Ministre, j'ai demandé à intervenir dans ce débat parce que j'attends depuis cinq mois l'occasion de vous remercier du discours que vous avez prononcé lors du 70e anniversaire du Parlement européen. Vous avez donné espoir à beaucoup d'entre nous, qui sommes fatigués d'écouter, de la bouche de nos dirigeants européens, des discours à ce point prévisibles et standardisés qu'ils pourraient bien avoir été rédigés par le désormais célèbre ChatGPT.

Aujourd'hui, vous avez souligné, comme il y a cinq mois, l'importance du respect des minorités, qu'elles soient sexuelles, ethniques, religieuses ou politiques, pour la paix entre les peuples de l'Europe. J'ai rarement entendu cela avec la conviction que vous avez, et que vous savez transmettre.

Je vous demande de continuer à utiliser votre voix pour nous rappeler, comme vous l'avez dit, que ni les droits ni la paix ne sont des acquis définitifs et que nous devons nous battre sincèrement pour les défendre chaque jour.

Siegfried Mureşan (PPE). – Madam President, thank you, Prime Minister Bettel, and many thanks to the people of Luxembourg for being excellent hosts to the European Parliament and to many institutions of the European Union for more than 70 years. The people of Luxembourg have always been at the forefront of European integration and at the forefront of defending European values. Let us stick together in defending Europe against extremism, against euroscepticism, against division and against exclusion. Let us fight together for European values, for our democracy, for our institutions, for the values of the free world.

And let me say that defending our European way of life requires efforts, and sometimes it also requires costs. Safety, security and defence is something important to my political family, to the European People's Party, and we have to work on this together. This is why my plea to you, Prime Minister: battle that Luxembourg increases also its commitment to safety, security and to defence spending, as we have all agreed in NATO to allocate 2% of our GDP to defence. The people of Ukraine are fighting for a European way of life. We should also defend our security here in Europe and at our borders.

Brando Benifei (S&D). – Signora Presidente, signor Presidente Bettel, bentornato al Parlamento europeo.

Il Suo paese, il Lussemburgo, è stato centrale nella costruzione dell'integrazione europea insieme a tanti altri paesi. Oggi siamo una grande Unione, ma abbiamo bisogno di più coraggio, dal Suo paese e da tanti altri, da tanti governi, dal Consiglio.

L'8 e il 9 maggio per la festa dell'Europa saranno qui a manifestare a Strasburgo centinaia, migliaia di cittadini e di associazioni, lo stanno facendo in ogni angolo d'Europa per un'Europa più unita e un'Europa federale. Sono le nuove generazioni che ci chiedono decisioni rapide, senza veti sui temi cruciali dei diritti sociali, dei diritti climatici, della giustizia fiscale, dei diritti civili, del cambiamento istituzionale dell'Europa perché sia più forte.

La Conferenza sul futuro dell'Europa ha indicato la strada da seguire. Apriamo una convenzione per la riforma dei trattati, che dia vita a una vera integrazione europea, rispettando anche le differenze.

Non mettiamo il veto sul futuro dei cittadini europei, ascoltiamo le loro richieste per un'Europa più unita, perché altrimenti l'alternativa è il nazionalismo, e il nazionalismo, lo sappiamo bene, è la guerra.

Λουκάς Φουρλάς (PPE). – Κύριε Πρόεδρε, σας καλωσορίζω στο Ευρωπαϊκό Κοινοβούλιο.

Ως ευρωβουλευτής που προέρχομαι από μια μικρή χώρα, την Κύπρο, χαιρετίζω τον ηγέτη μιας άλλης μικρής ευρωπαϊκής χώρας, με μεγάλη όμως προσφορά στο ευρωπαϊκό γίγνεσθαι. Αυτό που μας ενώνει στην Ευρώπη είναι οι αρχές και αξίες της, αυτές τις οποίες όλοι οφείλουμε να πρεσβεύουμε.

Προερχόμενος από μια μικρή χώρα, κύριε Πρωθυπουργέ, θέλω να δηλώσω εμφαντικά ότι η αλληλεγγύη ερμηνεύεται για μας πολλές φορές ως διασφάλιση της ύπαρξής μας. Δυστυχώς δεν μπορώ να πω ότι εμείς, τα μικρά κράτη μέλη, λαμβάναμε όση αλληλεγγύη ή στήριξη μας αναλογεί. Θέλω να σας ευχαριστήσω θερμά για τη στάση αρχών που τηρεί η χώρα σας στο Κυπριακό, ένα πρόβλημα εισβολής και κατοχής. Σας ευχαριστώ ακόμα και για τη στάση που τηρεί η χώρα σας στο σοβαρότατο θέμα του μεταναστευτικού. Ως μικρή χώρα έχουμε αφενά να παλεύουμε μόνοι μας, λαμβάνοντας μέχρι στιγμής μόνο φραστική στήριξη, χωρίς να έχουν δοθεί ουσιαστικές λύσεις.

Γιατί μόνο με έμπρακτες και συγκεκριμένες ενέργειες στήριξης προς τα μικρά κράτη μέλη μπορεί να επιτευχθεί η πραγματική αλληλεγγύη και η ευρωπαϊκή ολοκλήρωση, όπως την περιγράψατε προηγουμένως. Αλλιώς θα μιλάμε απλά για μια Ευρώπη των λίγων και των ισχυρών, κάτι που είμαι σίγουρος ότι ούτε εσείς ούτε και εμείς αποδεχόμαστε.

Christophe Hansen (PPE). – Madame la Présidente. Monsieur le Premier Ministre, c'est un plaisir de vous voir, pour la troisième fois déjà en une année, ici, devant cette plénière. Je pense que c'est une preuve du respect que vous témoignez envers notre institution. Certains n'ont pas forcément montré le même respect à votre égard en attaquant la politique du Luxembourg, notre pays, et je le regrette, parce que nous sommes ici pour discuter aussi de l'avenir de l'Union européenne, et je pense que le plan de relance européen a été l'un des plus grands approfondissements de notre Union européenne au xxie siècle.

Ma première question pour vous est donc la suivante: quelles seraient les prochaines étapes pour un approfondissement encore plus important, et quel serait le prochain approfondissement que vous voyez?

Une deuxième question, qui évidemment est très importante dans la politique étrangère et de sécurité, concerne le principe de l'unanimité qui, à mon avis, est contre-productif. Quelle est votre position, et quelles seraient les actions à prendre pour se débarrasser de ce système de l'unanimité?

Une troisième question, enfin, eu égard à ce que vous avez dit sur le fait d'être proche des citoyens. Si on parle aux citoyens, évidemment, on a parfois un problème de représentativité et de démocratie, parce qu'on avait, par exemple, le système des Spitzenkandidaten, que les citoyens nous disent soutenir. Quelle serait votre position, l'année prochaine, si on rediscute du Spitzenkandidat? Est-ce que vous l'acceptez, Monsieur Bettel?

Xavier Bettel, *Premier ministre du Luxembourg*. – Madame la Présidente, tout d'abord je tiens à remercier tous les orateurs d'avoir pris la parole et je me permettrai de rebondir. Je ne sais pas si M^{me} Aubry est là. Car M^{me} Aubry a attaqué mon pays. Mais je me rappelle, j'ai eu le même scénario, Madame la Présidente, il y a quelques années, sauf que cela venait de l'autre extrême. C'était M^{me} Le Pen. Aujourd'hui, M^{me} Le Pen n'est pas là, et M^{me} Aubry m'a posé une devinette. J'en ai une autre: qui tient le même discours que M^{me} Le Pen, et depuis quatre ans? C'est M^{me} Aubry.

(Applaudissements)

De plus, Madame la Présidente, elle est absente quand on veut répondre. Donc, je lui ferai part de ma réponse par écrit. J'ai eu plein de questions, donc permettez-moi de le dire: concernant la transparence fiscale, le Luxembourg a ratifié en 2019 la convention multilatérale. Nous avons, en décembre 2022, adopté la directive relative à l'imposition minimale. Nous sommes actifs au niveau de l'OCDE sur le pilier A de la réforme fiscale internationale. Le Luxembourg fait donc partie de la solution de la lutte contre l'évasion fiscale et la planification fiscale agressive. Et cela fait des années que nous ne sommes plus le problème, donc il serait important de se remettre à jour aussi sur tous les changements qui ont été faits au Grand-Duché de Luxembourg.

J'ai eu plusieurs questions; je vais plutôt commencer par la fin. M. Lutgen a parlé de l'agriculture. Il faut arrêter de penser qu'économie, écologie et agriculture sont trois ennemis. Au contraire: l'opportunité économique est énorme avec l'écologie. Est-ce que certains pensent que l'écologie, l'économie et l'agriculture vont l'une contre l'autre? On ne réussira pas le changement climatique sans l'économie de même qu'on ne le réussira pas sans l'agriculture. Donc, voyons-y plutôt des partenaires que des ennemis.

On a besoin d'une agriculture qui fonctionne et on sait aussi qu'on peut produire autrement et que le citoyen, le consommateur, s'attend aussi à ce que l'on fasse attention à ce qu'il a dans l'assiette. Certes, le prix existe, et il est important pour beaucoup de citoyens, mais la qualité aussi est importante, et on ne peut pas dire que les agriculteurs soient fautifs, car, s'il y a bien une catégorie professionnelle qui souffre du changement climatique, Madame la Présidente, ce sont les agriculteurs. Ce sont eux qui ne pourront plus produire si le changement climatique rend les champs infertiles. Donc, pensons aussi à eux quand on parle du changement climatique.

Plusieurs collègues m'ont posé des questions sur les changements que l'on souhaite opérer quant à l'avenir de l'Europe. Il y a beaucoup de questions, en effet – les quatre priorités, les quatre chapitres... Je pense que la Commission prépare aussi des changements au niveau législatif, et il faut les encourager. Moi, si vous me posez la question, je recommanderais de ne pas changer les traités maintenant. Je vous le dis personnellement. Pourquoi? Parce que je sais que, dans un certain nombre d'États, il y aura des référendums qui seront organisés. Et je pense que, aujourd'hui, là où on peut avancer, on doit avancer, on doit le faire. Mais faire des changements dans les traités aujourd'hui serait risqué. Cela risquerait de bloquer, en fait, toute évolution future. Mettons-nous donc autour de la table, voyons ce que l'on peut changer sans changer les traités et avec des procédures législatives, afin d'avancer.

Vous avez posé la question des listes transnationales et des *Spitzenkandidaten*. Je dois vous dire personnellement que les listes transnationales, si on veut les faire, elles doivent être transnationales. Ce ne doit pas être régional, ce doit être une liste, si on veut le faire, de 27 candidats de 27 pays différents. Et, dans ce cas-là, il y aura un *Spitzenkandidat*, car on a aujourd'hui des *Spitzenkandidaten* qui ne sont candidats nulle part ou alors qui ne sont pas sur les listes de tous. Donc, si on veut avoir un *Spitzenkandidat* au niveau européen, il faut que les partis se mettent d'accord, qu'il y ait une liste qui soit représentée dans chaque pays avec 27 candidats dessus, qu'on ait une voix pour ces députés européens, où on choisit qui on veut élire, et une autre liste européenne transnationale avec 27 candidats, qu'il y ait les étiquettes des différents partis qu'ils représentent, qu'ils s'identifient et qu'on les élise. Dans ce cas-là, c'est la seule chose qui peut être faite, sinon ça ne sert à rien, sinon on va faire du tricotage et du bricolage, et je pense que cela n'avancera à rien.

Concernant la réunion de Xi Jinping et de Joe Biden, que j'ai sollicité, je vois qu'actuellement il y a des gens qui meurent tous les jours en Ukraine, tous les jours. La première chose qui aiderait l'Ukraine, c'est un cessez-le-feu. C'est mon intime conviction: un cessez-le-feu est important si on veut arrêter le bain de sang. Et c'est pour cela que je vois aujourd'hui le président Poutine – et je le sais, j'ai été critiqué pour cela, mais je ne le regrette pas.

J'ai au début été en contact avec le président Zelensky et, à la demande du président Zelensky, j'ai aussi été en contact avec le président Poutine. Et je trouvais important de voir s'il y avait une chance de pouvoir peut-être trouver une solution. J'ai abandonné quand j'ai vu qu'il n'y avait pas de volonté du côté russe de trouver une solution pacifique à ce conflit, et surtout après ce qui s'est passé à Boutcha. Pour moi, le respect, tout simplement, n'était plus là pour pouvoir travailler, discuter ou essayer de trouver une solution ensemble.

Aujourd'hui, donc, je vois qu'il y a d'un côté la Russie et de l'autre l'Ukraine. Je suis du côté ukrainien et je suis fier que dans la plupart des partis politiques, nous soyons conscients que, si aujourd'hui nous sommes une démocratie sur ce continent, c'est que nous avons eu, à l'époque de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, d'autres pays qui sont venus nous défendre. J'ai un cimetière au Luxembourg qui est rempli de soldats américains, dont la plupart ne savaient pas où était mon pays. Ce sont eux qui sont venus me défendre par rapport au nazisme. Et si, à l'époque, d'autres – des Canadiens, des Britanniques, d'autres Américains – n'étaient pas venus, le Luxembourg ne serait pas une démocratie aujourd'hui.

(Applaudissements)

On ne peut pas accepter qu'un autre pays, plus grand, décide quel est l'avenir d'un pays voisin. On doit donc continuer à apporter notre soutien, et je pense qu'aujourd'hui les deux personnes qui auraient le plus d'influence – et c'est cela ce que je dis – pour qu'advienne un cessez-le-feu, ce sont le président chinois et le président Biden. Je l'ai dit et je le répète.

Concernant la Roumanie et la Bulgarie, le Luxembourg ne s'est jamais opposé à leur entrée dans Schengen. Je ne prendrai par ailleurs jamais une raison de politique nationale pour bloquer l'accès à Schengen des uns ou des autres.

Concernant la politique étrangère, le Grand-Duché de Luxembourg – et cela est dans notre accord de coalition – est d'avis que la majorité qualifiée pourrait être une solution, et je pense qu'il est important d'aller de l'avant. Madame la Présidente, je sais que vous avez encore un ordre du jour assez long. Pour moi, l'échange, le fait de pouvoir être aujourd'hui devant vous, c'est quelque chose d'important.

Je ne demande à personne de partager mes positions, de dire que celles de l'un ou de l'autre sont bonnes. Je vais vous dire, cela m'a choqué, Madame la Présidente, d'entendre quelqu'un dire ici, devant cette assemblée, que son pays était un exemple et qu'il fallait le suivre. Moi, je suis fier que l'Union européenne, ce soit 27 pays différents, des langues différentes, des cultures différentes, des valeurs différentes, des opinions différentes, des religions différentes, des origines différentes, et que l'on n'ait pas un moule, où l'on aimerait que tous se ressemblent. Ce serait la fin de l'Europe. Je suis fier de notre diversité.

La Présidente. – Merci beaucoup. Merci beaucoup, Monsieur le Premier Ministre.

Le débat est clos.

Déclarations écrites (article 171)

Victor Negrescu (S&D), în scris. – Aderarea României la spațiul Schengen este un drept. Țara noastră respectă de peste 12 ani toate criteriile tehnice și orice întârziere a aderării înseamnă o încălcare flagrantă și continuă a principiilor de bază ale UE. De aceea, trebuie să încetăm să avem guverne politice în Europa care țin Uniunea Europeană prizonieră. De exemplu, argumentele folosite de către guvernul de dreapta din Austria pentru veto-ul aplicat României nu au, de fapt, nicio legătură cu realitatea sau datele oficiale prezentate de Comisia Europeană.

Țara noastră nu poartă responsabilitatea eventualelor probleme din spațiul Schengen, reclamate de guvernul austriac, fiind în afara zonei de liberă circulație. Chiar și astăzi vedem aceeași opoziție motivată prin false argumente, care nu face altceva decât să slăbească unitatea europeană și să sădească neîncredere.

Aceste acțiuni, prin care se politizează subiectul Schengen și se instrumentează subiectul migrației, încurajează o retorică populistă și creează un precedent îngrijorător. De aceea, fac apel la solidaritate și insist ca subiectul aderării României la spațiul Schengen să se afle atât pe agenda Consiliului de Justiție și Afaceri Interne din luna iunie, cât și pe cea a Consiliului European, pentru a transmite un mesaj puternic de susținere pentru poporul român, în vederea menținerii credibilității proiectului european.

Marco Zanni (ID), *per iscritto*. – Per l'ennesima volta viene identificato come populismo ogni tipo di opinione divergente da quella principale, anche se basata su dati e studi e non su vane parole.

Relativamente all'immigrazione, vorrei ricordare al Primo ministro che non ne esiste un solo tipo: quella descritta nel suo discorso è la migrazione regolare, che nessuno nel mio partito ha mai voluto bloccare. L'unica che vogliamo fermare è quella irregolare, che alimenta il business del traffico di esseri umani e dello sfruttamento, portando capitali nelle mani di organizzazioni criminali spietate e pronte a tutto pur di avere un profitto.

Aggiungerei una considerazione riguardo all'ingerenza dell'Unione europea in materie di competenza esclusiva degli Stati, che trovo inaccettabile: ci siamo uniti definendo in modo preciso quali fossero i ruoli sia a livello nazionale che delle varie istituzioni e ora, con l'arma del ricatto, volete sostanzialmente costringere gli Stati membri ad adeguare le proprie politiche a quelle prevalenti in UE?

Approcci poco pragmatici e basati sull'ideologia, come quelli appena descritti, sono il modo più sbagliato per rispondere alle esigenze dei cittadini.

8. Statement by the President - 80th anniversary of the Uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto

President. – Dear colleagues, today the European Parliament marks the 80th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. I ask you now to view a short video that commemorates the events of 19 April 1943 in Warsaw.

(A video was shown in the Chamber)

Today we remember. We remember the extraordinary bravery of ordinary people. People who stood up against the odds to light a spark in the darkest of times.

In 1940, Nazi commanders confined more than 400 000 Jews into the Warsaw Ghetto. They were targeted simply because they were Jewish. By autumn 1942, 50 000 Jewish people remained in the so-called residual ghetto, including Bronisław Geremek, a former colleague of ours in this House, who was just 11 years old.

On 19 April 1943, the Jews of Warsaw took up arms against the enemy. Starving women and men took on an army. They knew they could not win. But the enduring symbol of resistance, the power of men and women standing up when there was nothing left to lose, remains an inspiration.

The April Uprising was the largest armed uprising of Jews during the Second World War. In the words of Marek Edelman, whom we just saw: 'We weren't stupid. We knew very well what we were up against.' They did not go gently into the night. They raged against the dying of the light. And 80 years later they inspire us still.

So today we pay tribute to those who fell, with the unwavering hope of resistance against tyranny. With the belief in a lasting symbol of Jewish resistance against the Holocaust. Our Europe is built on their shoulders.

To mark this 80th anniversary, I urge all of you, colleagues, dear Members, to wear a yellow daffodil. They are available at the entrance to this Hemicycle. They were donated by the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews so that we should remember the power of resistance against death, autocracy and dictatorship.

Please join me in rising for a moment of silence as we remember them.

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

(The sitting was suspended for a few moments)

PRESIDENZA DELL'ON. PINA PICIERNO

Vicepresidente

9. Resumption of the sitting

(La seduta è ripresa alle 12.25)

10. Composition of committees and delegations

Presidente. – Care colleghe e cari colleghi, proseguiamo con l'ordine del giorno.

Il gruppo Verts/ALE ha comunicato alla Presidente una decisione relativa alla modifica delle nomine all'interno di una delegazione. Questa decisione sarà inclusa nel verbale della seduta odierna ed entrerà in vigore a decorrere dal presente annuncio.

11. Voting time

Presidente. – L'ordine del giorno reca il turno di votazioni.

(Per i risultati delle votazioni e altri dettagli che le riguardano: vedasi processo verbale)

11.1. Amendments to Parliament's Rules of Procedure concerning question time, the central rostrum, the blue-card procedure, the explanations of votes, the transparency register and the Ombudsman (A9-0072/2023 - Gabriele Bischoff) (vote)

11.2. Protocol Amending the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization (A9-0068/2023 - Bernd Lange) (vote)

11.3. Deforestation Regulation (A9-0219/2022 - Christophe Hansen) (vote)

- 11.4. Methods and procedure for making available own resources based on the Emissions Trading System, the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism and reallocated profits and on the measures to meet cash requirements (A9-0046/2023 - José Manuel Fernandes, Valérie Hayer) (vote)**
- 11.5. Guidelines for the 2024 budget – Section III (A9-0124/2023 - Janusz Lewandowski) (vote)**
- 11.6. Combating discrimination in the EU – the long-awaited horizontal anti-discrimination directive (B9-0201/2023, B9-0202/2023) (vote)**
- 11.7. Challenges facing the Republic of Moldova (B9-0197/2023, RC-B9-0198/2023, B9-0198/2023, B9-0199/2023, B9-0200/2023, B9-0203/2023, B9-0204/2023) (vote)**
- 11.8. EU Rapid Deployment Capacity, EU Battlegroups and Article 44 TEU: the way forward (A9-0077/2023 - Javi López) (vote)**

Presidente. – Con questo si conclude il turno di votazioni.

(La seduta è sospesa per alcuni istanti)

12. Resumption of the sitting

(La seduta à ripresa alle 12.45)

13. Approval of the minutes of the previous sitting

Presidente. – Il processo verbale della seduta di ieri è stato distribuito.

Vi sono osservazioni?

Dichiaro approvato il processo verbale della seduta di ieri.

14. Keeping people healthy, water drinkable and soil liveable: getting rid of forever pollutants and strengthening EU chemical legislation now (topical debate)

Presidente. – L'ordine del giorno reca la discussione su tematiche di attualità (articolo 162 del regolamento) - Mantenere le persone in buona salute, l'acqua potabile e il suolo vivibile: eliminare le sostanze inquinanti eterne e rafforzare la legislazione dell'UE sui prodotti chimici adesso (2023/2664(RSP)).

Marie Toussaint, autrice. – Madame la Présidente, «nous avons rendu la planète inhospitalière à la vie humaine en la contaminant de manière irréversible, ce qui fait que plus rien n'est propre, au point que ce n'est pas assez propre pour être sûr». Ces mots sont ceux du chercheur scientifique Ian Cousins, évoquant les PFAS per- et polyfluorés, une famille de plus de 10 000 substances éminemment toxiques et tellement persistantes qu'elles ne disparaîtront jamais de la Terre. Outre la limite planétaire des produits chimiques, celle sur l'eau douce est également dépassée. L'eau de pluie est simplement devenue impropre à la consommation partout, jusque dans l'Arctique ou sur le plateau tibétain.

Ces polluants éternels sont en effet partout: dans nos ustensiles de cuisine, nos vêtements, nos emballages, nos peintures, nos cosmétiques, nos batteries de voiture, et même nos prothèses dentaires ou notre papier toilette. On retrouve aussi ces polluants éternels dans les pesticides que nous épandons dans nos champs et jusque dans nos utérus.

Le sujet qui nous réunit aujourd'hui est grave, peut-être même le plus grand scandale du xxi^e siècle et des siècles à venir. Derrière cette réalité brute, des vies gâchées, des écosystèmes détruits. Cancers du rein, du sein, des testicules, réduction de la fertilité, de la réponse immunitaire aux vaccins chez les enfants, obésité aussi (un enfant sur trois), maladies de la thyroïde, ou encore risques cardiovasculaires, et tant d'autres maladies, sûrement, pour lesquelles le lien n'est pas encore établi.

Qu'attendons-nous pour sortir de la civilisation des toxiques? Le consortium européen de journalistes The Forever Pollution Project a récemment révélé que 17 000 sites industriels étaient hautement contaminés en Europe et que 21 500 autres étaient susceptibles de l'être – si seulement nous nous donnions la peine d'analyser les pollutions qui s'y trouvent.

Quatre États membres ont récemment demandé l'interdiction totale des substances de la famille PFAS. Je veux ici leur dire tout mon soutien, mais il nous faut agir maintenant, et pas seulement dans quelques années, le temps de traiter la demande de ces quatre États. D'abord parce que, comme pour l'ensemble des substances toxiques, il faut réglementer par famille et non pas par substance, sans quoi les industries substituent simplement une substance interdite par une autre, tout aussi toxique. Ensuite, parce qu'il faut éviter que certaines dérogations nécessaires ne deviennent la règle. Si les industriels pensent l'usage d'un PFAS indispensable, alors ils doivent le démontrer pleinement et le réserver aux usages vitaux, comme la médecine. Évidemment, nous ne pourrons pas nous contenter de l'interdiction de ces substances.

Dans la vallée de la chimie, au sud de Lyon, en France, les paysans nous appellent à l'aide. Si les sols sont contaminés, alors c'est l'ensemble de leurs exploitations et de leurs revenus qui sont en danger. Alors, que faire? L'Europe doit mettre en place un fonds public financé par les pollueurs eux-mêmes et consacré à la dépollution de ce qui peut encore l'être et aux réparations à apporter aux victimes. Un célèbre procès américain, retracé par le film *Dark Waters*, a montré que l'industrie chimique était parfaitement informée des effets dévastateurs des polluants éternels, et ce dès 1961. Mais elle les a cachés. Robert Bilott, l'avocat des familles américaines, nous a prévenus: la bataille sera féroce, mais l'industrie doit payer.

Le simple fait que la contamination par les PFAS ait été possible pointe l'échec de nos règles actuelles sur les produits chimiques. C'est pourquoi il nous faut réviser urgemment le règlement REACH, relatif aux produits chimiques. Raison pour laquelle les écologistes veulent une fois de plus interpeller la présidente von der Leyen sur l'urgence de proposer cette révision, littéralement vitale pour tant d'êtres humains et d'écosystèmes. Voilà déjà vingt ans que ce règlement existe et qu'il nous a montré toutes ses limites. Il faut actuellement dix ans pour engager une procédure d'analyse puis d'interdiction des produits dangereux. Au rythme actuel, il nous faudrait des siècles pour atteindre l'objectif d'une Europe sans toxique. C'est trop long.

Et quand les industriels du plastique et ceux de la chimie – 3M, Solvay, ExxonMobil, Arkema, ou encore Chemours – ferrailent contre l'interdiction des polluants éternels, ce sont BASF, VCI, BDI ou encore le CEFIC qui luttent contre toute réforme du règlement REACH. Ils semblent avoir trouvé en M. le commissaire Breton un allié de poids, qui leur permet d'espérer repousser la présentation de ce texte en décembre, autrement dit un enterrement en bonne et due forme.

Alors disons-le tout net: si la proposition de la Commission ne nous est pas présentée en juin, nous ne serons pas en mesure de l'adopter d'ici la fin du mandat, et la Commission ne sera pas en mesure de tenir ses promesses, maintes fois répétées, d'une Europe enfin libérée des produits toxiques. Rappelons qu'il s'agit là de 10 % de cancers qui pourraient être évités.

Durant le temps de mon intervention, ce sont plus de 2 000 tonnes de polluants éternels qui ont été produites. Alors soyons enfin responsables et tournons la page de la civilisation des toxiques.

Jessika Roswall, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Madam President, honourable Members, Commissioner, thank you for inviting me today to the discussion on this important topic, which is closely linked to the European Green Deal and its environmental and climate objectives.

This is a particularly important debate for the Swedish Presidency. As you know, Sweden has been vocal about the need to phase out PFAS for a long time. PFAS are hazardous for people, animals and the environment, and they are known to persist in nature for a long time. Phasing out PFAS is therefore crucial to protect our environment and health.

Fulfilling our climate goals is our duty. We have to work towards achieving a high level of health and environmental protection in line with the Treaties. In its 8th Environmental Action programme, the EU committed to achieving six priority objectives, among which is pursuing a zero-pollution ambition, including for air, water and soil, and protecting the health and well-being of Europeans. These ambitious objectives include tackling the impact of harmful chemicals on the environment and human health. That is why initiatives such as the Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability and the Biodiversity Strategy are so important.

Protecting the environment should go hand in hand with preserving the competitiveness of our economy. That is why we need our industry and businesses to be part of the green transition and to find substitutes to dangerous chemicals. In the end, this will bring us the competitive advantages.

REACH has been at the core of our chemical policy for almost two decades. As a legislation framework, REACH has also become a global reference for tackling chemicals in other countries and regions. As we wait for the Commission to table its proposal for a revised REACH, we should maintain the same level of ambition and ensure that it remains one of the pillar of our internal market. You can be certain that the Council will stand ready to work on the proposal as soon as it is tabled.

A revised REACH is also the main tool to deliver on the Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability. The strategy presents a new approach to harmful chemical substances, such as PFAS. That is why the recently updated Drinking Water Directive already sets a limit for the amount of PFAS that can be found in water for human consumption. That Directive also requires Member States to monitor this limit.

The Council is also happy to see that PFAS are included in the list of pollutants in the recent proposal amending the Water Framework Directive, the Groundwater Directive and the Environmental Quality Standards Directive. The Council will start discussions on these proposals very soon. Thank you for your attention and I am looking forward to the debate.

Mairead McGuinness, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, dear Minister, honourable Members of Parliament, I think we can all agree that the Commission, Parliament and Council share the ambition to keep our water and soil clean and free from pollutants that harm human health and the environment.

The Commission is committed to the Green Deal and the Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability and to moving towards a toxic-free environment. These commitments must be in line with our individual and collective commitments towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals, including the one health approach and sustainable consumption and production.

We cannot speak about forever pollutants without mentioning per- and polyfluorinated substances. These were familiar as PFAS. They are a major concern for human health and the environment. Ten years ago, we took action on one of these substances found in surface waters by including it under the Water Framework Directive. Now that we know other such substances are also harmful, the Commission has proposed adding 24 more of these chemicals to the list of priority substances under the directive.

In January, five national authorities also initiated an EU restriction on PFAS as a group of substances under the REACH regulation. Given the complexity of the proposal, this will be a long process, but I believe we all share the same goal, to strike a balance between two legitimate public interests: the need to protect public health, the environment and vulnerable groups, and the need to secure European investments in certain technologies for decarbonisation.

The public consultation by ECHA on the restrictions of these substances is open and it is key that all relevant stakeholders provide sound evidence. This is a highly complex case covering many different uses and stakeholders, and the complexity may impact the time it will take ECHA prepare their opinion. The Commission proposal will follow after we receive the ECHA opinion.

And this brings me to the REACH revision and to your request to strengthen chemical legislation immediately. The REACH revision will be a targeted revision. We do not intend to rework this legislation or change its fundamental architecture. As it stands, we have knowledge gaps in REACH that must be addressed, notably on certain critical hazard classes. That includes information on substances that cause cancer or adversely affect the nervous system, the immune system or the hormone system. This is also a large group of chemicals, polymers, that are exempted from the REACH registration process. We are looking at a registration obligation for the estimated 40 000 polymers of particular and potential concern.

Sixteen years of implementation of REACH has shown us it is world-leading legislation, but at the same time we can make this regulation stronger and more efficient while simplifying and streamlining processes. REACH is a science-based regulation with evidence at its core. In fact, its main founding principle was that 'no data – no market' principle. Substances should not be authorised for the market without data on their safety.

Gathering knowledge upfront will enable us to take better and faster decisions. Simplifying how the authorisation process works is another key goal, to boost innovation and the production of safer and more sustainable chemicals.

For our legal framework to become more effective in preventing harm to health and the environment, we are also looking at extending the generic approach to risk management. This means looking at groups of products and types of hazardous chemicals like endocrine disruptors. Priority will be given to uses where citizens and the environment are highly exposed. REACH is all about results and if we want results, we need effective enforcement. The revision also aims to improve enforcement by setting up an audit system, increased transparency and frequent checks. This would lead to better protection as well as a level playing field for EU industry.

Now, on the timing of the proposal, I want to reassure you that we are working at full speed on the revision of the legal text and the impact assessment. We aim to present the proposal to the co-legislators as soon as it is ready, by the last quarter of this year at the latest.

Now a few words on soil. The EU soil strategy aims to prevent contamination and to restore contaminated and degraded soils. In the context of the upcoming soil health law proposal, the Commission is considering provisions to identify, register and remediate contaminated sites. We intend to adopt the proposal in June.

In addition, the EU Mission under Horizon Europe, called 'A Soil Deal for Europe', is tackling soil decontamination and soil restoration. This ambitious research and innovation programme includes the demonstration of solutions in living labs and soil monitoring. This is all about types of soil contamination in both urban and rural areas.

Honourable Members, we need your support to achieve the ambitious objectives of the European Green Deal under this mandate. We look forward to working with you and I now look forward to hearing your views.

Cindy Franssen, *namens de PPE-Fractie*. – Voorzitter, geachte commissaris, collega's, als voormalig coördinator voor de EVP in de commissie BECA staat volksgezondheid voor mij altijd centraal. Zorgen voor een gezond leefmilieu, gevrijwaard van blootstelling aan schadelijke chemische stoffen, is daarbij essentieel. Op dat vlak schieten we duidelijk tekort. Veel van deze schadelijke stoffen krijgen we ondertussen niet meer uit onze omgeving, en zelfs niet meer uit het menselijk lichaam. De wetenschap is kristalhelder: blootstelling aan schadelijke chemische stoffen ligt aan de oorsprong van bepaalde kankers, vruchtbaarheidsproblemen, een verlaagd IQ en een verhoogde cholesterol.

Iedereen kent natuurlijk PFAS, maar het gaat uiteraard over veel meer dan alleen maar deze groep stoffen. Van het overgrote deel weten we nog niet eens hoe schadelijk ze voor de volksgezondheid zijn, laat staan dat we de cumulatieve werking op langere termijn en de cocktaileffecten kennen. Dit kan niet langer.

Laten we eerst kijken naar de stoffen die reeds op de markt zijn. Met een familieaanpak op basis van wetenschappelijke evidentie en snellere processen moet het mogelijk zijn vroeger in te grijpen wanneer blijkt dat de volksgezondheid in het gedrang komt. Niet-essentieel gebruik moet onmiddellijk op de schop.

Maar de beste manier om blootstelling aan schadelijke en kankerverwekkende niet-afbreekbare chemische stoffen te voorkomen, is ervoor te zorgen dat ze simpelweg niet op de markt kunnen komen, met een omgekeerde bewijslast. Stoffen zouden alleen maar op de markt mogen komen wanneer vaststaat dat ze de volksgezondheid niet bedreigen. Daarom is het noodzakelijk dat we de volksgezondheid resoluut centraal stellen. De pandemie van de *silent killers* moeten we nu aanpakken.

Mohammed Chahim, namens de S&D-Fractie. – Voorzitter, soms zijn er zaken die je gewoon niet begrijpt. Als iemand bijvoorbeeld een liter frituurvet dumpst, dan krijgt hij terecht een boete. Maar voor bedrijven geldt het tegenovergestelde. Die mogen jaarlijks tonnen gif in onze natuur en omgeving dumpen. Daaronder ook PFAS, een verzameling stoffen waarvan we niet eens weten hoe schadelijk ze zijn. Pas als aangetoond wordt dat een bepaalde PFAS schadelijk is, wordt deze verboden. Veel te laat.

Wanneer grijpen we in en verbieden we deze stoffen als groep? Pas wanneer het ons persoonlijk raakt? Als het wordt aangetroffen in ons lichaam of in dat van onze kinderen? Ik heb nieuws voor je. Het zit er waarschijnlijk al lang in. Het is treurig dat je in sommige regio's je kind beter geen moedermelk kunt geven vanwege de te hoge concentraties PFAS, soms meer dan tien keer de norm. En ondertussen durven wij geen algemeen verbod aan.

Ik heb me ook verbaasd over een interview van twee topvrouwen van een chemiebedrijf, afgelopen week in het Algemeen Dagblad. Die zeiden, verwijzend naar PFAS, dat alles waarvan je te veel inneemt, uiteindelijk giftig wordt. Hoe cynisch kun je zijn? Waar wachten we op? Pas het voorzorgsbeginsel toe en verbied PFAS.

Martin Hojsík, za skupinu Renew. – Vážená pani predsedajúca, predstavte si, že vám jedného dňa úrady povedia, že nemáte jesť vajcia z vašich sliepok, piť vodu z vlastnej studne, ani ňou polievať záhradu, že vlastne nemáte jesť nič z vašej záhrady, dokonca ani tie jahody, na ktoré ste sa s deťmi tešili, pretože vaša pôda obsahuje látky, ktoré narúšajú vývoj ich reprodukčného systému a môžu spôsobiť autizmus.

Aj vy si uvedomíte, že ste ich roky jedli. To je realita v niektorých častiach Európy vrátane Slovenska. A nielen kontaminácia: 7,5 % mladých ľudí na Slovensku má zvýšené hodnoty PFAS-ov vo svojej krvi, nezničiteľných toxických látok. Stále poriadne neriešime príčinu týchto problémov. Namiesto toho trpíme následkami. Toxickou katastrofou, kontamináciou PFAS v Antverpách, až po PCB na východe Slovenska. A všade na naokolo, pretože tieto chemikálie sa nachádzajú dokonca aj vo vysokohorských plesách v slovenských Tatrách.

Vedeli sme, že sú problém, ale nekonali sme. Treba odstrániť konečne príčiny tejto katastrofy. Toxické chemikálie ako PFAS musíme nahradiť, a to bez nových pravidiel pre chemikálie naozaj nejde. Loptička je teraz na strane Komisie a ľudia naprieč celou Európou nasledujú.

VORSITZ: KATARINA BARLEY

Vizepräsidentin

Jutta Paulus, im Namen der Verts/ALE-Fraktion. – Frau Präsidentin, Frau Kommissarin, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Die Schwächen der derzeit gültigen Chemikalienverordnung für PFAS sind letztes Jahr überdeutlich geworden, als das *Forever Pollution Project* mehr als 17 000 Altlasten mit PFAS in der EU öffentlich gemacht hat. Mehr als 50 Jahre ist es her, dass der Hersteller Dupont herausfand, dass seine Produkte – per- und polyfluorierte alkylierte Substanzen, PFAS – hochgradig gesundheitsschädlich und umweltgefährlich sind. Bei der Registrierung im Rahmen von REACH sind diese Daten auch pflichtgemäß bei der Europäischen Chemikalienagentur angegeben worden.

Und tatsächlich hat es die Europäische Union geschafft, einige dieser Substanzen zu beschränken. Aber diese Beschränkung betrifft weniger als ein Prozent der 5000 PFAS. Wenn wir in diesem Tempo weitermachen, sind wir im nächsten Jahrhundert noch nicht fertig. Hier, aber auch in weiteren Punkten, für die meine Redezeit nicht ausreicht – UVCB, Polymere, Sanktionsmöglichkeiten, die Herstellung muss energieeffizient sein, Geschwindigkeit der Verfahren –, besteht dringender Handlungsbedarf. Ich fordere die Kommission hiermit auf, ihr mehrfach gegebenes Versprechen im Rahmen der Chemikalienstrategie – im Plenum von Kommissar Šefčovič, bei der Anhörung im Umweltausschuss von Direktor Ciobanu-Dordea – endlich einzulösen und den Vorschlag für die REACH-Revision spätestens im Juni vorzulegen.

Frau von der Leyen, die Bürgerinnen und Bürger, aber auch die progressiven Akteure in der Industrie, die endlich Investitionssicherheit brauchen: Sie warten auf Ihre Initiative. Lösen Sie die Blockaden, damit wir die Parlamentsposition für dieses wichtige Gesetz noch in dieser Legislatur abstimmen können.

Anna Zalewska, *w imieniu grupy ECR*. – Pani Przewodnicząca! Pani Komisarz! Koleżanki i Koledzy! Wszyscy są zgodni: substancje chemiczne, substancje szkodzące człowiekowi, glebie, powietrzu, wodzie, należy eliminować. Trzeba jednak dokonywać takich zmian, takich rewizji opartych na dowodach, na nauce, które nie doprowadzą do osiągnięcia efektu odwrotnego.

Dlatego trzeba przemyśleć co najmniej trzy dokumenty, o których tutaj wspominamy. Po pierwsze, rewizję rozporządzenia REACH, rewizję dyrektywy wodnej czy też dokumenty związane z glebami, z troską o gleby. Ważne jest, abyśmy pamiętali o tym, że są to substancje chemiczne, które właściwie występują wszędzie. Są w telefonach komórkowych, w szklach kontaktowych, są w strunach do gitary, są w niciach dentystrycznych czy też w produktach do makijażu.

Mówię o tym specjalnie, żeby pokazać mnogość, wielość i skomplikowość, po to żeby też właściwie dobrać środki. Po drugie, zaufajmy naukowcom, badaczom, zaufajmy również producentom, bo im niekoniecznie zależy na tym, żeby nas truć – też chcą uczestniczyć w tym procesie. Posłuchajmy konsultacji społecznych. One mają zakończyć się pod koniec września czy października tego roku. Bądźmy rozsądni. Jeżeli przygotowujemy właściwie dokumenty, może nie od razu, ale stopniowo będziemy szkodliwe substancje eliminować.

André Rougé, *au nom du groupe ID*. – Madame la Présidente, chers collègues, en entrant dans l'hémicycle, nombre d'entre vous ont certainement bu un verre d'eau, ce qui, au xxi^e siècle, au sein de l'espace européen, semble tout à fait normal. Pourtant, un tiers des Français des Antilles, 40 % de ceux de Guyane et 31 % de nos compatriotes de Mayotte ne sont pas raccordés à l'eau potable. Manque d'assainissement, défaillances, réseau obsolète et eau contaminée sont les difficultés de nos compatriotes ultramarins.

Comme l'a dénoncé Marine Le Pen lors de son passage à la Guadeloupe, l'État et l'Union européenne ne peuvent continuer à ignorer ce sujet. Aux Antilles françaises, le chlordécone a eu des effets dévastateurs sur les nappes phréatiques, aujourd'hui contaminées. À la Guadeloupe, l'abandon par l'État du syndicat des eaux ralentit toute réfection des réseaux d'eau. En 2018, sur 80 millions de mètres cubes d'eau prélevés pour les besoins en eau potable, seuls 21 ont été réellement utilisés. Le reste a été gaspillé dans d'importantes déperditions. Ce problème de l'eau dans les régions ultrapériphériques touche même l'éducation. Sans eau, nombre d'établissements scolaires ferment temporairement leurs portes.

Les régions ultrapériphériques ne sont pas habitées par des citoyens de deuxième catégorie, et leur éloignement géographique ne saurait en rien justifier la précarité de l'accès à l'eau potable. Alors, avant de vouloir sauver le monde entier en interférant ici et là sur des sujets n'ayant rien d'europpéen, l'Union européenne a l'obligation de se préoccuper des besoins vitaux de nos compatriotes ultramarins, ce qu'elle ne fait pas.

Anja Hazekamp, *namens de Fractie The Left*. – Voorzitter, onze giftige voetafdruk reikt al tot de hoogste bergtoppen en de diepste oceaانبodems. We laten zelfs PFAS achter op de maan, Mars en Jupiter. Deze voetafdruk gaat nooit meer weg.

Ik ben dan ook blij dat er nu eindelijk gewerkt wordt aan een verbod op PFAS. Dit verbod moet er snel komen en moet gelden voor alle toepassingen. Geen enkele uitzondering, want geen enkel doel is het waard om de planeet, al het leven daarop, ons voedsel en ons drinkwater permanent te vervuilen. Dat is precies wat deze akelige groep gifstoffen doet.

De herziening van de chemicaliënwetgeving Reach is nodig voor een breed verbod op alle PFAS, nog voor de zomer. Kan de Commissie dat toezeggen?

Kan de Commissie ook toezeggen dat zij de voorstellen van de Raad om PFAS uit ons voedsel te verbannen steunt? Graag een reactie.

Laura Ferrara (NI). – Signora Presidente, l'inchiesta giornalistica «The Forever Pollution Project» ha rivelato la spaventosa entità della contaminazione da sostanze PFAS, che sono prodotte sinteticamente, sono delle sostanze tossiche e persistenti che hanno una moltitudine di applicazioni. Possiamo trovarle in prodotti di uso comune, nell'acqua che beviamo, nei vestiti che indossiamo, nelle confezioni del cibo che mangiamo, nel suolo e negli esseri viventi.

Le conseguenze per la salute sono gravi e possono causare una vasta gamma di patologie, con relativi costi sanitari stimati tra 52 e 84 miliardi di euro all'anno nell'Unione europea.

La riduzione dell'esposizione a concentrazioni sempre maggiori di inquinanti eterni è in linea con gli obiettivi del Green Deal europeo e della strategia in materia di sostanze chimiche sostenibili del 2020. Ecco che allora la proposta di restrizione di circa 10 000 sostanze PFAS presentata da alcuni Stati membri va nella giusta direzione da intraprendere per la ricerca di valide alternative sicure e sostenibili.

Ed è per questo che è importante che la Commissione colga questa sfida e intervenga ora per salvaguardare la salute e tutelare l'ambiente.

Heléne Fritzon (S&D). – Fru talman! Nyligen sändes i Sverige en dokumentär som heter *Mörkt vatten*. Den handlar om tusentals människor i Kallinge i södra Sverige som upptäcker att de under flera år har druckit vatten från kranen som innehöll enorma mängder av den giftiga evighetskemikalien PFAS. Spåren leder över Atlanten till de globala kemikaliejättarna. Människorna i Kallinge lever nu ständigt med oron för att utveckla cancer. En kvinna säger: "Jag kommer att vara giftig tills jag dör, men jag vill se en ändring för mina barns och barnbarns skull, om jag får några."

Ingen – ingen – ska behöva oroa sig för att få cancer av att dricka vatten ur kranen. Jag kommer att kämpa för ett förbud mot PFAS och kräver att EU-kommissionen nu också lägger fram sitt förslag om en reviderad kemikalielagstiftning. Jättarnas intressen får inte gå före människors hälsa. Och människorna i Kallinge i södra Sverige kan inte vänta.

Róza Thun und Hohenstein (Renew). – Madam President, 24 % of teenagers in France, in Sweden 23 % of teenagers, in Germany 18 %, in Belgium 17 % of teenagers, in Greece 14 % of teenagers are found to have excessive levels of PFAS in their blood. PFAS – most persistent human-made chemicals called forever chemicals for one reason: they remain in the environment forever.

In Poland, studies published by the Science Direct Journal found PFAs even in our milk, in our cottage cheese, in yogurt, in butter, and many others. So in the REACH regulation revision, yes, Commissioner, it is essential to remediate the existing contamination through the full banning of the use of all PFA production and use as soon as possible. Thank you for your very concrete presentation and very concrete proposals and surely you have our full support in those endeavours.

Thomas Waitz (Verts/ALE). – Frau Präsidentin! Ich kann nur dort ansetzen, wo meine Kollegin aus Polen gerade geendet hat. Es handelt sich um ewige Chemikalien. Und wer sind jene Menschen in unserer Gesellschaft, die dem am meisten ausgesetzt sind? Es sind unsere Kinder. Es sind vor allem unsere Kleinkinder, jene, die zum Beispiel in unseren Wohnungen auf dem Boden unterwegs sind, dort, wo sich im Hausstaub jene Chemikalien anlagern. Wir haben in der Geschichte gesehen: Überall dort, wo untersucht wurde, überall dort, wo tatsächlich vorsorglich – oder eigentlich erst im Nachhinein – untersucht wurde, wie giftig diese Chemikalien eigentlich sind, ob sie krebserregend sind, ob sie Organschäden hervorrufen, finden wir in den allermeisten Fällen heraus: Es handelt sich um wahrscheinlich krebserregende Substanzen.

Gleichzeitig sind 4000 Substanzen dieser Art auf dem Markt, 4000 verschiedene, die allermeisten davon weder untersucht noch geprüft. Wir brauchen eine Chemikalienregulierung noch vor Ende des Mandats, damit wir sicherstellen können, dass diese Produkte im Rahmen des Vorsorgeprinzips getestet werden, bevor sie auf den Markt kommen, bevor wir unsere Bürgerinnen und Bürger damit gefährden. Darum ersuche ich die Kommission heftigst.

Gianna Gancia (ID). – Signora Presidente, signora Commissaria, colleghi, credo che questo sia un momento importantissimo per quel che riguarda il nostro futuro. È evidente che ci sono delle azioni contrastanti per quel che riguarda le industrie e talvolta l'interesse pubblico, salute, suolo.

Ritengo che dobbiamo cambiare assolutamente paradigma: non deve essere più il denaro il motore delle nostre scelte, ma una visione che dobbiamo dare ai nostri figli e alle generazioni future. Quindi, solo garantendo una strategia europea fondata – come Lei ha ricordato, signora Commissaria – su evidenza scientifica, coerenza, sinergie con ambiente, lavoro, sostanze chimiche, acqua, suolo e rifiuti potremo assicurare la piena attuazione di quello che la Commissione si propone.

Eliminare una volta per tutte le sostanze chimiche eterne dal ciclo produttivo europeo è innanzitutto una battaglia di civiltà. La garanzia di vivere in un ambiente pulito e al contempo tutelare la salute pubblica è la sfida non del prossimo decennio, ma del prossimo secolo.

Nikolaj Villumsen (The Left). – Fru formand! Overalt i Europa finder man det sundhedsskadelige evighedskemikalie PFAS flere og flere steder. I den fri natur, i æggene, på morgenbordet og i vores drikkevand. Men i stedet for at handle hurtigt og effektivt, så ser vi, at den længe ventede og stærkt tiltrængte opdatering af EU's kemikalielovgivning REACH har lange udsigter. Det er ganske enkelt ikke godt nok. Både når det gælder PFAS og REACH generelt, bør én ting stå helt klart: Jo længere vi venter med at handle, desto dyrere bliver det. Og forsinkelsens pris betales af vores børn og vores børns helbred. Det er ganske enkelt uacceptabelt. EU skal sætte ind over for de sundhedsskadelige kemikalier. Vi har brug for skrappe lovgivning. PFAS må og skal forbydes i EU. Det skylder vi alle EU's indbyggere. Det skylder vi naturen.

Seán Kelly (PPE). – *A Uachtarán*, forever pollutants have been present in consumer products for decades. The risks that these chemicals pose to human health and our environment are of utmost concern. Indeed, 84 % of Europeans have expressed their fears regarding the impact of chemicals on their health.

Action is necessary to address these risks. Like most aspects of policymaking, the revision of EU chemicals legislation will require us to strike a delicate balance between the costs and benefits of EU action.

Dangerous chemicals must be banned from situations that are harmful to human health and the environment. With this in mind, we should also remember that some of the chemicals which are used across many sectors play a key role in ensuring our well-being, as well as our access to modern comforts. Chemistry and innovative chemicals will also play an important role in the climate transition. For example, certain chemicals can be used to improve the efficiency and longevity of wind turbines.

Revising the EU chemicals legislation would be a complex process, as Commissioner McGuinness said. We should aim to arrive at a point that offers protection to citizens while ensuring we can access the innovative potential that certain chemicals offer. We must avoid harm while simultaneously reaping the benefits. Science-based evidence will be key to addressing this question going forward.

Maria Arena (S&D). – Madame la Présidente, on l'a dit, les études scientifiques concernant les effets des PFAS sur notre santé et sur l'environnement s'accumulent, et toutes sont plus inquiétantes les unes que les autres. J'en citerai quelques-unes: une étude récente fait le lien entre l'exposition aux PFAS et les problèmes de fertilité chez les femmes, une autre montre que les PFAS dans nos contenants alimentaires migrent effectivement dans notre nourriture, et bien d'autres enquêtes encore nous montrent que la plupart des citoyens européens sont aujourd'hui contaminés aux PFAS avec des concentrations alarmantes.

Alors, évidemment, j'accueille favorablement la proposition de restriction formulée par certains États membres, mais il y a urgence à agir. Or, ces restrictions proposées n'entreraient en vigueur qu'à partir de 2026, voire 2027, avec des dérogations qui pourraient aller jusqu'à douze ans supplémentaires. Il sera donc trop tard.

Nous savons que, aujourd'hui, 75 000 tonnes de PFAS sont émises chaque année dans notre environnement. Nous estimons donc, au vu des données de la science, qu'il faut absolument et très très vite limiter et interdire l'émission de ces PFAS. Interdire les usages est une chose; il faut aussi prendre en considération la dépollution et la responsabilité de ces pollueurs.

Madame la Commissaire, vous avez dit beaucoup de choses sur la révision de la législation REACH, mais si elle vient après l'été, il sera trop tard.

Asger Christensen (Renew). – Fru formand! Jeg er dybt bekymret for de tusindvis af evighedskemikalier, vi finder i vores vand og vores jord, i vores drikkevand, vores børnehaver og vores regntøj. I Danmark har vi noget af det reneste drikkevand i verden. Det kan vi være stolte af, men det er ikke en friбилlet. Tværtimod, det forpligter. I Danmark har vi f. eks. lige fundet kemikalierester fra bildæk og kunststofbaner. Der er fundet over 400 forskellige kemikalietyper i vores drikkevand. Det er et problem, der er langt større end PFAS og pesticider. Derfor skal vi tage alle former for evighedskemikalier alvorligt, og vi skal teste bredt. Vi skal erstatte evighedskemikalierne med innovation og bioløsninger. Kun derved kan vi sikre rent drikkevand og beskytte vores børn og børnebørn.

Grace O'Sullivan (Verts/ALE). – Madam President, Commissioner, colleagues, plastic has become so cheap to produce, it has invaded every part of our lives, our seas, our soils, our environment. We now have a plastic waste problem so massive that everyone except those responsible for it has to pay to clean it up. Similarly, when so-called PFAS chemicals were discovered, industry started using them in absolutely everything. It does not matter that these toxic hazardous chemicals do not break down, but instead remain in our environment and even in our blood forever.

Again, people suffer the consequence as industry giants like DuPont and Bayer face lawsuits and court challenges. Industry continues to lobby hard to resist an EU ban on these toxic, polluting chemicals. We cannot wait for industry to regulate itself. The market will not correct this so the EU and our Member States must act, must step in right now.

Marina Mesure (The Left). – Madame la Présidente, la crise de l'eau est là. Les pénuries vont se multiplier et créer plus de tensions. Le monde doit se préparer, et notre continent aussi, à cette crise qui touche aussi bien la quantité que la qualité de l'eau disponible. Face à cela, l'Europe a légiféré depuis vingt ans. La directive-cadre devait protéger l'eau, restaurer les écosystèmes et réduire la pollution d'ici 2015. Résultat: en 2023, eh bien la moitié des cours d'eau de l'Union européenne ne respectent pas les normes minimales relatives à la pollution.

À la crise écologique s'ajoute la crise sanitaire, du fait de l'exposition à ces substances dangereuses. Nous devons agir, revoir nos modèles agricoles et industriels, pour ne plus dépendre de ces substances dangereuses pour la santé et les sols. Nous devons imposer des seuils de pollution plus drastiques et doter les services de contrôle de moyens suffisants. Et soyons clairs: ce sont les pollueurs qui doivent payer la dépollution et le contrôle des eaux, pas le contribuable, qui est déjà empoisonné au quotidien.

L'eau est le messenger du changement climatique. Alors que la sécheresse de 2022 a été l'une des pires depuis les cinquante dernières années, agir sur la quantité et la qualité de l'eau est l'un des principaux enjeux de notre humanité.

Michaela Šojdrová (PPE). – Paní předsedající, myslím, že všichni souhlasíme s tím, že ochrana zdraví je naší prioritou. Musíme postupovat dále v souladu s novými technologiemi a výzkumem. Ve vztahu k obecnému posílení právních předpisů Evropské unie v oblasti chemických látek bych chtěla upozornit na to, že v zachování zdraví lidí, pitné vody a životaschopné půdy hrají jednu z nejdůležitějších rolí právě zemědělci. A jsou to zemědělci, kteří nás živí, a pro zajištění výnosů musí některé ochranné látky používat. Nejde jen o množství, o kvalitu, ale především o dostupnost potravin.

Zemědělci se rozhodně nebrání šetrnějšímu hospodaření a používání méně pesticidů a především očekávají uznávání nových ochranných látek, které budou šetrnější, a samozřejmě otevření legislativy k novým genomickým technikám a novým šlechtěním. Tedy nebrání se využití biopesticidů, ale musí jít o cenově dostupné látky. Uvedu příklad – zrušení výjimky na neonicotinoidní mořidla v cukrové řepě a zákaz insekticidních látek vede k tomu, že pěstitelé cukrové řepy ve Francii, Belgii i v České republice odhadují propad výnosů o 15 %, a již nyní na trhu vidíme její zdražení. Tedy kolegové, chci se zeptat: ano, chraňme zdraví lidí, ale musíme také počítat. A ptám se Komise, zda řeší tyto dopady a zda počítá i s urychlením nových biopreparátů a nových genomických technologií.

César Luena (S&D). – Señora presidenta, por lo que vamos escuchando en el debate, yo creo que es evidente que hay que corregir esta Ley de Seguridad Química de la Unión Europea. La Comisión Europea prometió reformarla, pero se está aplazando su reforma a pesar de la urgencia que reviste esta situación.

Además, se prometió un plan más ambicioso para limpiar de químicos tóxicos nuestro medio ambiente y hasta ahora no hemos visto, señores de la Comisión, ningún avance. Por si fuera poco, incluso el plan de prohibir varias sustancias químicas, como se dice, indestructibles, que están relacionadas con un amplio abanico de enfermedades, permanece congelado. Es decir, que el expediente de la Comisión está siendo bastante deficitario en este aspecto.

Tenemos la obligación de completar el Pacto Verde Europeo y así no lo vamos a conseguir. La contaminación por químicos es un problema muy serio que tiene graves consecuencias para la salud. Por tanto, aprovecho este debate para pedir a la Comisión que cumpla su promesa de transición ecológica y que presente sus propuestas legislativas de manera urgente, porque la salud pública, el medio ambiente, deben ser siempre lo primero.

Irena Joveva (Renew). – Gospa predsednica. Čista voda, varna hrana, neonesnažena prst, čist zrak. To so osnovne dobrine, ki bi morale biti samoumevne.

Resda gre za področja, na katerih sicer Unija počne veliko. Ampak nekako pa pozabljamo na ureditev področja kemikalij, kjer resnih sprememb ni od leta 2006, ko je bil sprejet še vedno aktualen REACH, katerega prenovno nam Komisija navidezno obljublja že tri leta.

Kot kaže, bo predlog objavljen šele v zadnji četrtini letošnjega leta, le par mesecev pred volitvami. Torej, te prazne obljube bodo zaenkrat ostale očitno zgolj to. Prazne. Medtem pa ljudje in drugi organizmi ostajamo izpostavljeni škodljivim kemikalijam, katerih negativni učinki bodo trajali desetletja.

Vsi ukrepi za varovanje okolja in zdravja, ki smo jih sprejeli in sprejemamo, stojijo in padajo na neurejenih področjih, ki nanje vplivajo. Dovolj je zavlačevanja. Predlog prenove REACH-a potrebujemo takoj zdaj, dokler še imamo čas, da ga sprejmemo.

Bas Eickhout (Verts/ALE). – Madam President, when we signed up to the Green Deal as a European Parliament, we signed up to climate neutrality, a fully circular economy and a zero-pollution economy. And that has also been said by you, Madam Commissioner. We want a toxic-free environment and that is also a key part of the Green Deal that Europe needs to deliver on. And that's exactly what's at stake here.

A lot of my colleagues talked about PFAS and forever chemicals and the problems that we are seeing, and the contaminated sites all over Europe being a forever chemical. And I want to thank the Swedish Government, not as a presidency, but the government for their action, together with others, on making sure that there will be a group restriction. However, if there is a group restriction, it will take 3 to 15 years from now.

So it takes time and it shows we need a revision of our policies. We need a revision of REACH. And for that we need also an urgent proposal on the table. Dear Madam Commissioner, you said 'as soon as it's ready, at the latest the fourth quarter', but the impact assessment passed the scrutiny boards. The Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability is very clear. You know what to do. And even if the environment is not compelling enough for you, the industry now is also asking to move fast: if you come beyond June, then there will be a very long, insecure period for industry because then it will not be dealt by this Parliament. It will go to the next term and it will just be delays and uncertainty for companies. And that should be a concern for other DGs than maybe only the DGs that also are working on the environment, although that should be our concern as well.

Luke Ming Flanagan (The Left). – Madam President, I agree 100 % with strengthening legislation in this area, but we also need to make sure that what is already there is actually enforced.

In Ireland, the law governing sustainable use of pesticides, which enacts the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive, makes it clear that pesticides should not be used in areas used by the general public or vulnerable groups, or environmentally sensitive areas. However, at least 28 out of Ireland's 31 local authorities are still using chemical herbicide, of which at least 19 are using glyphosate-based weed killers, as of this year. Data on pesticide use is gathered inconsistently between local authorities, with some councils not keeping records required by the EU Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive.

I heard one EPP member here use the word how it was important to look after our health and then put in a 'but', because there's always a 'but' there for these people. Well, if there was no 'but' there 30 years ago, my father would now be alive. Six months ago, he died from asbestosis. He used asbestos; he was told it would keep him safe from burning when he was using an angle grinder. And that's because a few people in the past said, 'Oh, but we've got to keep it'. If there was no 'but' my father would be alive now.

Delara Burkhardt (S&D). – Frau Präsidentin, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Gehört meine Regenjacke jetzt eigentlich in den Sondermüll? Und ist das Backpapier krebserregend? Das sind legitime Fragen, die man Stand heute nicht klar beantworten kann und die spätestens seit dieser Nachricht viele beschäftigen. An 1500 Orten in Deutschland konnten PFAS, sogenannte ewige Chemikalien, nachgewiesen werden. Wasser-, schmutz- und fettabweisend – diese Eigenschaften sorgen dafür, dass wir sie überall finden: Kleidung, Einwegverpackungen, selbst im Blut von Kleinkindern und in der Muttermilch.

Forever chemicals klingt eigentlich auch nach einem schönen Namen für eine Band. Es handelt sich aber um eine Stoffgruppe, die im Verdacht steht, Leber- und Schilddrüsenfunktion einzuschränken und Krebs auszulösen. Ebenso namensgebend wie problematisch: Sie können nicht natürlich abgebaut werden. Das Vorsorgeprinzip sollte unsere Chemikalienpolitik leiten. Gibt es Bedenken, dass eine Substanz die Gesundheit gefährdet, kann das Problem nicht ausgesessen werden – erst recht nicht, wenn weder Menschen noch Umwelt diese Stoffe abbauen können. Das Problem wird durch das Aussetzen eigentlich nur verschärft. Die Europäische Chemikalienagentur muss hier schnell Klarheit schaffen. Wir brauchen klare Ansagen von der Kommission.

Irène Tolleret (Renew). – Madame la Présidente, Madame la Commissaire, chers collègues, les PFAS sont partout: dans nos vêtements, nos emballages alimentaires, les mousses anti-incendie, les revêtements antiadhésifs, les cosmétiques, les produits phytosanitaires. Ces produits chimiques sont éternels. Nous devons donc les interdire. Madame la Commissaire, vous avez l'initiative législative. Il me semble important d'aller vite en reprenant la proposition portée par la France, l'Allemagne et plusieurs États membres.

N'oublions pas que, dans les cours d'eau, l'essentiel des PFAS se retrouve en aval des rejets des grosses agglomérations et à côté des aéroports. Cela veut dire que, en même temps que nous devons interdire ces produits, vu leur persistance, nous devons de toute façon dépolluer les rejets. Et cela ne se fera pas tout seul. Cela se fera par une politique européenne volontariste d'équipement des sites d'épuration pour que l'on arrête d'envoyer les PFAS dans nos cours d'eau, dans notre eau potable. C'est la vie qui en dépend.

Manuela Ripa (Verts/ALE). – Frau Präsidentin! Hochgiftige ewige Chemikalien wie PFAS finden sich überall in Europa und weltweit. Besonders schockierend: Es ist mittlerweile ganz selbstverständlich, sie in unseren Alltagsprodukten zu verwenden, wie in regenabweisenden Jacken und noch schlimmer in Lebensmittelkontaktmaterialien wie Papierstrohhalm, um sie wasserfest zu machen. Wir kommen also täglich mit ihnen in Berührung, unsere Kinder sind ihnen täglich ausgesetzt. Sie verursachen Krebs und beeinträchtigen das Immun-, Hormon- und Fortpflanzungssystem sowie das Herz-Kreislaufsystem. In der Natur können sie auch in mehreren hundert Jahren nicht abgebaut werden und sind hochgiftig für Wasser und Tiere. Wir gefährden also uns und unsere Umwelt und das über Generationen hinweg.

Für mich bedeutet das ganz klar: Im Interesse unserer Gesundheit, der unserer Kinder und unserer Umwelt dürfen wir diesen Stoffen wie PFAS nicht mehr ausgesetzt sein. Die Industrie muss dort, wo sie in Prozessen unvermeidbar sind, aufzeigen, wie sie nicht in Kontakt mit Menschen und Umwelt kommen und was ihre *End-of-Life*-Bestimmung ist. Und die Überarbeitung der Chemikalienverordnung muss schnellstmöglich im Juni vorgelegt werden – im Interesse von uns allen.

Milan Brglez (S&D). – Gospa predsednica, spoštovane in spoštovani! Današnja tematska razprava ima sporočilno vrednost. Gre za razpravo pred svetovnim dnevom Zemlje in po svetovnem dnevu voda, ki pa od nas zahteva, da smo del spremembe, ki jo hočemo, ki jo hočemo narediti.

Čeprav se strinjam z vsem, kar je bilo povedano, bi hotel postaviti širši kontekst. Kot poročevalec revizije direktiv o zaščiti voda vem, da lahko okolje ščitimo z več sredstvi in tako, da solidarno k temu prispeva tudi zasebni sektor.

Sedaj se spopadamo s posledicami, okoljskimi in zdravstvenimi, dejstva, da imamo v Evropi registriranih in v dnevni uporabi več kot 20.000 kemikalij, medtem ko jih je na trgu več kot 100.000.

Če hočemo zmanjšati vnos teh kemikalij v tla in vode, moramo spremeniti življenjski način in tudi industrijo vpeti v rešitve za obvladovanje. Torej, preprečevati moramo onesnaževanje pri viru ter pravičneje razdeliti stroške na javno blagajno in zasebni sektor.

Billy Kelleher (Renew). – Madam President, forever pollutants, PFAS toxins are a real concern both to people and our environment. And it is time now that the Commission, in terms of its review of REACH, should strengthen legislation to deal with this particular issue. Not just in terms of strengthening legislation itself, but we also need to expand our capacity around evidence, around science, testing, sampling and analysing to ensure that we can detect the immediate impacts that these particular forever pollutants are having on the health of people and the broader environment. Soil health, water health, food health and the health of wildlife habitats are consistently being degraded by the presence of PFAS toxins in our environment.

So we do need to act swiftly, Commissioner, and I would urge that, in terms of the review, it would be swift and it would be robust in terms of dealing with what we need to do, which is to ban PFAS production. And do not worry about the industries: they will respond to finding new ways of addressing the issues other than producing PFAS which are poisoning and polluting our planet.

Margrete Auken (Verts/ALE). – Fru formand! Da nogle af os tilbage i 70'erne råbte op om, at sprøjtegifterne ville gå i grundvandet, blev vi afvist med den absurde anklage: »Dommedagsprofeter, det vil tage mindst 30 år!« Ja, nu er vi der, overalt i Europa har vi de store generationsforureninger, som vi døjer med at bekæmpe, og den kamp har fyldt i mit snart 50 års politiske virke. Men stadig er det som om, de centrale beslutningstagere ikke har lært af erfaringerne. De gentager sig selv nu med PFAS. EU er allerede heftigt forurenet med det, og vi ved, at det kan plage os århundredere frem. Vi må hurtigst muligt forbyde alle ikke-essentielle PFAS-kemikalier og finde veje til at få afviklet de andre. Og de medlemslande, der nu selv er klar til det, må se at komme i gang. Men som mange allerede har nævnt, haster det med at få revideret REACH. Det er nu, vi skal tage ansvar for vores børns og børnebørns miljø og natur. Det er dem, forsigtighedsprincippet gælder, ikke ængstelsen for at træde reaktionære industrier og politikere over tærerne.

Clara Aguilera (S&D). – Señora presidenta, como no podía ser de otra manera, compartimos la ambición de tener un entorno libre de sustancias tóxicas. Nadie puede desear lo contrario. Nadie puede querer lo contrario.

En primer lugar, es necesario que se cumpla la normativa actual, que no se está cumpliendo. Estoy de acuerdo con el cambio en la normativa del Reglamento REACH, pero es necesario que se exija ya el cumplimiento de la que no se está cumpliendo ahora. Y eso es algo importante, porque si hubiese un mayor cumplimiento probablemente no estaríamos donde estamos. Además, para todo ello, para eliminar esos plásticos, también es necesario hacer cambios en la normativa, pero también en nuestros hábitos y en nuestra sociedad.

Asimismo, es necesario, desde luego, forjar alianzas para garantizar que tengamos un medio ambiente y un agua más sanos y más saludables, por supuesto, pero necesitamos para ello presupuesto también. Es algo muy importante, aunque muy difícil de abordar; que la ciencia sea la que pondere y la que mida también todas estas medidas. Es muy importante tener siempre en cuenta lo que la ciencia nos dice.

Martin Häusling (Verts/ALE). – Frau Präsidentin, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! PFAS sind gekommen, um zu bleiben – leider. Sie sind hochtoxisch und müssten eigentlich längst aus dem Verkehr gezogen werden. Aber man sieht sie nicht, man kann ihnen nicht ausweichen, sowohl in Produkten als auch in Wasser, Luft und Boden. Aber was wird eigentlich getan? In Deutschland sind 1 500 Standorte belastet. Wir haben aber in Deutschland immer noch sechs Fabriken und die größte Zahl von Fabriken in Europa, die PFAS produzieren – in Bad Wimpfen, in Frankfurt, in Leverkusen, im Chemiepark Gendorf bei Burgkirchen. Was passiert da eigentlich? Da wird eine riesige Fläche wahrscheinlich belastet werden, indem wir weiter produzieren. Und die Kosten allein für die Sanierung von belasteten Flächen werden 17 - Milliarden Euro betragen, und die gesundheitlichen Folgekosten werden wahrscheinlich noch viel höher sein.

Das ist aber auch, wenn man das jetzt sieht, eigentlich ein Versagen der Chemikalienagentur der Europäischen Union, dass man jahrelang nichts gemacht hat. Deshalb: Alle nichtessentiellen PFAS müssen sofort schnellstmöglich aus dem Verkehr gezogen werden, und die Chemikalienstrategie muss jetzt verabschiedet werden. Wir haben keine Zeit mehr, zu warten bis nach dem Sommer, sondern jetzt muss gehandelt werden. Deshalb der dringliche Appell an die Kommission: Handeln Sie jetzt!

Christel Schaldemose (S&D). – Fru formand! Evighedskemikalier er en af vor tids største trusler mod vores sundhed og mod vores miljø. Og det er en skandale, at EU ikke har gjort mere for at beskytte os imod dem. Giftstoffer som PFAS findes overalt i vores hverdag. De gør os syge, de sviner vores miljø, og så nedsætter de fertiliteten. Helt ærligt, der er brug for handling nu! PFAS er et grænseoverskridende problem, som kun kan løses her i EU-fællesskabet. Men vi har kendt til det længe. Hvordan kan det så være, at vi ikke har gjort noget ved mere ved det i EU? Jeg synes faktisk, at EU blæser på forsigtighedsprincippet, når man stiltiende har set til, at vores drikkevand er blevet fyldt med PFAS. Kommissionen skal tage ansvar nu, så vi kan nå at få vedtaget en ny kemikalielovgivning inden EP-valget. Hvis ikke vi skynder os, så risikerer vi, at der går årevis, før vi kommer i mål med det her. Og rigtig mange medlemslande har også presset på for, at der skal ske noget. Så derfor vil jeg slutte af med at spørge Kommissionen direkte: »Hvad er det egentlig, vi venter på?« Lad os få det forbud nu!

Sarah Wiener (Verts/ALE). – Frau Präsidentin, meine Damen und Herren! Sie haben hier schon alles gehört heute. Auch ich möchte in dieses selbe Horn blasen. PFAS sind überall, sie sind Ewigkeitschemikalien, wir werden sie nicht mehr los. Sie sind aber auch ein menschengemachtes Produkt, und sie befinden sich zum Beispiel in Bratpfannen, wie auch erwähnt worden ist, in Nahrungsmittelverpackungsmaterial, aber auch auf Pizzakartons, damit die Pizza nicht durchsuppt. Wir essen also mit sehr vielen Mahlzeiten jedes Mal ein bisschen, ein bisschen, ein My Gift mit, das sich in unserem Blut ablagert, in unserem Blutplasma, wie jetzt das Deutsche Umweltbundesamt 2020 bei Blutplasmaproben von 3- bis 17-Jährigen festgestellt hat, nämlich dass bei den 3- bis 17-Jährigen in 100 % der Blutplasmaproben PFOS und in 86 % der Proben PFOA gefunden wurden – und das, obwohl diese Substanzen schon 2009 beziehungsweise 2019 verboten worden sind.

Jetzt ist der Moment gekommen. Wir hören, es gibt immer größere Umweltgifteinträge. Und es ist wirklich der Moment gekommen, entschlossen zu handeln. Ich möchte die Kommission darin unterstützen, sich nicht ins Bockshorn jagen zu lassen von einer Industrie, die nicht unsere Gesundheit im Blick hat und diese Umweltschäden in längerer Zeit gar nicht abheben kann. Also bitte treiben Sie die Überarbeitung der REACH-Verordnung schnellstens voran und denken Sie an die Gesundheit, an die Umwelt und an unsere Kinder.

Claude Gruffat (Verts/ALE). – Madame la Présidente, Madame la Commissaire, Monsieur le Représentant du Conseil, chers collègues, 17 000 sera la donnée du jour. Dix-sept mille sites à travers l'Europe sont contaminés par les polluants éternels, ces polluants issus des substances chimiques utilisées dans l'industrie, dans l'agriculture, et que l'on retrouve partout dans notre quotidien. Ces polluants contribuent à la pandémie d'obésité, à la hausse importante des cancers environnementaux et aux problématiques de fertilité auxquelles nous sommes confrontés partout en Europe. Et que font les pouvoirs publics? Rien de significatif.

On a appris vendredi dernier, après six mois de dissimulation soigneusement orchestrée par le gouvernement français, qu'un rapport désastreux sur les polluants éternels concluait à une très mauvaise surveillance de ces substances et à une totale incapacité à les éliminer lors des traitements visant à rendre l'eau potable. Ce constat français est valable pour toute l'Union européenne.

Quand arrêterons-nous de jouer avec la santé de nos concitoyens et de nos concitoyennes pour permettre à quelques-uns de s'enrichir? Aujourd'hui, la réglementation européenne est défaillante et son application lacunaire. La Commission européenne ne doit pas céder aux pressions des lobbys de l'industrie, dont le commissaire Thierry Breton s'est fait le porte-parole. La Commission doit proposer sa révision de la réglementation avant le mois de juin. La protection de la santé des Européennes et des Européens vous oblige et nous oblige tous.

(Applaudissements)

Mairead McGuinness, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, colleagues, I do want to try and respond to some of your questions, and I will understand if I am not giving you the answers you need but I do think we need to be very clear. And I will convey the strength of this debate to my colleagues in the Commission, as I'm sure you will be aware.

So on the timing of the revision of REACH, we know this revision is urgent and we've heard it from the Environment Committee and now today in this debate. As you know, when presenting the work programme of the Commission, Vice-President Šeřčovič spoke of the possibility of an earlier date for the proposal, if we can do that. I mentioned already that we are working hard, with great urgency, to ensure the quality of the proposal. As you said in your intervention, Bas Eickhout, the impact assessment is complete and the services are addressing the comments from the Regulatory Scrutiny Board. Drafting of the legislation is underway. It is programmed for Q4 but if the proposal is ready earlier, it remains a possibility.

On the second point – questions on the state of play of the PFAS restriction – as you know, five countries have submitted the restriction dossier to the European Chemicals Agency in January of this year. This procedure requires two assessments by two specific committees. The aim of ECHA is to deliver the opinions to the Commission in the shortest possible time frame, while obviously ensuring proper scrutiny from the committees. And based on the restriction proposal and the opinions provided by these committees, the Commission makes the legislative proposal for the restriction under REACH. And I would also point out that this restriction procedure that the five Member States are undertaking is under the current legal framework of REACH. So timing is not affected by the new proposals for the targeted revision of the REACH provisions.

You raise a very important point in this debate around enforcement of existing legislation, and this is one of the issues that we will deal with in the revision of REACH: improving enforcement by setting up an audit system, increased transparency and frequent checks. So I hope that addresses questions which were raised by colleagues.

Briefly, in conclusion, we are already taking some steps. If I point out the contamination of soils and drinking water, we are working to protect health and the environment, including rules under the Industrial Emissions Directive, setting limit values through water and food legislation and restrictions under EU chemicals legislation. As I have said, we do need to update REACH to increase market incentives also for chemicals that are safe and sustainable by design, with benefits for health and the environment, for the economy and jobs.

The assessment of the risks of these substances in soils must be improved and appropriate remedial action taken if required. The Commission will facilitate a dialogue and knowledge exchange on risk assessment of soil contaminants, and I think we all agree that we owe this to citizens and the environment. And, indeed, we owe this to industry, which needs – as you pointed out – long-term legal clarity and predictability when they make their investment choices.

Jessika Roswall, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Madam President, honourable Members and Commissioner, this debate has shown that we all agree that PFAS are some of the most problematic substances of our time, and these toxic substances are a threat to humans, animals and the environment. And for this reason, I believe that it is very positive that we are taking steps towards a sustainable chemical policy with the revised REACH and other files that were raised here today, and this is of utmost importance to protect our health and the environment.

And as I said at the beginning of this debate, the Presidency stands ready to work on the proposals as soon as these are tabled, which the Commissioner has pointed out.

And thank you for noting Sweden's actions and, in parallel, of course we will continue to work on improving the quality of our water and our soil. Thank you again for this important debate and thank you for your attention.

Die Präsidentin. – Die Aussprache ist geschlossen.

Schriftliche Erklärungen (Artikel 171)

Romana Jerković (S&D), napisan. – Prema nedavnom istraživanju, vječna kemikalija PFAS može dovesti do problema s plodnošću žena. Ona se, između ostalog, pojavljuje u i našoj hrani pa stoga ne čudi činjenica da je velik broj ljudi njome kontaminiran. Kako bismo riješili ovaj problem, potrebna nam je veća transparentnost i češće provjere.

Trebamo zajedničkim snagama nastojati izbjeći onečišćenje tla i regenerirati već onečišćena tla. Isto tako, moramo spriječiti onečišćenje na izvoru. Zaštita okoliša je zaštita konkurentnosti europske ekonomije.

Iako je u Europi registrirano više od 20 000 kemikalija na dnevnoj bazi, na tržištu ih ima oko 100 000. Sukladno tome, moramo promijeniti način života i uključiti industriju u rješavanje ovog problema. Budući da se radi o tvarima koje ugrožavaju naše zdravlje, važno je djelovati što je prije moguće.

Moramo zaštititi okoliš ne samo kroz zakone, već i kroz individualne navike i društvo. Trebaju nam i financijska sredstva. U podlozi svih mjera treba biti znanost. Neke zemlje žele uvesti restrikcije, ali one neće stupiti na snagu prije 2026. godine.

Budući da se svake godine otpušta 75 % više PFAS-a u okoliš, potrebna je hitna revizija Uredbe o kemikalijama. Interesi multinacionalnih kompanija ne smiju biti ispred interesa ljudskih života.

15. Markets in Crypto-assets (MiCa) - Information accompanying transfers of funds and certain crypto-assets (recast) (debate)

Die Präsidentin. – Als nächster Punkt der Tagesordnung folgt die gemeinsame Aussprache über

— den Bericht von Stefan Berger im Namen des Ausschusses für Wirtschaft und Währung über den Vorschlag für eine Verordnung des Europäischen Parlaments und des Rates über Märkte für Kryptowerte und zur Änderung der Richtlinie (EU) 2019/1937 (COM(2020)0593 – C9-0306/2020 – 2020/0265(COD)) (A9-0052/2022) und

— den Bericht von Ernest Urtasun im Namen des Ausschusses für Wirtschaft und Währung und Assita Kanko im Namen des Ausschusses für bürgerliche Freiheiten, Justiz und Inneres über den Vorschlag für eine Verordnung des Europäischen Parlaments und des Rates über die Übermittlung von Angaben bei Geldtransfers und Transfers bestimmter Kryptowerte (Neufassung) (COM(2021)0422 – C9-0341/2021 — 2021/0241 (COD)) (A9-0081/2022).

Stefan Berger, Berichterstatter. – Frau Präsidentin, meine Damen und Herren, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Mit der morgigen Abstimmung über die Krypto-Verordnung geht ein langer und komplexer Prozess zu Ende. Mit der morgigen Abstimmung erzielen wir einen gemeinsamen Erfolg, einen Erfolg, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen, um den wir lange gerungen haben. Und mit der morgigen finalen Abstimmung über die Krypto-Verordnung setzen wir die Europäische Union an die weltweite Spitze in der *token economy*.

Bisher war die juristische Situation bei Krypto vergleichbar mit Wildwest. Regeln, die Verbraucher vor Betrug und Gefahren schützen, waren de facto nicht existent. Das wird jetzt beendet. Wir haben den Fall FTX erlebt, in dem eine Börse 30 Milliarden Dollar verbrannt hat und beinahe einen Lehman-Brothers-Moment ausgelöst hätte, und das nur, weil eine Regulierung gefehlt hat, die dies verhindert hätte. MiCA – *markets in crypto-assets* – repariert das Vertrauen, das durch Fälle wie FTX beschädigt wurde, und durch diesen ausgewogenen Rechtsrahmen schaffen wir Stabilität in einer jungen Branche.

Wie sieht dieser Rechtsrahmen aus? Was haben wir konzipiert? Zunächst klassifizieren wir Coins, um sie beurteilen zu können. Dann klären wir auch Informationsrechte der Verbraucher, und deshalb müssen Herausgeber von Coins ab jetzt ein *whitepaper* erstellen, in dem sie auf die zugrunde liegende Technologie, Risiken, Umtausch, Rückgaberechte und vieles mehr eingehen müssen, um zum Handel zugelassen zu werden. Auch muss bei der Zulassung neuer Coins geprüft werden, ob das Geschäftsmodell nicht die Währungsstabilität gefährdet. Facebook mit 2,4 Milliarden Usern hätte so eine Genehmigung für das geplante Projekt Libra nie bekommen.

Wir haben *non-fungible tokens* von MiCA ausgenommen. MiCA adressiert im Wesentlichen in diesem Bereich nur die *crypto-asset service provider*, die Dienstleistungen für NFT anbieten. Das ist eine gute Lösung, genauso wie wir eine kompetente Aufsichtsarchitektur zwischen EBA und ESMA sichergestellt haben und gut gefunden haben.

Schließlich und endlich wurde der Aspekt der Umweltauswirkungen sehr kontrovers bei uns im Verhandlungsteam diskutiert. Wir haben eine gute Lösung gefunden, ohne auf ein Verbot von *proof-of-work* zurückgreifen zu müssen. Stattdessen müssen Herausgeber strenge Offenlegungspflichten über den Energieverbrauch und die Umweltauswirkungen beachten. Ich glaube, anhand dieser Daten soll jeder selbst für sich entscheiden können, ob er ein *crypto-asset* kauft oder nicht.

Meine Damen und Herren, die Tokenisierung setzt sich fort. Die Blockchain-Technologie ermöglicht bahnbrechende Innovationen. Mit MiCA haben wir die richtige Antwort. Ich danke allen Schattenberichterstellern für intellektuell hochklassige Diskussionen. Wir haben uns in Gebiete vorgewagt, die nie zuvor Gegenstand politischer Debatten waren. Ich danke auch der Kommission für die gute Zusammenarbeit in diesen komplexen Diskussionen und bitte morgen um eine breite Unterstützung.

Ernest Urtasun, *rapporteur*. – Madam President, Commissioner, the MiCA and TFR recast mark the end of the Wild West era for the unregulated world of crypto-assets. For over a decade, the lack of regulation has resulted in massive losses to many first time investors and provided a safe haven for fraudsters and international criminal networks.

MiCA represents an important and necessary first step to bring the crypto sector under the regulatory oversight. There will be safeguards for investor protection rules against market abuse, anti-money laundering checks on companies and crypto companies will be held liable to the clients.

One key concern was that this whole new framework is undermined by foreign companies serving EU customers from outside the EU, in breach of MiCA standards. We successfully pushed for an EU-wide blacklist of non-compliant entities supported by far reaching supervisory powers. This will add regulatory teeth to MiCA.

One contentious point was related to the climate impact of crypto mining. MiCA will require now issuers and crypto companies to disclose information on the climate footprint of the crypto they issue and trade, based on a standardised methodology. This is positive but I have to say it is only a first step until we finally manage to better control at international level certain consensus mechanisms that are extremely energy intensive and have become a threat for our climate goals.

Overall, there is more to be done. From lending and staking, decentralised finance, NFTs to the environmental impact of crypto mining, as well as on antitrust and with respect to supervision of crypto groups. The recent collapses in crypto space – FTX, SVB, Silvergate – showed the urgency of taking additional steps. MiCA today is a first step, but is not enough.

Finally, MiCA will fully apply only in the last quarter of 2024 and I would like to ask the Commission, and also the Member States, until then to analyse possible transitional measures to protect consumers and prevent abuses.

Let me now quickly move to the recast of the TFR. Today, illicit flows are moved swiftly across the world with a high chance of never being detected. Criminals thrive where there is financial secrecy and anonymity. The recast of the TFR will finally oblige crypto-asset service providers to trace every crypto-asset transfer to a verified identity in order to detect and block suspicious transactions and facilitate investigations.

Parliament has significantly strengthened the original Commission proposal. Firstly, by ensuring traceability on all crypto transfers from the first euro by eliminating the *de minimis* threshold of EUR 1 000. Secondly, transfers between a CASP and a self-hosted wallet are captured by the traceability rules. And thirdly, CASPs are required to apply enhanced due diligence on a risk basis to all transfers with self-hosted wallets, including verification where possible, and mandatory verification in certain cases.

I believe that with these measures, the EU will implement the most ambitious travel rule legislation in the world so far, in full compliance with international standards. Let me end by thanking my co-rapporteurs and all shadows for the excellent cooperation to ensure a swift conclusion of political negotiations. Thanks to Commissioner McGuinness as well, and her teams, for the support; to the French Presidency, also, for the openness and constructive negotiations. And let me end by thanking my team, Valeria Cusceddu and Jesús Hernández, who are the Green advisors who I work with, without whom this would not have been possible.

Assita Kanko, rapporteur. – Madam President, dear Commissioner and dear colleagues, the last few years have been quite a wild ride in the crypto world. Sometimes – and my colleagues would confirm that as well – it felt like a wild ride also here in this Parliament when we are negotiating the Transfer of Funds Regulation.

We started work on this file just after the total crypto market cap hit its third trillion. Trading was feverish, lobbying was feverish, and many people wanted to make sure that we do not harm this growth sector, which was also never our intention.

Things look quite different right now. At one point, cryptos collectively lost almost two-thirds of their market value. Although this year there has been some recovery, the sector is reeling from high-profile scandals and bankruptcies. Some very normal people that could be your neighbours have lost a lot. A lot more people have come around to the idea now that crypto-assets need normal regulations. That is what we have been working on in Parliament and Council, together with the Commission. I am firmly convinced that the package we are now debating today is a good package. MiCA and TFR together will make holding and trading crypto-assets safer for ordinary people and more difficult for criminals, terrorists and for sanction-evaders.

Let me highlight a few points: first of all, our new European legislation does not say that crypto-assets are bad, or that they are good. It does not say that holders and traders of crypto-assets are bad or good. This legislation simply seeks to regulate a sector that is still quite new and dynamic, but it takes a neutral approach to the merits of the sector.

Secondly, the rules that we agreed upon between Parliament and Council are not revolutionary. I would even say that there are a lot less revolutionary than some people believe crypto-assets to be. Ninety-nine per cent of our work has been to translate rules that have already existed for many years for the traditional banking sector to the crypto world.

We have translated the existing travel rule from traditional finance to crypto. We have translated existing provisions on fighting money laundering and terrorist financing from traditional finance to crypto. Colleague Berger with his file created rules on transparency and disclosure, on consumer protection and the prevention of market abuse. All this stuff is standard as every entrepreneur and every EU country knows.

Let me mention two specific issues from my own file. First of all, the threshold for application of the travel rule, or rather the absence of a threshold. It was the Slovenian Council Presidency that first removed the EUR 1 000 threshold from the Commission proposal. In Parliament, we follow the Member States. I am convinced we are doing the right thing here.

Colleagues, a EUR 1 000 threshold is really quite meaningless in the crypto world. There is high price volatility. Smurfing and opening or closing accounts is so easy. Just like banks, crypto-asset service providers would anyway need to check linked transactions, so even with a threshold in place, small amounts cannot be transferred without bureaucracy. Most importantly, it's often in the small amounts that crime is hidden. We have seen evidence of fundraisers from terrorists with amounts of around EUR 100. We have seen evidence of payments on child pornography sites with amounts around EUR 10 or EUR 20. If we would not include the small transfers, we will not be doing enough.

Another contentious issue has been the partial inclusion of unhosted wallets. Again, the Member States made the first move in the general approach. The point is the following: we already agree that crypto-asset service providers, the banks and trading houses of crypto need regulation. We also concluded that peer-to-peer transfers, the decentralised part of the crypto world, should stay out of the scope, even if I understand that my S&D colleague Paul Tang disagrees.

But what about the interaction between crypto wallets hosted by CASPs and the unregulated private wallets? In order to prevent a massive loophole, we decided to apply the travel rule to those interactions as well. This is not fundamentally different from identifying yourself when making cash deposits or withdrawals from your bank account. Will this create a dual system and push crypto holders and traders into the unregulated world? I don't think so. The verification burden on CASPs is very limited. We are not going to be as strict as some other countries are already today.

Colleagues, there is more to say, but I think my time for now is up and I'm looking forward to our debate. I will be happy to get back to you at the end after hearing your observations. And I also extend my thanks to my co-rapporteur Urtasun, who is amazing, to all the shadows and to my political group advisor, Jannes De Jong, thank you very much. And the collaboration with Valeria.

Mairead McGuinness, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, dear colleagues, I welcome this debate, and I think it's really important that we're having an exchange before we have the vote tomorrow, because as some of you have mentioned, we are ahead of many other jurisdictions in this area.

But I want to start by thanking the rapporteurs and to acknowledge the very good cooperation, despite disagreements, to get these files over the line. Let me name Stefan Berger for MiCA, Ernest Urtasun and Assita Kanko for the Transfer of Funds Regulation and, of course, all of the shadow rapporteurs for both files. And I really do want to extend an appreciation for our ECON Chair, Irene Tinagli, who has facilitated this work and, of course, the French Presidency.

We are putting in place comprehensive, tailored rules for crypto-assets in the European Union. No one, I think, in this House questions why these rules are absolutely vital for the financial system. And, as we've seen in recent months, stringent rules and supervision are very much needed because we've had the collapse of projects such as FTX, Terra Luna, Celsius and Voyager.

We've seen many retail investors lured in by false promises or false hopes, losing huge amounts of money. And while the crypto market may be too small to trigger systemic risks, we do know that there are increasing links between crypto markets and traditional financial services.

So now to a few elements of our new rules. Firstly, MiCA will bring crypto markets into the regulated space by addressing risks related to consumer protection, market integrity and financial stability. It will also provide legal certainty for market participants that will be able to continue to innovate in a safe environment.

Secondly, it will introduce rules to prevent market abuse of crypto markets such as market manipulation. And we're bringing crypto asset service providers into the scope of anti-money laundering rules.

Third, under MiCA, crypto-asset service providers like wallet providers or exchangers that serve EU customers will have to be established in the EU and they will be authorised and supervised by national supervisory authorities. MiCA will allow EU-authorised crypto-asset service providers to passport their services throughout the European Union. In return, these operators will be subject to stringent prudential and conduct rules, in addition to rules against insider trading and market manipulation. Crypto-asset service providers will also have to disclose the environmental impact of crypto-assets they offer to customers.

Fourth, the transfer of funds will require all crypto-asset service providers recognised under MiCA to include information about the sender and beneficiary with crypto-asset transfers. This is in full compliance with the Financial Action Task Force international standards on crypto-assets.

Overall, we're putting safeguards in place that would prevent companies active on the EU market from engaging in some of the practices that led certain crypto-asset operators to collapse in recent months.

After your vote tomorrow, we hope final Council approval and the final signature by the co-legislators will soon follow and we hope for publication by the end of June and entry into force in July of 2023. The new rules will apply progressively. Yes, Markus, I looked for attention from my colleague and I got clarification, thank you. The MiCA provisions on stablecoins will start to apply in July of 2024. The provisions on issuers of other crypto-assets and crypto-asset service providers will start applying in January of 2025, together with the transfer of funds rules. We're applying these new rules rather progressively, giving stakeholders time to adapt to them, and it gives us time to adopt the secondary legislation for the implementation of the rules.

On a final note, and I think this is very clear to all of us, crypto markets are international and this means that robust rules in the EU are necessary, but other countries need to play their part as well. So I'm very supportive of international regulatory discussions in this area. Indeed, in the US, just last week, we did have useful conversations with our US counterparts about the regulation of crypto markets. So thank you for this debate and I look forward now to listening to all of the contributions.

Lídia Pereira, *em nome do Grupo PPE*. – Senhora Presidente, os mercados financeiros estão a mudar e as leis têm de mudar com eles. A digitalização e a descentralização são tendências inevitáveis. A emergência dos criptoativos traz riscos que temos de mitigar e oportunidades que não podemos desperdiçar. A Europa perdeu o comboio da inovação quando surgiu a internet e não soube liderar a revolução da internet das plataformas.

Agora, não basta apenas apanhar o comboio. Temos de ser a locomotiva da inovação e liderar esta nova era de tecnologias financeiras da Web 3.0.

Há cada vez mais europeus a utilizar criptoativos para investir, para comprar bens e serviços, ou mesmo para apoiar causas como a luta da Ucrânia pela liberdade e pela democracia. Estes ativos têm, portanto, de ser fiáveis e confiáveis para cidadãos e empresas. Temos de evitar os obstáculos legais e a burocracia que afastam o investimento. Temos de ter uma política fiscal competitiva para atrair os melhores cérebros e os melhores projetos. Temos de investir em infraestruturas digitais que facilitem a instalação das melhores soluções tecnológicas em solo europeu.

Como em tudo, não há mudanças sem riscos. Os escândalos financeiros que conhecemos não seriam evitados por esta legislação, mas seriam mais difíceis de acontecer.

Com o regulamento relativo aos mercados de criptoativos damos um sinal claro: a Europa quer regular de forma inteligente e virada para o futuro. E com o regulamento relativo a transferências de fundos sinalizamos que o combate ao branqueamento de capitais, ao financiamento do terrorismo e à fuga de sanções internacionais não tem aqui uma janela de oportunidade.

A Europa pode estar orgulhosa com o passo que damos hoje. Desta vez, não vamos assistir ao que se passa. Desta vez, vamos dizer como se vai passar.

Jonás Fernández, *en nombre del Grupo S&D*. – Señora presidenta, comisaria, sin duda el entorno cripto y los avances tecnológicos en esta materia permiten abrir nuevas vías de innovación y también abrir espacios para la democratización financiera. Ahora bien, los criptoactivos generan también retos muy importantes: retos de supervisión, retos de regulación, retos de control de la financiación del terrorismo y de otras actividades ilegales y, sin duda, retos también para la propia soberanía monetaria, para lo cual discutiremos más adelante la propuesta del euro digital.

Damos la bienvenida a este nuevo marco regulatorio, al MICA, que permitirá encauzar algunos de estos activos. Pero también es importante reconocer que hay algunos agujeros, algunos espacios, en ese marco regulatorio que debieran invitarnos a un segundo MICA, podríamos decir, en los próximos tiempos.

En todo caso, y como ponente de este Parlamento en el paquete para mejorar el tratamiento prudencial y la seguridad de nuestro sector bancario, me gustaría desde aquí invitar al Consejo de la Unión Europea y especialmente a su Presidencia sueca, a que se abran a debatir en el marco de los diálogos tripartitos la propuesta de este Parlamento para introducir el tratamiento prudencial de los activos de estos criptoactivos en la regulación bancaria.

Yo creo que tenemos una buena oportunidad para seguir avanzando en esta senda regulatoria, a la que nos invita también la Comisión, y garantizar un entorno de una mayor estabilidad que permita, por otra parte, aprovechar las ventajas innovativas de este tipo de activos.

Ondřej Kovařík, *on behalf of the Renew Group*. – Madam President, I welcome the final agreement on the MiCa and Transfer of Funds Regulation. These texts will guide the sector as we move towards full implementation.

What we need now is strong cooperation between the stakeholders, the industry, and the competent authorities, the regulators, the supervisors to ensure that the MiCa is properly enforced and there is a clear understanding of the new rules on all sides, particularly on licensing requirements.

It is paramount, also, that the final TFR requirement and agreement is fully reflected in the ongoing discussions on anti-money laundering rules to ensure that there is legal certainty consistency for the crypto sector. This new regulated status could also help crypto companies to be recognised on the same footing as actors from the traditional financial sector, giving them full access to financial services, including, for instance, bank accounts.

If we can implement the rules well, this will also ensure that the EU has a strong voice on the international stage to push for crypto assets globally. The EU is the first large global jurisdiction to have a comprehensive framework in trading assets, and I think we should be proud of it.

Andželika Anna Moźdzanowska, *w imieniu grupy ECR*. – Pani Przewodnicząca, Pani Komisarz, Szanowne Koleżanki i Szanowni Koledzy! Przeżyliśmy kryzys i załamania rynku kryptoaktywów i widzimy wyraźnie, jakim praktykom zapobiegać i na co musieliśmy zwrócić szczególną uwagę. Najgłośniejszy w branży skandal – upadek giełdy FTX – nastąpił z powodu długotrwałego wprowadzania w błąd inwestorów co do faktycznej wartości posiadanych aktywów. Nasze rozporządzenie MiCa stanowi odpowiedź właśnie na ten problem. Zapewnia mechanizmy kontroli wewnętrznej, obowiązkowe raportowanie sposobu zarządzania oraz skuteczną segregację aktywów klienta od aktywów dostawcy.

Uważam, że naczelne wartości, które należy bezwzględnie chronić, to wolny rynek, uczciwa konkurencja i zapewnienie inwestorom rzetelnej informacji umożliwiającej świadomą decyzję. Równe szanse na rynku to także neutralność technologiczna, którą zapewniliśmy właśnie w tym rozporządzeniu. Jestem stanowczo przeciwna dyskryminowaniu niektórych kryptoaktywów pod pretekstem troski o środowisko. W tych staraniach jest zbyt wiele obłudy i partykularnych interesów, by wierzyć w szczerą intencję i bezinteresowność środowisk forsujących takie ograniczenia.

Jako przedstawicielka Polski, państwa spoza strefy euro, cieszę się szczególnie, że udało się zabezpieczyć interesy również takich państw członkowskich. Uwzględnienie opinii banków centralnych w procesie licencjonowania czy utrzymanie krajowego nadzoru nad pieniądzem cyfrowym, funkcjonującym tylko w danym kraju, to dla mnie jako kontroldawczyni spore osiągnięcie i ważny element monetarnej niezależności. Podsumowując, o ile w przypadku wielu aktów stanowionych w tym parlamencie mam spore wątpliwości, czy rzeczywiście służą one obywatelom i czy są niezbędne, to dzisiaj jestem przekonana, że praca wykonana przy rozporządzeniu MiCa dobrze przysłuży się Europejczykom.

Antonio Maria Rinaldi, *a nome del gruppo ID*. – Signora Presidente, Signora Commissaria, colleghi, dopo una lunga e intensa contrattazione sia in commissione ECON che nel trilatero, siamo giunti al testo del regolamento sui *markets in crypto-assets* (MiCA), dove è stato fatto senza nessun dubbio un grandissimo e ottimo lavoro.

Tuttavia vorrei sottolineare alcune criticità. L'Unione europea è la prima ad introdurre delle norme in questo settore, con il rischio però di rincorrere la rapida evoluzione del mondo *cripto* e *cripto-assets*, con il pericolo concreto di emanare un regolamento già obsoleto.

Proprio per questo motivo ho sempre sostenuto fortemente la necessità di promuovere una conferenza mondiale sulle cripto-attività, una sorta di Bretton Woods, per poter pianificare e armonizzare regole comuni tra tutti gli attori, soprattutto quelli extraeuropei.

Abbiamo comunque raggiunto l'obiettivo di fissare pochi e semplici paletti normativi in un terreno che fino ad ora potremmo definire da Far West, e questo principalmente a tutela degli investitori/consumatori.

Tuttavia non dimentichiamo che viviamo in un mondo fortemente globalizzato dei mercati finanziari per il quale, in mancanza di un approccio comune alla materia, potrebbero crearsi enormi problematiche di concorrenza dovute alle forti asimmetrie normative.

Anche se è opinione diffusa che le normative europee aggiungano spesso burocrazie inutili, in questo caso possiamo affermare che, con l'introduzione del regolamento MiCa, abbiamo contribuito a dare un'enorme opportunità a questo settore, riconoscendolo legalmente, e quindi di aver tracciato un percorso per il futuro.

Chris MacManus, *on behalf of The Left Group*. – Madam President, Commissioner, I firstly want to thank Mr Berger and all who worked on this file. And I want to be clear: my support is based on the fact that this legislation brings transparency, protects consumers and adds financial stability. I have no interest in creating a market in or fostering the use of crypto assets. At their worst they are pyramid schemes, are used by criminal gangs for money laundering or defrauding working people, and they can waste huge amounts of energy for no purpose. I see little or no social or economic benefit to these tools of speculation.

I accept the reality that crypto-assets exist, and short of banning them, they must be regulated. I predict we will be back here again, tightening this regulation and closing any loopholes left open. As Fabio Panetta of the ECB put it, crypto-assets are bringing about instability and insecurity, the exact opposite of what they promised. They are creating a new Wild West. Now, the Wild West may have romantic connotations, but I don't think anyone would want to live there. So we have a responsibility to regulate the good from the bad and ugly.

Any identifiable use that crypto-assets might have in terms of efficiency and technological innovation must be put to use in the design of public money such as the digital euro. Crypto-assets are a threat to financial stability, to consumers, to the environment, and at their most extreme, to the functioning of a democratic society. Those pushing their use are vested interests out for a quick buck. They're detached from and have no regard for what working people and families actually need. So let us regulate, regulate, regulate.

Lukas Mandl (PPE). – Frau Präsidentin, Frau Kommissarin, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Geld bedeutet Vertrauen, Vertrauen in ein Produkt oder eine Dienstleistung oder eine Arbeitsleistung, selbstverständlich Vertrauen darin, dass mit dem Geld etwas Gutes gemacht werden kann und dass es dann Bonität gibt im Rückfluss dieses Geldes. Deshalb ist es mir so wichtig, dass der Titel dieser Debatte nicht *cryptocurrencies* heißt, also Kryptowährungen, sondern *crypto-assets*. Denn Krypto, das ist nicht Geld, sondern das sind Assets, und das ist nicht eine Währung, weil Währungen – Geld –, das kann man nicht privatisieren. Geld braucht im Hintergrund demokratisch legitimierte Staaten, die dieses Vertrauen stärken.

Deshalb ist es auch so wichtig, dass wir als Vertretung der Bürgerinnen und Bürger Europas die unabhängige Europäische Zentralbank dennoch genau beobachten und uns auch unsere Meinung dazu bilden, was die Europäische Zentralbank mit unserem Geld gerade in diesen Zeiten der Inflation und der Herausforderungen in so vielen Bereichen macht. Es ist daher wichtig, dass wir mit dieser Regulierung sicherstellen, dass alles transparent ist, was mit *crypto-assets* gemacht wird auf der gesamten Kette, in der *crypto-assets* eingesetzt werden, und dass wir sehr, sehr kritisch hinterfragen, was mit einem Einstieg der Eurozone in dieses *crypto-asset*-Geschäft überhaupt bezweckt werden sollte und ob das dann sinnvoll wäre.

Ich bin da sehr kritisch zu dem, was der sogenannte digitale Euro genannt wird. Ich glaube, dass das Bargeld als Form der Ausübung von Freiheit selbstverständlich erhalten gehört. Wie in allen anderen Bereichen gehört Geldwäsche, gehört jede Art von Missbrauch bekämpft, aber deshalb Bargeld in Summe in Frage zu stellen, ist ganz sicher der falsche Weg. Da schließt sich der Kreis, weil wir dieses Vertrauen, das Geld bedeutet, auch jeden Tag stärken müssen. Und dazu sind wir als Parlamentarierinnen und Parlamentarier auch aufgefordert.

Aurore Lalucq (S&D). – Madame la Présidente, Madame la Commissaire, chers collègues, grâce à MiCA et à TFR, les acteurs des cryptos vont pouvoir commencer à appliquer des règles de base de la finance traditionnelle, des trucs dingues comme demander les identités, avoir une assurance, ne pas recourir à la manipulation de marché ou au délit d'initié. C'est bien. C'est mieux que rien. Est-ce que c'est suffisant? Non.

La Banque centrale européenne, à travers les voix de Christine Lagarde, Fabio Panetta et Elizabeth McCaul, estime que MiCA ne suffit pas à réglementer correctement les cryptos, et ils ont raison, entre autres pour des questions de seuils et de délais d'application. Ainsi, la plus grosse plateforme au monde, Binance, qui est enregistrée dans la cryptonation française, pourra se mettre en conformité avec MiCA dans seulement dix-huit mois. Dix-huit mois pendant lesquels les épargnants n'auront donc aucune protection. Quand j'ai abordé ce sujet en commission ECON, la Commission européenne m'a répondu: «Ah bah c'est comme ça!» Pardon, mais ce n'est pas une réponse. De deux choses l'une: soit il n'y a pas de problème, et on ne légifère même pas, soit il y a un problème, et dans ce cas-là on doit agir.

Donc, Madame la Commissaire, j'ai des questions pour vous. Estimez-vous que M^{me} Lagarde, M. Panetta et M^{me} McCaul ont tort sur leur jugement quant à MiCA? Si oui, pourquoi? Sinon, que comptez-vous faire? C'est vous qui avez décidé d'avoir une approche spécifique sur les cryptos, alors qu'il faudrait plutôt suivre une logique simple, qui dit: «Même service, mêmes risques, même réglementation». Aussi, on vous demande d'agir rapidement.

J'attire aussi l'attention de mes collègues sur le fait que l'AEMF a la possibilité d'interdire les produits financiers lorsqu'ils sont dangereux.

Je terminerai en louant l'action des Américains, et notamment d'un homme, Gary Gensler, qui a choisi de protéger les épargnants américains. Je pense que nous devrions nous inspirer de ce que font les États-Unis.

ΠΡΟΕΔΡΙΑ: ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΟΣ ΠΑΠΑΔΗΜΟΥΛΗΣ

Αντιπρόεδρος

Ramona Strugariu (Renew). – Mr President, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the global volume of money laundering is estimated at between 2% and 5% of global GDP, of which about 10 billion may be laundered through cryptocurrencies every year. One of the main challenges in combating money laundering through crypto-asset transfers is the difficulty in tracing transactions. While traditional financial transactions are recorded and tracked, crypto operate on platforms that are often difficult to monitor. This makes it very hard for law enforcement agencies to identify and investigate suspicious transactions.

Europol hosted, in September 2022, the 6th Global Conference on Criminal Finances and Cryptocurrencies and there are five major recommendations emerging from this conference. I would like to briefly refer to two of them. The first and very important one is breaking down silos between traditional and crypto organised crime and money laundering. These are two merging worlds. Crypto-assets are more and more involved in traditional money laundering patterns and they need to be treated as such.

The second one is to regulate broadly and make full use of existing laws. This is exactly why we have today the Transfer of Funds and MiCA regulations as well as the AML package, which is still under negotiation. Because we do need a strong regulatory framework for anti-money laundering, for transfers and for crypto-assets to ensure the integrity of our financial systems and, last but not least, to save lives. And I would like to thank the Commissioner and my colleagues for the excellent work and I'm looking forward to its implementation.

Michiel Hoogeveen (ECR). – Voorzitter, voor de EU is de verordening betreffende markten in cryptoactiva (MiCA) een gamechanger. Tot nu toe moesten cryptobedrijven in de EU bij elke nationale toezichthouder aankloppen als ze de EU-markt wilden bedienen. Als een bedrijf nu een MiCA-licentie in één land krijgt, zal het dezelfde service ook kunnen aanbieden in de gehele gemeenschappelijke markt. Met de MiCA-verordening van kracht zullen niet-gereguleerde bedrijven van buiten de EU niet langer in staat zijn om proactief EU-consumenten te werven. Het FTX-debacle van misleiding en wanbeheer liet zien dat dit een broodnodige stap is. Wij zijn van mening dat cryptoactiva een innovatieve bijdrage aan onze economie kunnen leveren. De EU moet daarom een aantrekkelijke plek zijn waar start-ups kunnen floreren.

Voorzitter, laten we doorgaan met wetgeving die inziet dat de digitale transitie gepaard moet gaan met kansenvrijheid. Ik feliciteer de rapporteurs met het geleverde resultaat.

Gunnar Beck (ID). – Mr President, the EU is introducing a new regulatory framework for crypto-assets, which offers some consumer protection, may deter businesses operating from within the EU, but above all raises serious privacy concerns. The new rules impose extensive compliance requirements on crypto-asset providers which need to obtain an EU operating licence. Crypto-asset providers also need to provide real-time information about pricing processes and trading volumes. This requires considerable technical expertise, which raises entry barriers for SMEs.

Crypto transfers above EUR 1 000 between exchanges and unhosted wallets owned by private individuals are now automatically reported to national authorities, regardless of any money laundering or terrorism-related suspicions. The EU is criminalising decentralised finance and its users.

The fight against money laundering and terrorist financing should be fought against the Islamist terrorists and the NGOs financing them, not against ordinary citizens that are venturing into crypto for a safe store of value in times of runaway inflation and unaffordable real estate. Under the guise of anti-terrorism and anti-money laundering, the EU is establishing a total financial surveillance state. This should be a grave concern for anyone who takes privacy and individual rights seriously.

José Gusmão (The Left). – Senhor Presidente, o mercado das criptomoedas tem, hoje, uma capitalização semelhante à que tinha a indústria do *subprime* antes da última crise financeira. E essa dimensão continua a crescer, e vai crescer ainda mais depois de aprovada este regulamento e de dada credibilidade pública a uma indústria que assenta em «dinheiro do monopólio».

Mas o facto dos criptoativos serem dinheiro a brincar não quer dizer que não tenham consequências sérias. A ligação entre o mercado dos criptoativos e o sistema financeiro convencional é cada vez maior e são cada vez mais as famílias que dão dinheiro a sério em troca de ativos a brincar.

O regulamento que aqui é proposto já é obsoleto, como disse a presidente do Banco Central Europeu, ou seja, estamos a aprovar um regulamento que já é obsoleto antes de entrar em vigor.

Em segundo lugar, é ineficaz porque coloca uma missão impossível às agências regulatórias, preparando-se para as tornar nos bodes expiatórios de futuras crises financeiras.

E, finalmente, não faz absolutamente nada – a não ser uma pequena declaração de intenções – sobre as consequências ambientais desta absurda indústria.

Markus Ferber (PPE). – Herr Präsident, sehr geehrte Frau Kommissarin, liebe Kolleginnen, liebe Kollegen! Die Märkte für *crypto-assets* sind nichts für schwache Nerven. Wir haben in den vergangenen Jahren nicht nur extreme Volatilität gesehen, sondern auch Marktmanipulation, Betrugsmaschen und – ich möchte es mal deutlich sagen – katastrophales Risikomanagement. Die Pleite der Kryptobörse FTX ist nur eines der vielen Beispiele dafür.

Unabhängig davon, was man von *crypto-assets* grundsätzlich hält, müssen wir aber attestieren, dass sich diese Märkte einer gewissen Beliebtheit erfreuen. Und eben weil viele Menschen diese Märkte trotz aller Turbulenzen nutzen wollen, ist es wichtig, dass wir als Parlament hier dafür sorgen, dass Marktmissbrauch unterbunden wird, dass Mindeststandards für den Verbraucherschutz eingeführt werden, dass die Konvertibilität, die Umwechselbarkeit auch gewährleistet wird und bestimmte Marktinformationen zur Verfügung stehen.

Genau das machen wir mit der Verordnung über Märkte für *crypto-assets*. Wir setzen klare Spielregeln und übertragen Elemente, die sich im Wertpapierbereich bewährt haben, auf die Kryptowelt. Damit wählen wir einen anderen, einen berechenbaren Ansatz, anders als es andere Rechtsräume auf diesem Globus tun. Das schafft Rechtssicherheit für die Anbieter, und das schafft Rechtssicherheit für die Nutzer. Damit wird die Europäische Union zum Vorreiter im Bereich der Kryptoregulierung. Deswegen unterstützen wir diesen Vorschlag uneingeschränkt.

Paul Tang (S&D). – Mr President, Commissioner, colleagues. In 1637, the Netherlands went crazy over tulips. They didn't know what to use them for, but people believed that their price would go up. Then the bubble burst, savings evaporated and investors were left in ruins. That was 1637, but the similarities with crypto are stark. Nobody knows what to use them for, but they are the next hot thing.

Then again, tulips are at least pretty. Crypto, on the other hand, not only defaults on the investor, it also pollutes the climate. With the laws we passed today, this week, Europe will make crypto better, but our work is far from done. With regulations for crypto companies, we raise the bar, make the market more transparent and protect consumers. However, when one of the biggest crypto companies on Earth, FTX, appears to be rotten to its core, I ask myself if it will be enough.

With rules against money laundering, we managed to set obligations to detect illicit transfers. Yet unhosted wallets still loom in the dark and can escape the eye of the law. Moreover, it's incomprehensible that the crypto sector is still excluded from climate change policy. It pollutes more than Belgium, and the question is for what? Today, crypto is an empty and dirty promise with many risks. Then again, the tulip once seemed the same. Now they are part of our culture, the Dutch culture at least. With today's rules, perhaps crypto will achieve the same thing one day.

Martin Hlaváček (Renew). – Pane předsedající, obchodování s kryptoaktivy zaznamenává nebývalý rozmach. Celkový počet uživatelů dávno přesáhl stamiliony a hodnota trhu se odhaduje až na dva triliony dolarů. Dále roste a poroste. Co to znamená? Že čím dál větší objem hodnot a transakcí bude realizován prostřednictvím těchto aktiv.

A zatímco tradiční aktiva jsou řádně obchodována, chráněna a daněna, tady jsme měli až doposud naprostou džungli. A to za situace, kdy v rozpočtech téměř všech členských zemí Evropské unie začínají být čím dál větší díry. Pokud nebudou jasně stanovena pravidla, bude dnešní stav nadále přinášet spoustu škod a neštěstí, daňových úniků, manipulací trhu, kriminality, ale i nešťastných osudů těch, kteří v kryptoaktiva měli víru a ztratili jimi na hodnotě. Jsem proto rád, že hlavní právní díry byly tímto předpisem zalátány, o což se zasloužil i můj kolega Ondřej Kovařík.

Ale je to teprve začátek. Musíme dál a systematicky pokračovat i v souvisejících předpisech, jako je aktuální výměna daňových informací. Bez toho nám budou peníze utíkat dále.

France Jamet (ID). – Monsieur le Président, Madame la Commissaire, mes chers collègues, il y a dix ans, personne ne connaissait les cryptoactifs. Aujourd'hui, ce sont à la fois des placements, des quasi-monnaies et des voies de blanchiment. Le potentiel de ces innovations ne doit pourtant pas nous abuser sur les risques qui pèsent sur nos citoyens et nos sociétés. Leur volatilité et le niveau de risque financier élevé qu'ils comportent nous obligent à la prudence. L'affaire FTX a été évoquée tout à l'heure, mais il y a aussi les arnaques et les projets fumeux promus par des pseudo-influenceurs, qui menacent chaque jour nos petits épargnants et les investisseurs de détail. C'est pour cela qu'il est essentiel de poser enfin une règle – celle de la transparence, notamment – dans cette jungle qui n'en a pas, une règle qui nous permette de faire respecter la loi et la justice.

Nous ne devons pas pour autant être à la traîne, dans ce secteur, comme pour de nombreuses autres innovations technologiques qui vont profondément modifier notre monde et l'avenir, et peut-être même au-delà de ce que nous pourrions imaginer aujourd'hui. Nous ne devons pas nous laisser dépasser par les événements et surtout par la fulgurance de ces avancées technologiques. Nous devons appuyer la technologie et ses progrès sur des principes humains, qui passent par l'humain et travaillent pour l'humain, afin de permettre non pas notre asservissement mais notre émancipation. Et la première des libertés, c'est d'en accepter les règles.

Barbara Thaler (PPE). – Herr Präsident, liebe Frau Kommissarin, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Es ist so, wie wir es eigentlich schon oft hier gehört haben. Wir stehen vor einer besonderen Herausforderung, gerade weil es um digitale Dienstleistungen geht. Es gibt hier eine kleine Nische, die sich aufmacht, die Welt zu erobern. Und keiner hat bei dieser aufregenden Reise daran gedacht, die juristische Welt zu kontaktieren, die nach diesen ersten erfolgreichen Abenteuern leise beginnt zu fragen: Ja, dürfen die denn das?

Und das klingt ein bisschen wie eine aufregende Geschichte von Thomas Brezina, ist aber durchaus Realität, wenn wir in die letzten Jahre zurückschauen. *Crypto-assets* sind mittlerweile gut etablierte Teile für viele Anlegerprofile und ganz und gar nicht mehr nur etwas für Profis in der *Fintech*-Welt. Und weil diese kleine Nische gerade dabei ist, erwachsen zu werden, wird der Ruf nach Regulierung immer lauter. Und das muss nicht immer gleich etwas Negatives sein, denn Regulierung bedeutet auch Planungssicherheit. Und deswegen ist es an uns, hier einen Gesetzesrahmen zu bauen, der solche Entwicklungen nicht nur zulässt und fördert, sondern gleichzeitig auch Konsumenten schützt und natürlich Betrug vorbeugt.

Und ich bin wirklich schon sehr gespannt, wie diese zukünftige Reise der Kryptowelt aussehen wird. Mit dem heutigen Beschluss ist die EU wirklich um einen gesetzlichen Rahmen reicher, der Innovationen unterstützt und Menschen beschützt. Ich möchte ganz herzlich meinem Kollegen Stefan Berger gratulieren zu seiner Arbeit. Er hat sich seit Beginn mit viel Herzblut für dieses Thema eingesetzt. Herzlichen Glückwunsch an alle, die verhandelt haben.

(Die Rednerin ist damit einverstanden, auf eine Wortmeldung nach dem Verfahren der „blauen Karte“ zu antworten.)

Bogdan Rzońca (ECR), wystąpienie zasygnalizowane przez podniesienie niebieskiej kartki. – Chciałem zapytać panią o następującą rzecz: otóż dostrzegam, obserwując rynek kryptowalut, dużą promocję – wręcz propagandę – pozytywów rynku kryptowalut. Natomiast dosyć słabo opisane są zagrożenia. Czy ta regulacja, o której mówimy, mówi o tym, że jednak powinien istnieć obowiązek rzetelnego informowania o tym, jak funkcjonuje rynek kryptowalut?

Barbara Thaler (PPE), Antwort auf eine Wortmeldung nach dem Verfahren der „blauen Karte“. – Herr Kollege, vielen Dank. Ich habe deshalb nicht über die Risiken gesprochen, weil das heute schon einige andere Kollegen gemacht haben. Genau das ist ja der Grund, warum der Ruf nach Regulierung stärker geworden ist. Weil so eine neue Entwicklung, so eine Nische, die sich auf den Weg macht, eine große Entwicklung zu werden, natürlich immer mit Chancen, aber auch Risiken verbunden ist. Ich glaube – und ich habe die Verhandlungen verfolgt und auch Stefan Berger immer wieder kontaktiert –, es geht hier natürlich sehr viel um Transparenz und um Berichtspflichten, und ich glaube, dass ein ausgewogenes und balanciertes Ergebnis gefunden wurde, dass auch entsprechend informiert wird, wie Sie gefragt haben.

Alfred Sant (S&D). – Mr President, this new system that we are voting upon brings the transfer of crypto funds and assets under full surveillance, even for small values. It's a needed measure. It brings crypto assets within the scope of EU legislation on financial services. It signals that the regulatory framework applying to them will be strong and transparent. Whether we like it or not, crypto technology is here to stay.

The new measures are not intended to stifle this development. So robust they could actually help to promote the EU as a crypto hub. For I am told, the technology has now reached a phase where it's really established itself as a legitimate area of activity. Its practitioners and developers do need and do want a strong regulatory framework. Not in the US, where cacophony prevails. Their hope is the EU. Cutting-edge American developers, among the best and the brightest, are relocating to Europe. We should welcome this.

Even so, I am still unsure about the understanding we have of the impact of crypto technology on market economies and financial systems. Most of the inputs and interventions we hear, feel like they're dealing with only one or three tentacles of an octopus. We do not have a conceptual model – Keynesian, Friedmanite, or whatever – to help explain and guide the macroeconomic and macrofinancial implications of crypto developments. It feels a bit, perhaps on a larger scale, like the misgivings we had about shadow banking in the recent past. That makes me uneasy.

Sunčana Glavak (PPE). – Poštovani predsjedavajući, poštovana povjerenice, kolegice i kolege, na početku želim zahvaliti izvjestitelju, kolegi Bergeru, na njegovom reportu.

Posljednjih godina, naravno, porast digitalnih valuta revolucionirao je način na koji razmišljamo o novcu, ali je također izazvao i ozbiljnu zabrinutost u vezi s potencijalom nedopuštenih aktivnosti, osobito pranja novca.

Oni koji imaju takozvane digitalne novčanike često su svjesni toga da se oni isprazne zbog nestabilnosti tržišta, pa bismo mogli reći i bez da ste otišli u kupovinu ostali ste bez velikog dijela novca, kada govorimo o kriptovalutama.

Međutim, mi smo ovdje zato da bismo zapravo, kao i sva druga tržišta, sveli u zakonske okvire i ovaj je prijedlog dio paketa zakonodavnih prijedloga za jačanje pravila Europske unije protiv pranja novca, ali i financiranja terorizma. Ažuriranje, naravno, mora proširiti opseg pravila na određene kriptoimovine za koje postoji sve veći rizik iskorištavanja u kriminalne svrhe i pranja novca. O tome postoje brojna svjedočanstva.

Također, vrijedno je napomenuti da tradicionalni financijski sustavi jednako tako nisu imuni na pranje novca i da je to sistemski problem koji zahtijeva višestruki pristup za rješavanje. Uz to, postoje koraci koji se mogu poduzeti protiv pranja novca u prostoru kriptovaluta, a naravno koraci su poput implementacije politika Know Your Customer i Anti-Money Laundering, koja od korisnika zahtijeva identifikaciju i podvrgavanje dubinskim provjerama.

Za kraj, htjela bih reći – istina je da transakcije kriptovalute može biti mnogo teže pratiti nego tradicionalne financijske transakcije, ali vrijedi zapamtiti da su velika većina korisnika kriptovalute legitimni pojedinci i tvrtke koji ovu tehnologiju koriste u legitimne svrhe.

Διαδικασία Catch-the-Eye

Patrick Breyer (Verts/ALE). – Herr Präsident! Bargeld ist finanzielle Freiheit. Wir können ohne Schere im Kopf ganz anonym kaufen und spenden. Niemand ist von Bargeld ausgeschlossen. Bei Bargeld gibt es keine Kartensperrungen oder Negativzinsen. Wir Piraten kämpfen dafür, dass es im digitalen Zeitalter auch digitales Bargeld geben muss, das genauso frei und anonym nutzbar ist wie Geldscheine und Münzen. Zum Beispiel, um an Wikileaks spenden zu können, wenn die Banken der Enthüllungsplattform wieder einmal die Kreditkartenspenden abgedreht haben. Zum Beispiel, damit russische Bürger den Dissidenten Nawalny unterstützen können, ohne Angst vor Repressionen durch das Putin-Regime.

Dass jetzt anonyme Zahlungen und Spenden in digitalen Währungen total und ab dem ersten Euro verboten werden, hat kaum nennenswerte Auswirkungen auf die Kriminalität, beraubt aber gesetzestreue Bürger ihrer finanziellen Freiheit. Kriminelle Krypto-Transaktionen werden schon heute auch ohne Generalverdacht von Polizei und Justiz erfolgreich verfolgt. Aber dass für einige die Terrorismusbekämpfung nur ein Vorwand ist, um immer mehr Kontrolle über unsere privaten Ausgaben zu erlangen und dann schrittweise auch das Bargeld abzuschaffen, da machen wir nicht mit. Wir Piraten sind und bleiben die Stimme der finanziellen Freiheit und Privatsphäre hier im Europäischen Parlament. Deswegen lehnen wir diese extreme Krypto-Regulierung ab.

Beata Mazurek (ECR). – Panie Przewodniczący! Kryptowaluty są na rynku finansowym zjawiskiem stosunkowo nowym, które nie jest jeszcze wystarczająco uregulowane w unijnym prawodawstwie. Nadszedł czas na stworzenie ram dla emisji i świadczenia usług związanych z kryptoaktywami, które będą wspierać innowacyjność i uczciwą konkurencję, ale przede wszystkim zapewnią wysoki poziom ochrony konsumentów.

Dotychczas była to szara strefa, finansowa dżungla nęcąca obietnicą szybkiego zysku, który jednak w wielu przypadkach okazywał się mirażem i wyparowywał równie gwałtownie, jak się pojawił. Bez ścisłych wymogów informacyjnych rynek ten pozostanie jedynie ziemią obiecaną dla rozmaitych cwaniaków, którzy wykorzystują naiwność i niską świadomość konsumentów. Mam nadzieję, że regulacja otworzy nowy rozdział i da szansę na włączenie kryptoaktywów w europejski rynek finansowy z korzyścią dla wszystkich obywateli Unii Europejskiej.

(Λήξη της διαδικασίας Catch-the-Eye)

Mairead McGuinness, Member of the Commission. – Mr President, thank you to the Members for all of your comments. I think we've covered the entire spectrum of views around this piece of legislation. In my view, it is extremely timely, and I repeat my thanks to all involved.

In addition, we all know that crypto activity is not within a borders regime – it crosses borders, it's international. While we have done our work, and I compliment you ahead of tomorrow's vote, I think it's really important that we work internationally as well. So we're hoping that our international partners will also look at introducing legislation or regulation around this space. What we believe is that having a regulatory framework on crypto assets allows the industry to evolve in a more cohesive and safer environment. And I would hope that our work, our rules could become a model for other countries. We're also closely following the work of the Financial Stability Board on crypto assets, so it's not as if we have done our work and are ignoring what is happening and, indeed, what will continue to happen in the future. But I repeat the point that global convergence is absolutely key.

Here in the European Union, our new rules will protect against risks to consumer protection, market integrity, money laundering and financial stability, and I think those are very important issues for citizens. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, the first of these rules will come into application in July 2024. In the meantime, I strongly encourage our supervisors to watch these activities very carefully already now, even before the new rules apply formally. And I believe that that is happening and I would encourage it.

But also to add – and I think some of you have alluded to this – that this area of crypto is evolving even as we speak. And therefore, we know that tomorrow's vote is not the conclusion of our work on crypto. There are issues which we will probably need to look at, but it was a little bit too early to do it in this legislation. And here I mentioned decentralised finance, lending and borrowing of crypto assets and non-fungible tokens. It was considered to be premature to fully address these issues, considering their early development and novelty in these markets. So it's not fully clear yet if we will need additional legislation, but the Commission is mandated to assess the feasibility and necessity of regulating those activities within 18 months after the entry into force of MiCA, and indeed, we're starting to prepare that work now.

In relation to whether our rules would have prevented some of the more recent events which have dramatically impacted citizens around the world, we believe that had FTX, for example, been captured under EU jurisdiction, many of its practices would not have been permissible under MiCA or indeed under applicable rules already, such as MiFID, for their derivatives business. And for example, service providers under MiCA must properly manage or disclose conflicts of interest. And there are strict rules on segregating clients' assets. In addition, MiCA explicitly prevents the use of clients' funds for the trading platform's own account. And on the issue of environmental impacts, the co-legislators, in my view, agreed on a very balanced position to address this issue by robust disclosure requirements. So I think on these issues we are certainly very clear about the work we have done and, indeed, open to what might lie ahead.

A comment was made about the EU criminalising crypto. Of course, that is not the case at all. Those who engage in criminal activity criminalise themselves. What we are putting in place is the regulations to ensure that we find out what is happening in this area and indeed avoid that it happens at all.

On the latter questions of cash and freedom and those important points, I constantly say as commissioner responsible in this area that we absolutely defend the rights of citizens to have access to cash. But I dare say that issue will arise in the upcoming debate around the digital euro. But I really appreciate the opportunity to have had this debate with colleagues today. I thank you very much for your incredible work in this area and I look forward to seeing the result of tomorrow's vote.

Stefan Berger, *Berichterstatter*. – Herr Präsident! Ich glaube, wenn man diese Debatte zusammenfasst, dann zeigt das die ganze Breite eines neuen wirtschaftlichen Bereichs, der sehr dynamisch ist, der noch jung ist, der am Anfang steht. Und die angesprochenen Punkte, die es noch zu lösen gibt – ja, natürlich gibt es sie noch zu lösen, weil dieser Bereich jung ist. Die Fragen waren: Haben wir noch Zeit genug oder muss MiCA schneller in Kraft treten? Natürlich müssen sich die Akteure in diesem Bereich auf MiCA einstellen können. Natürlich brauchen wir noch einige Monate, damit auch Unternehmen in Europa Zeit haben, ihr Unternehmen an MiCA anzupassen.

Berücksichtigen wir die Umweltaspekte genug? Ich denke, ja. Wir bringen sie erstmals rein in einen neuen ökonomischen Zweig, ohne technologische Konsensmechanismen verbieten zu wollen, ohne in Technologie einzugreifen, sondern offen zu sein für neue Entwicklungen. Denn wir müssen doch eins sehen: Die Welt wartet nicht auf uns. In Amerika werden Jahr für Jahr Milliarden an Dollars in Metaversen investiert. Innerhalb dieser Metaversen wird mit NFT, wird mit Blockchain-Geld, wird im Web3 mit NFT bezahlt. Alles das müssen wir schützen und müssen versuchen, dass das auch hier in Europa entstehen kann.

Und deswegen kann ich auch die Kritik von Herrn Breyer und den Piraten nicht wirklich verstehen. Durch MiCA wird eine Bitcoin-Spende in die Ukraine jedenfalls nicht unmöglich. Ich glaube, dass wir am Ende einen Kompromiss gefunden haben, der jetzt durch den Beschluss dieses Parlaments morgen ein Rahmenwerk auf den Weg bringt, das Innovation und Wachstum in Europa ermöglicht – ohne über die Maßen Chancen zu beschneiden. Und in diesem Sinne bitte ich noch einmal morgen um Unterstützung für diesen Vorschlag.

Ernest Urtasun, *rapporteur*. – Mr President, I would like to thank everyone for all the comments. I want to briefly touch on some of the issues that have been raised.

Lídia Pereira mentioned – and I can only agree – that we don't have to block innovation, that our rules need to be technologically neutral. I fully agree on that. I think that here the issue is more that we need to apply the same rules for the same risks. I think this is something that Aurore Lalucq mentioned and I think this is the principle that we should follow. But this, and let's be clear, what we are doing is not applying the full set of financial regulation rules to the crypto world, we are creating a specific regime and by doing so this is why, I think, during the debate many people raised the issue that we probably need to adapt to MiCA 2 again, because this is the consequence of having chosen this kind of approach, which has good reasons for it, but then it will need further adaptation in order to be sure that same rules are applied to same risks, which is what we need.

Jonás Fernández from the S&D said that we need to strengthen the prudential treatment of crypto exposures. I can only agree to that. I hope that the dialogue negotiations on CRD/CRR will get there.

I also can fully agree with Chris MacManus on the need to put in place these rules, but to consider those only a first step. So I fully agree also with that. I have mentioned it in my intervention

And also to Ondřej Kovařík, who said that we need to completely be coherent what we are voting on Thursday together with the AML legislation. I think this is very important that we have a coherent framework, also maybe it's a good opportunity to insist that with CFR we have also made crypto companies obliged entities on the on the current AML regime and therefore we are going to apply the highest AML standards that we apply to banks also to the cryptocurrency actors and service providers. So I think this is this is important and we have done that also by doing some targeted changes to the already existing AML framework in in the waiting until the next one is put fully in place.

And then finally, just a brief word to Commissioner McGuinness, thank you so much for your cooperation again, Commissioner. I think that the most important thing is that in this in this progressive entry into force of the legislation, we have to very carefully look at potential fragile investors that can be affected by the turmoil while we wait until the rules to be in place. So I think here in the in this transitional period, we still have some some work to do. And also, as you said, I think we need to continue international cooperation because most of these phenomena require international regulation. We need to continue cooperating at the level of FATF and also things like, for instance, the regulation of the impact of an of environment of cryptocurrencies will need at the end to have a solution at the international level. Voilà, this is what I wanted to say. Thank you again to all colleagues, Commissioner, for all your work on that.

Assita Kanko, *rapporteur*. – Mr President, colleagues, thank you very much for this debate and for all the excellent points you have made. Let me just pick up one or two issues: throughout the negotiations, some people kept insisting that crypto is actually much safer than traditional finance because of the transparency of the blockchain and, therefore, regulation was not really necessary. I disagree with that.

The blockchain can indeed offer transparency, and some old crypto hacks have been resolved years later as a result. However, there are a lot of innovations to reduce this transparency, not least mixers and tumblers. In some cases, CASPs themselves do a lot of mixing and tumbling as well. Furthermore, if you can identify the flow of crypto on the blockchain, but cannot identify the people involved, you see only half of the picture. I therefore see the travel rule as proportionate and compatible to the blockchain. Again, peer-to-peer transactions remain outside of the scope of defi.

Another issue has been the concern to push crypto out of the EU. Again, I don't think these laws will do that. We see all the serious countries in the world taking big steps to regulate crypto. Some less democratic places go even further and ban most crypto activities. It is clear to me that if crypto wants to be taken seriously as an innovative fintech sector, it should also accept serious regulation like what we are doing now. I think most countries around the world agree with that.

That was enough discussion, and we have experienced a lot of positive contributions. I would like to thank all of you who are involved in this file for the excellent cooperation. Also, the French presidency has been very supportive, with a lot of capable people. I want especially to thank Commissioner McGuinness and her team. Together, we will expect and hope for a very – I'm so happy that the Council is back – positive outcome tomorrow, and broad support so that we can make crypto safer for our citizens and much more difficult for criminals.

Πρόεδρος. – Η κοινή συζήτηση έληξε. Η ψηφοφορία θα διεξαχθεί αύριο Πέμπτη 20 Απριλίου 2023 στις 12.00 το μεσημέρι.

Γραπτές δηλώσεις (άρθρο 171 του Κανονισμού)

Waldemar Tomaszewski (ECR), *raštu*. – Ponia Pirmininke, būtina reguliuoti kriptoturtų rinkas, nes šiandien šiame sektoriuje tvyro chaosas, kuris neigiamai veikia ekonomiką. Bendros ES sistemos kriptoturtų srityje nebuvimas gali lemti vartotojų nepasitikėjimą šiuo turtu, o tai trukdys šio turto rinkos plėtrai ir gali būti praleistos galimybės teikti novatoriškas skaitmenines paslaugas, alternatyvias mokėjimo priemones ar naujus finansavimo šaltinius ES verslui. Be to, kriptoturtus naudojančios įmonės neturės teisinio tikrumo dėl to, kaip kiekvienoje valstybėje narėje bus elgiamasi su jų kriptoturtu, o tai pakenks jų veiklai. Todėl būtina Sąjungos lygmeniu apibrėžti sistemą, pagal kurią būtų reguliuojami kriptoturtai ir su jais susijusi veikla bei paslaugos, ir paaiškinti taikomą teisinę sistemą. Tokia suderinta sistema taip pat turėtų apimti kriptoturtų paslaugas, kurioms dar netaikomos ES finansinių paslaugų taisyklės, kartu gerbiant valstybių

narių suverenitetą. Tokia sistema turėtų padėti skatinti naujoves ir sąžiningą konkurenciją, kartu užtikrinant aukštą vartotojų apsaugos lygį. Būtent vartotojų gerovė turėtų būti svarbiausias veiksnys kuriant naujus šios ES teisės srities reglamentus.

16. Digital euro (debate)

Πρόεδρος. – Το επόμενο σημείο στην ημερήσια διάταξη αφορά τις δηλώσεις του Συμβουλίου και της Επιτροπής με θέμα: Ψηφιακό ευρώ (2023/2641(RSP)).

Jessika Roswall, President-in-Office of the Council. – Mr President, honourable Members, Commissioner, today's exchange on the digital euro is well timed and important, as the Commission is expected to present its proposal for a regulatory framework. It is important for both Council and Parliament as co-legislators: our objective is to ensure that the legal foundations are fully in place when the ECB takes the final decision on whether or not to proceed with the issuance of a digital euro.

The Council recognised the strategic importance of the digital euro project and investigations into central bank digital currency in general. As you know, the digital euro project is part of a broader international trend. Other central banks are embarking on similar projects, including in non-euro members like Sweden. The digital project has a clear political dimension as it touches on economic and financial sovereignty and affects citizens and businesses in a very tangible manner.

The introduction of the digital euro must therefore be an inclusive project supported by the European public and built on a solid democratic basis. This is also why we need to make sure that the citizens and businesses maintain access to sovereign money issued by the central bank, which should remain the monetary anchor. Member States have regularly discussed this matter within the Eurogroup, which has issued several statements summarising its views.

I would say that there are both opportunities and challenges. To mention a few key points, the digital euro's expected benefits span from widespread access to safe central bank money, and enhanced financial inclusion to cutting-edge, pan-EU payment systems. However, there are also risks connected to the launch of a retail digital euro. Among other things, it requires certain safeguards so that it does not disrupt financial stability, resulting, for instance, from a displacement of commercial bank deposits.

Another key concern of Member States is that of privacy. A high level of privacy is essential to gain the trust of retail users. At the same time, combating financial and illegal activities should be high on the agenda. At the same time, there are issues connected with the role of intermediaries and cost allocations that needs to be addressed so that consumers don't face higher costs for digital euro payments than for commercial payments.

Another important dimension of this discussion is the international role of the euro and the interoperability with similar initiatives around the world. I mentioned just some key issues for the Member States, which I am sure that that we share with the Parliament. Discussions on these and other aspects will continue. Once the Commission's proposal is made public the Council will do its part to take the legislative work forward so that we can engage in interinstitutional negotiations with the European Parliament.

I'm looking forward to the debate. Thank you for your attention.

Mairead McGuinness, Member of the Commission. – Mr President, Minister, honourable Members, I'm really happy that we're having this conversation in the Chamber today because we've been having conversations in corridors and it's important that this Chamber discusses what is a really important project.

You've already heard that many governments and central banks around the world are looking into possible central bank digital currencies. And for the last two and a half years, we've examined whether a digital euro would be possible or desirable, and what the requirements would be. We're doing that work hand in hand with the European Central Bank, discussing key aspects of a possible digital euro. And that's why we very much welcome the political debate on the project.

The single currency is a symbol of the European Union and of European unity. Bringing the euro into the digital age is a big European project and it is a very political project. And that means the digital euro needs to be supported by the European public and a strong democratic process. So the European Parliament has a vital role to play in this debate. And, of course, you will soon be asked to look at our legislative proposal. So just a few words on what a digital euro is, why we might need it and some details of the legislative proposal.

So to the basic question: what is a digital euro? We all understand what physical cash is and how to use it. Central banks issue coins and banknotes and they play a key role in monetary systems. A coin or a banknote is a direct liability on a central bank. When we use private money, our confidence in it is based on the fact that you can convert it back to central bank money. A digital euro would be a complement to physical cash, which keeps its important role. Indeed, I mentioned that in the last debate.

A digital euro would play a similar function to cash, providing us with access to central bank money in a digital world. The digital euro – like cash today – would be backed by a central bank, and that's also the real contrast to existing private digital currencies like crypto-assets. A digital euro would be safe, secure and sound.

So now to 'why we would need a digital euro'. Let me talk about four main points here. The first one is that in a very rapidly digitalising economy, the share of payments in cash is declining, while digital payments are on the rise. This trend is likely to continue. So we want to make sure the euro is fit for the future and we want to keep our access to public money in a digital world.

The second and related point: a digital euro could support financial inclusion. We know that people without bank accounts and other vulnerable groups rely heavily on cash for payments, and that means they face new risks as cash is used less. We would like a digital euro that can be used not only online but offline, too, for example in person-to-person payments or to pay in physical shops. We should also make a digital euro accessible to more vulnerable groups, including people who are not familiar with electronic devices or mobile apps.

Third point: a digital euro is essential to support the EU's open strategic autonomy. Private companies are developing stablecoins, crypto-assets whose value is pegged to another currency, usually not the euro. Central banks around the world are investigating, piloting and even issuing digital currencies. If we don't provide our own solution, then we run the risk of private stablecoins or foreign central bank digital currencies filling the gap. And that could affect the role of the euro, both in the European retail payments market and in international trade.

Fourth, and finally, a digital euro could foster innovation in payment systems and the economy at large. The payment systems we have at the moment are national or international. The digital euro could foster competition in the payment field, not crowding out existing means of payment. A digital euro should give citizens and businesses an additional payment option to use anywhere in the euro area, and they could always rely on it and know that their personal data is protected. A digital euro could support more innovation in payments, such as machine-to-machine payments that work without human interaction, like the automatic recharging of cars, logistics or deliveries.

As I noted, a digital euro is not intended to replace cash, but rather to complement it. And it's in this spirit that the Commission intends to adopt a legislative proposal on the legal tender of cash in parallel to the digital euro proposal. And this is about maintaining the role of cash as legal tender in our economy, making sure we keep sufficient access to cash and keeping cash as an accepted form of payment. Our upcoming regulation is intended to establish and regulate the essential aspects of the digital euro, and this is in full respect of the competence of the ECB, because ultimately the decision to issue a digital euro remains up to the ECB.

I cannot pre-empt decisions to be taken by the College of Commissioners, but I want to speak about some key issues we believe the upcoming legislative proposal should address, and these include legal tender. The legal tender status of the digital euro would ensure consistency with cash and make digital central bank money widely accessible in the euro area. On privacy, there is a delicate balance to be struck between privacy and anti-money laundering requirements. On financial stability, the digital euro should be a means of payment, but should not become a large store of value. We want to avoid the disintermediation of banks and any risk to financial stability.

On the area of distribution and compensation, the digital euro would be distributed by private payment service providers, and these entities should receive a fair compensation. On financial inclusion, we are considering a series of basic services for people to be provided free of charge or at a reasonable price. And finally, the use of the digital euro outside the euro area.

I want to thank members of this House who will share their views on this digital euro project, because I think your insights are really important and helpful, informing our preparation of the legislative proposal. And we're looking forward to continuing to work with you on this important initiative.

The Eurogroup has also expressed strong support for the digital euro project and indeed our Minister has outlined the views of the Eurogroup. Our targeted consultation last summer fed into our work also and we've engaged with public and private stakeholders, consumer organisations, businesses and financial institutions. And, indeed, this project has evolved over time. We have raised many questions. We have had answers. But sometimes the answers indeed lead to further questions. And I think that's how it should be, because this is a very new area that we move into.

So in conclusion, I would just say that this digital euro can only be a success if it has strong democratic foundations. And that's why this House plays a vital role in our debate and why I am delighted that we are having this exchange today.

Markus Ferber, *im Namen der PPE-Fraktion*. – Herr Präsident, Frau Kommissarin, Frau Ratspräsidentin, liebe Kolleginnen, liebe Kollegen! Die Europäische Zentralbank führt nun bereits seit einigen Jahren umfassende Vorarbeiten und Machbarkeitsstudien zum Thema „Digitaler Euro“ durch. Die Grundsatzentscheidung seitens des EZB-Rats steht zwar offiziell noch aus, aber wir sollten schon davon ausgehen, dass die Zentralbank dieses Projekt weiter vorantreiben will. Die Europäische Zentralbank hat in den vergangenen Monaten das Für und Wider verschiedener Designoptionen – also, wie sollte es wirklich ausgestaltet sein? – diskutiert und die Überlegungen sowohl in ihren Fortschrittsberichten als auch im Austausch mit dem Europäischen Parlament vorgestellt.

Dabei haben wir zwar einen besseren Einblick in einige dieser Optionen, dieser Designoptionen bekommen, die Europäische Zentralbank, aber auch die Europäische Kommission, die ja jetzt an einer Rechtsgrundlage für einen digitalen Euro arbeitet, haben aber eine zentrale Frage noch nicht glaubwürdig beantwortet, nämlich: Was ist der Mehrwert des digitalen Euro für die Nutzer? Oder um es anders auszudrücken: Was kann ich mit einem digitalen Euro machen, was ich mit den heutigen Zahlungsoptionen nicht machen kann?

Also, was ist das Geschäftsmodell des digitalen Euro? Solange diese Frage nicht beantwortet ist, wird es viel Skepsis gegenüber einem digitalen Euro geben. Die öffentliche Konsultation der Zentralbank zeigt auch, wo diese herrührt. Die meisten Bürgerinnen und Bürger wollen ein hohes Maß an Privatsphäre im Zahlungsverkehr. Es gibt begründete Zweifel, dass ein digitaler Euro diese Ziele im gleichen Maße erfüllen kann wie Bargeld. Deswegen muss auch klar sein: Bargeld wird nicht ersetzt, Bargeld muss weiter bestehen bleiben und der digitale Euro kann es höchstens ergänzen. Daran sollte auch die EZB keinen Zweifel lassen.

Um es klar zu sagen: Ich habe kein Problem mit einem digitalen Euro, wenn wir wissen, wofür er notwendig ist. Aber solange diese Frage nicht beantwortet ist, gibt es bei uns eine große Skepsis. Wenn es eine klare Vision gibt, dann beantworten sich auch viele Fragen, Frau Kommissarin, ganz von selber, denn über das Design beantwortet sich auch die Regulatorik. Deswegen bitte erst die Frage nach dem „Wofür“ beantworten und dann erst die Frage nach dem „Wie“.

Jonás Fernández, *en nombre del Grupo S&D*. – Señor presidente, señora comisaria, bienvenida de nuevo.

Discutíamos antes sobre los retos, las oportunidades, las incertidumbres del mundo en torno a los activos digitales. Y sin duda, en mi opinión, la mayor de las incertidumbres de este cambio, de esta innovación en los activos financieros, consiste en la potencial pérdida de soberanía monetaria que pudiera acontecer ante una desintermediación creciente de las monedas de emisión pública por parte de los bancos centrales.

Ante las dificultades para gestionar los ciclos en esas condiciones —por cierto, podemos recordar qué ocurría en el mundo occidental en el siglo XIX, a finales del siglo XVIII, cuando no había monedas públicas, cuando no había un monopolio en la emisión de moneda, esto hay que tenerlo muy presente—, tenemos que pensar —y en mi opinión esta es la respuesta a la pregunta que hacía mi colega Markus Ferber previamente— que la razón para tener un euro digital es garantizar la soberanía monetaria de manera estructural.

Ahora bien, este gran objetivo tiene que alcanzarse empezando con pequeños pasos. Y probablemente la Comisión y el Banco Central Europeo estén pensando en una propuesta más bien poco ambiciosa que, de alguna manera, pueda no distinguirse de otros sistemas de pagos. Y en este punto se suscitan las incertidumbres de algunos colegas: ¿para qué queremos un sistema de pagos que tiene poca diferencia con los que ofrece ya el sector privado?

La respuesta, en mi opinión, es contar con el marco, con la estructura para garantizar nuestra soberanía monetaria a medio plazo, porque ciertamente el futuro es inescrutable.

Gilles Boyer, *au nom du groupe Renew*. – Monsieur le Président, Madame la Commissaire, l'Union européenne doit être à l'avant-garde des transformations profondes du secteur des paiements et y rester. Le monde ne nous attend pas. Il en va de notre souveraineté comme de la préservation d'une prérogative essentielle de la puissance publique: l'émission de monnaie. Nous saluons donc la proposition de la Commission à venir en vue de la création d'un euro numérique, en complément des travaux de la Banque centrale européenne.

Il s'agit bien sûr d'un défi technique de taille, mais il s'agit surtout d'un défi politique, avec de nombreuses questions qui restent à résoudre. L'euro numérique doit être un succès, un nouvel outil de confiance, que les citoyens européens pourront s'approprier: complémentaire de l'argent liquide, auquel ils demeurent profondément attachés, facile d'utilisation, sécurisé, préservant les données personnelles tout en apportant sa contribution à la lutte contre le blanchiment. Nous devons aussi prendre en compte les possibles répercussions sur le système bancaire. Autant d'impératifs, parfois contradictoires, qu'il nous faudra concilier.

Nous attendons donc avec impatience la proposition de la Commission pour commencer notre travail et relever ces défis, afin de faciliter la vie quotidienne des citoyens européens.

Ernest Urtausun, *en nombre del Grupo Verts/ALE*. – Señor presidente, el euro digital es un proyecto potencialmente transformador que puede tener consecuencias positivas para la sociedad y la economía en su conjunto.

En primer lugar, y lo más importante, el oro digital nos tiene que permitir defender la soberanía monetaria en un mundo cada vez más digitalizado, es decir, mantener el dinero como un bien público; esto ahora mismo es lo más importante. Además, según como se diseñe, puede ser una manera efectiva de tener un sistema de pagos más efectivo y también más inclusivo.

Sin embargo, hay que decir que su valor añadido, económico y social dependerá en gran medida de cómo se diseñe. En este punto tengo que decir que mi grupo está preocupado porque algunos intereses ya creados, que temen mucho la potencial innovación disruptiva del euro digital, presionen para diseñar específicamente el oro digital para que este no funcione, de modo que no desafíe modelos de negocios de la banca comercial tradicional.

Por lo tanto, aquí lo que es crucial es cómo se va a desarrollar este proyecto. No lo podemos dejar en manos solo del BCE con el asesoramiento técnico de la banca privada porque este proyecto es de todos y, si es de todos, los objetivos, las opciones de diseño, la distribución, deben definirse a través de un procedimiento legislativo inclusivo y democrático que involucre plenamente a este Parlamento y a la sociedad civil.

Johan Van Overtveldt, *namens de ECR-Fractie*. – Voorzitter, commissaris, collega's, vertrouwen is het belangrijkste goed in de financiële wereld. Het komt te voet en het gaat, zoals men zegt, te paard.

In die zin werd de euro samen met andere klassieke munten de afgelopen tien jaar flink uitgedaagd en opgejaagd door de zogenaamde cryptomunten. Die cryptogekte op zich vloeide direct voort uit het onconventionele, zeg maar voor een stuk onverantwoorde monetaire beleid van de jaren 2010, waardoor wantrouwen in het monetaire systeem zeer werd aangewakkerd.

De crypto's werden voor sommigen de tulpenbollen van onze tijd. Voor anderen was het een fijne dekmantel voor de financiering van duistere praktijken. Op dit soort praktijken moet een gereguleerd antwoord komen, dat wat mij betreft niet restrictief genoeg kan zijn.

Waarom dan zou de Centrale Bank nog met een digitale euro moeten komen? Elektronisch geld overschrijven, dat kunnen we heel simpel met een appje op onze gsm. Onze banken overbodig maken? Aantrekkelijk voor sommigen, maar dat blijken dan bij nader inzien fans van het sovjetmodel te zijn. Een antwoord op China bieden? Een autoritair, gevaarlijk, agressief regime bestrijd je niet door het te kopiëren.

Kortom, de digitale euro biedt geen antwoord op een specifieke behoefte en al zeker niet op de reden waarom burgers hun heil in crypto's zijn gaan zoeken, namelijk een geschokt vertrouwen in het monetaire systeem. Dat komt pas terug met discipline, zowel op budgettaire als op monetair vlak. Schulden moeten omlaag en inflatie moet worden aangepakt. Chinagewijs onze economische en burgerlijke vrijheden hypothekeken zal eerder het omgekeerde teweegbrengen.

Gunnar Beck, im Namen der ID-Fraktion. – Herr Präsident! Letzten Monat wurde Christine Lagarde Opfer eines Scherzanzrufs. Unbeabsichtigt gab Lagarde preis: Beim digitalen Euro geht es um totale staatliche Kontrolle über das Geld der Bürger. Lagarde wörtlich:

'We have in Europe a threshold above EUR 1 000, you cannot pay cash. If you do, you take your risk, you get caught, you're fined, or you go to jail.

Our citizens will be controlled, only for very small amounts – around EUR 300 or EUR 400 – will there be no control.'

Zahlungen über 1000 Euro sollen kontrolliert werden und irgendwann alles über drei-oder vierhundert Euro. Barzahlungen garantieren Freiheit, denn keine Bank oder kein Staat kann wissen, was Sie wo, wie und wann gekauft haben. Bargeld schützt vor Minuszins, Enteignung und dem Verlust aufgrund von Bankeninsolvenzen. Lagarde ließ sich bei dem Anruf übertölpeln, und jetzt wissen wir es: Der digitale Euro soll uns diese Freiheit der Bargeldzahlung nehmen.

Chris MacManus, on behalf of The Left Group. – Mr President, Commissioner, I think it's fair to say that the digital euro has not captured the public's imagination. It is, however, an important innovation, and it's one that we must get right.

In the digital age, there are some who would have us abandon cash altogether. This must not happen. Workers, consumers and small businesses must continue to be allowed to use their own cash – their own money in their own purse or pocket. In this digital age, we must protect the idea of money as a public good. Huge corporations cannot be allowed to take over the use of our money. We wouldn't allow the privatisation of cash, therefore we cannot allow the privatisation of its digital equivalent.

I urge the Commission and ECB to not think of the digital euro as a purely defensive innovation, but to grasp its full potential. The banking sector has had enough public support down through the years, so for once let's put consumers, citizens and workers first and use the digital euro to empower them.

Marcel de Graaff (NI). – Voorzitter, met de digitale euro richt de ECB zich op de particuliere markt. Het is het digitale alternatief voor contant geld.

Op dit moment geven alleen de commerciële banken giraal geld uit en daar komt nu dus de Europese Centrale Bank bij. De burger heeft straks een rekening bij de ECB, zoals vroeger bij de postrekeningen, die ook eigendom waren van de staat. En omdat de ECB niet failliet kan gaan, kan de burger er zeker van zijn dat zijn geld veilig is. Dat geeft zekerheid bij grote financiële schokken. Maar het geeft de overheid ook verschrikkelijk veel macht om de burger te controleren en te dwingen.

De grootste zorg van de burger is dat de overheid in de toekomst kan beperken waaraan de burger zijn geld uitgeeft, zoals vleesproducten en brandstoffen. Of dat we een vorm van een *social credit system* krijgen zoals in Canada, waarbij je rekening wordt geblokkeerd als je kritisch bent op de regering. Daarom moet de digitale euro aan de volgende eisen voldoen: aankopen moeten niet herleidbaar zijn naar het product, het saldo moet ook direct als contant geld opneembaar zijn en het saldo moet niet programmeerbaar zijn. Dit moet wettelijk worden vastgelegd.

Lídia Pereira (PPE). – Senhor Presidente, a Europa tem, no euro, mais que uma moeda. É um compromisso de 20 dos 27 Estados-Membros para a partilha de uma parte importante da sua soberania – a da política monetária.

E porque estamos a falar de soberania, é importante sermos claros com os cidadãos que representamos. É verdade que a globalização das economias, a digitalização dos pagamentos ou a descentralização dos serviços financeiros exigem uma resposta sólida da política monetária.

As perguntas que se impõem, contudo, são estas: que problemas é que os europeus enfrentam que exigem um euro digital? Que valor acrescentado tem uma moeda digital única para a Zona Euro? E que oportunidades terão os cidadãos e as empresas europeias com este projeto?

Noutras geografias, as moedas digitais estão a avançar e não podemos ficar para trás. A esta altura, já devíamos estar a discutir propostas concretas, exatamente para identificarmos os problemas que vamos resolver, para decidirmos sobre as funcionalidades que queremos para o euro digital, e para criar um espaço de oportunidade para os cidadãos alargarem a sua liberdade financeira e para as empresas terem mais condições para investir e inovar.

Este não é o tempo para prolongar debates sobre onde estamos. Este é, sim, o tempo de decidir para onde queremos ir.

Paul Tang (S&D). – Mr President, bad money drives out good. This law – Gresham's law – is empirical, yet the European Central Bank believes otherwise: that good money, digital euro backed by the ECB, will drive out bad money backed by unstable private banks. And as a result, the ECB wants to impose restrictions to limit how much one can hold – up to EUR 3 000 – and where, with private actors.

To be clear, the digital euro makes absolute sense in a digitalised economy, no doubt. It's also important to maintain monetary sovereignty to prevent private currencies – bad money like Libra – from taking over. Yet I have strong doubts about the restrictions. First because the digital euro should be viable, and why use something you can hardly hold? And second, a digital euro should compete with bank deposits, encouraging banks, for example, to let consumers benefit from recent interest rate hikes. And of course this raises worries about bank funding, no doubt. But the digital euro doesn't introduce these problems. It merely highlights the fluidity of deposits in a digital age. And the Silicon Valley Bank was merely its first victim.

So I fully understand the ECB's wish to prioritise stability initially, but the restrictions should weaken over time, exactly as the Bank of England proposes.

Dear colleagues, this debate is important. The digital euro is a political project, indeed, not a technocratic one. And so the project of the digital euro needs political backing. So let the Commission put all the options on the table to have a real political debate on the digital euro.

Ondřej Kovařík (Renew). – Mr President, Commissioner, colleagues, we witness a clear trend towards the digitalisation of finance, and that includes the central bank money. This trend will provide a number of opportunities for citizens and businesses, but does not come without risk. I expect all these aspects should be considered when discussing the digital euro.

In order for this digital euro to be a helpful and successful project we need to be transparent in our goals, but also in our communication. For citizens, the key to an attractive digital euro is a guarantee of privacy and security in their spending. We also must take into account that cash still plays a prominent role in our society, and a digital euro cannot be a substitute for it, but rather simply to complement it. Cash is here to stay, even with the digital euro. Furthermore, better engagement with financial intermediaries is a key, as they will need time to develop relevant technical solutions and products.

I look forward to the proposals from the Commission and the conclusions from the European Central Bank on the digital euro, where we expect to see some more concrete version of the concept.

Michiel Hoogeveen (ECR). – Mr President, when Bitcoin was introduced 14 years ago, it revolutionised the world of finance. It was the world's first decentralised digital payments infrastructure. The underlying technology of Bitcoin still promises an endless potential of economic opportunity and freedom. And isn't it ironic that we are now talking about a centralised database controlled by government institutions? Why do we need a digital euro? We are already working on instant payments and digitalisation of finance. Now, I was told that we need this so we can compete with China. Well, back in the day we would counter communist China with policies of rollback or containment, not by copying it. Yet the European institutions press ahead and invest into a project with no added value, leaving many citizens worried about their privacy and lack of democratic control by national parliaments.

The digital euro is a solution looking for a problem, and for now would be best left on ice.

Gerolf Annemans (ID). – Voorzitter, de redenen waarom de Europese Centrale Bank deze digitale euro wil invoeren, kaderen volgens ons niet in de verschillende drogredenen die er door de Europese elite voor worden aangedragen, maar kaderen in de verdere stappen die we als burgers het afgelopen decennium door onze overheden hebben zien zetten in de richting van de absolute controlemaatschappij.

Vandaag hier wordt deze digitale munt met een politieke beslissing, nog meer dan voordien met de euro, een munt die om politieke redenen wordt ingevoerd. Dat deze digitale munt nodig is om de versturende marktwerking van Facebook en Mastercard voor te blijven, is een drogreden, want dat kan op andere manieren aan banden worden gelegd. Dat het faillissement van een commerciële bank ingevolge een bankencrisis erdoor in de greep wordt gehouden, is een drogreden omdat daarvoor toezichts- en afwikkelingsmechanismen bestaan. Dat de euro en de digitale euro naast elkaar zullen blijven bestaan, is een drogreden, want een eenvoudige nieuwe politieke beslissing kan daaraan een einde maken. En criminelen moeten door een efficiëntere overheid rechtstreeks aangepakt worden, niet via een totalitaire supercontrole op het leven van alle burgers.

Kortom, er is veel meer reden om te vrezen dat deze nieuwe en in essentie programmeerbare overheidsgecontroleerde munt het gevaar inhoudt van een controle op niet alleen de inkomsten, maar ook de uitgaven. Net als een account op sociale media zal een politieke munt als deze uw gedrag en uw mening via uw uitgaven kunnen beperken of schrappen met één druk op de knop. De hier gisteren goedgekeurde CO₂-boetes voor stoute burgers zullen meteen kunnen worden geïnd door Timmermans en zijn opvolgers.

Wakkere burgers die de vrijheid, *la liberté, die Freiheit, the freedom* in het hart dragen, wijzen deze munt af. En ik eindig met deze waarschuwing uit George Orwells *Animal Farm*:

“These people don’t see that if you encourage totalitarian methods, the time may come when they will be used against you instead of for you.”

Ivan Vilibor Sinčić (NI). – Poštovani predsjedavajući, poštovane kolege, današnja tema je digitalni euro. Kada govorimo o digitalnom euru, ja kažem gotovina, gotovina, gotovina. Gotovina je garancija slobode.

Pozicija s koje ovdje nastupam je očuvanje sloboda, i osobnih i ekonomskih, hrvatskih građana koje zastupam. U svijetu, nažalost, postoje moćne globalizacijske i korporativne skupine koje se iz Davosa hvale kako su penetrirale u sve kabinete svih vlada. Ti ljudi su neprijatelji sloboda ljudi i suvereniteta nacija.

Na primjeru Twittera, pak, vidimo da korumpirane vlade i moćne korporacije zajedno djeluju protiv građana i njihovih osobnih ekonomskih sloboda. Vidimo da se on masovno koristio za nadzor, kontrolu i cenzuru građana i njihovih prava na slobodu mišljenja i slobodu izražavanja.

Od Edwarda Snowdena, pak, znamo da američka vlada besramno špijunira svoje građane. Nije samo Amerika, i europske institucije i vlade su već zlopotrijebile digitalne tehnologije. Bilo je više pokušaja da se progura biometrijsko praćenje u Europi, ali smo to za sada spriječili.

Sve više regulirate kriptovalute i ljudi traže slobodu. Kruna svega je digitalni zeleni certifikat, koji je još uvijek na snazi i koji je alat društvene kontrole i kršenja ustavnih temeljnih prava.

Vi doista iz Komisije nakon svega želite našu potporu za digitalni euro? Nakon što ste pokazali na što ste sve spremni? Članica Komisije ovdje govori da će digitalni euro biti siguran i ne znam što sve ne. Naravno, uvijek počinje s lijepom pričom, ali ja to ne vjerujem. Vidio sam previše građana kojima su, dakle, slobode oduzete zbog skrivenih namjera i neistina koje dolaze iz Komisije.

Frances Fitzgerald (PPE). – Mr President, Commissioner McGuinness, colleagues, the digital transformation of the financial sector creates new opportunities – challenges, but of course risks. In this landscape the digital euro endeavours to maintain the euro as a dependable and effective payment method. It can also boost innovation. Other places are moving on and we should not be left behind. A digital euro can serve as a model for the rest of the world and support the international role of the euro. The ECB role’s is indispensable, but the voice of the European Parliament must also be heard.

And of course the digital euro has to maintain the trust of our citizens. Privacy is a fundamental right, which is also why we should preserve the two-tier distribution model. However, we should go beyond this minimum standard and explore options such as using encryption to protect users' data. We must also look at ways to make the digital euro economically attractive to customers, businesses and payment providers. Issues of access to the financial system will remain important. Physical cash, as many colleagues have said, will still have a role to play, so no one is left behind.

Trust, safety and access: these are the core principles that underpin our monetary system. It is our duty to create a digital euro that upholds these values while also promoting innovation.

Aurore Lalucq (S&D). – Monsieur le Président, Madame la Commissaire, je suis toujours preneuse de la réponse à la question que je vous ai posée dans le précédent débat à propos de M^{me} Lagarde et de M. Panetta.

Concernant l'euro numérique, je crois que la question que nous devons nous poser, c'est: pourquoi nous le faisons? Dans quel but? Et je pense que c'est un petit peu là, en fait, que le bât blesse, parce que, certes, on parle de souveraineté, mais je pense qu'on a voulu prendre un peu vite le tournant du numérique parce que c'était à la mode et qu'on essaye maintenant de remplir un peu au forceps ce projet.

Si on le prend au sérieux, ce projet, il est sincèrement vertigineux, parce que la monnaie, c'est de la confiance et de la violence, pour reprendre le titre du livre de Michel Aglietta. C'est un sujet éminemment politique, et on ne peut pas en faire n'importe quoi, notamment parce que ça peut remettre en cause le fonctionnement de notre système bancaire.

Je ne dis pas que c'est bien, je ne dis pas que c'est mal, je dis que ça se pense, que ça se prépare et que vous avez entre les mains quelque chose de très précieux, qui est une institution politique et qui s'appelle *la monnaie*. Dans le contexte actuel de tensions politiques et de montée des populistes, je pense qu'il faut faire très, très attention à la façon dont va tenir ce débat, qui n'est pas technique, qui est éminemment politique, et que, dans l'urgence, il faut toujours prendre son temps.

Elżbieta Kruk (ECR). – Panie Przewodniczący! Wiele krajów bada dziś możliwość wprowadzenia cyfrowych walut banku centralnego. Niektóre już je wprowadziły. Europejski Bank Centralny zapowiedział, że w tym roku rozpoczyna testy przed wprowadzeniem cyfrowego euro.

Zapowiada się oczywiście, że cyfrowe euro będzie bezpieczne i zapewni wysoki poziom prywatności, choć jak wiadomo, w przeciwieństwie do gotówki, nie pozwala na anonimowość.

Cyfrowe waluty spotykają się od dawna ze społeczną krytyką, wynikającą z obawy, że zwiększając możliwość kontroli nad wydatkami, doprowadzą do inwigilacji obywateli. Umożliwią też nowe rodzaje kontroli społecznej, w czasie gdy stoimy w obliczu zmniejszającej się ochrony praw człowieka, również w Unii Europejskiej.

Obawy te uzasadniło opublikowane na początku tego miesiąca nagranie rozmowy, podczas której pani prezes Europejskiego Banku Centralnego Christine Lagarde dała się nabrać, że rozmawia z prezydentem Ukrainy Wołodymyrem Zełenskim. Kiedy fałszywy prezydent zauważył, że Europejczycy protestują przeciwko cyfrowym walutom, gdyż nie chcą być kontrolowani, pani prezes pozwoliła sobie na szczerość i przyznała, że cyfrowe euro będzie służyło do większej kontroli nad obywatelami i ich wydatkami.

Mislav Kolakušić (NI). – Poštovani predsjedavajući i kolege, dragi građani, digitalni euro, digitalni identitet, digitalni zdravstveni podaci dostupni farmaceutske mafiji dovest će i imat će za posljedicu ukidanje slobodnog čovjeka puno prije nego što je to bilo tko od nas očekivao.

Kada nam uskoro stigne nova, takozvana pandemija, onima koji ne dođu na njihov predviđeni termin uštrcavanja istovremeno jednim klikom bit će ukinut njihov digitalni identitet, pristup novcu, pristup zdravstvenoj skrbi. Bit će blokirani jednim klikom.

Prošlogodišnje odluke vlada Kanade i Novog Zelanda su nam savršeni primjeri koliko je takav crni scenarij uistinu moguć i u sruću Europske unije. Hoćemo ga dozvoliti? Ja sigurno neću.

José Manuel García-Margallo y Marfil (PPE). – Señor presidente, señora comisaria, el debate de hoy versa sobre la puesta en marcha del euro digital como complemento, y no como sustituto, del dinero en efectivo. En este debate no estamos solos: otros bancos centrales están haciendo lo mismo, y haríamos bien en procurar ir de la mano. Esta puesta en marcha, en resumen, debe ir precedida de un análisis de coste-beneficio. En caso de duda, debemos abstenernos de actuar, aunque no debemos abstenernos de seguir estudiando este asunto para no quedarnos atrás.

Tengo tres certezas. La primera es que el euro digital debe estar a disposición de todos los ciudadanos y las empresas de la eurozona. La segunda, que estará contabilizado en el balance del Banco Central Europeo, lo cual quiere decir que estamos hablando de un bien público y no de un bien privado. La tercera, que las operaciones de cara al público estarán delegadas —subrayo «delegadas»— en las instituciones financieras, lo cual no exime al Banco Central Europeo y a esta institución de seguir atentos a la regulación y supervisión de lo que en este terreno se haga.

Hago tres advertencias. La primera es que el euro digital debe ser atractivo para que sea aceptado por la población, pero no debe ser excesivamente aceptado para que no se convierta en un depósito de valor que acabe con el dinero en efectivo y que acelere la retirada de depósitos; en tal caso, el euro perdería su condición de ancla monetaria. La segunda, que el acceso del euro digital a no residentes y su interoperabilidad con otras monedas digitales de otras áreas permitirá abaratar y hacer más efectivos los pagos transferidos. Y la tercera, que el euro digital no debe competir con los servicios de pagos digitales prestados en este momento por instituciones privadas, sino complementarlos.

Es un debate importante cuya celebración no podemos retrasar.

René Repasi (S&D). – Herr Präsident, Frau Kommissarin, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Der digitale Euro ist ein spannendes Projekt, geboren als Reaktion auf den Libra, von dem heute selbst kaum noch jemand spricht. Er wirft eine wichtige Frage auf: Welche Rolle kann öffentliches Geld in Abgrenzung zu privatem Bankengeld und privatem Digitalgeld spielen? Die Antwort auf diese Frage sagt uns, wie wir einen digitalen Euro ausgestalten müssen.

Meines Erachtens ist die zentrale Aufgabe des digitalen Euro, jedermann und jederfrau Zugang zu Finanzdienstleistungen zu eröffnen. Hier wurde heute viel über Freiheit gesprochen. Wichtig ist aber, dass Menschen überhaupt die Freiheit dazu bekommen, an Finanzdienstleistungen teilnehmen zu können.

Finanzielle Armut als Folge eines fehlenden Zugangs zu einem Bankkonto – das ist das zentrale Problem. 3,6 Prozent der europäischen Haushalte haben kein Bankkonto. Das bedeutet erstens: Verbraucherinnen und Verbraucher brauchen einen direkten Zugang zur EZB mit einem eigenen Konto. Zweitens: Es muss ermöglicht werden, den digitalen Euro offline zu nutzen. Und drittens: Konsequenterweise muss es ermöglicht werden, das Geld auch als Wertanlage zu nutzen, ohne Spekulation anzuheizen.

Engin Eroglu (Renew). – Herr Präsident, Frau Ministerin, Frau Kommissarin! Unsere Währungen sind im internationalen Wettbewerb, und deswegen ist es wichtig, dass sie leistungsorientiert und politisch unbeeinflusst agieren können. Weil wir im Wettbewerb um unsere Währung sind, müssen wir mit Innovationen gehen. Der Innovationsschritt der digitalen Währung kommt, und wir dürfen uns als Europäische Währungsunion dort nicht verschließen. Das heißt, wir müssen diesen Mut haben, den digitalen Euro, diesen Weg gemeinsam zu gehen, Frau Kommissarin.

Ich habe aber auch sehr gut Ihrer Rede zugehört. Sie haben fünf-, sechsmal in Ihrer Rede gesagt, Frau Kommissarin, Bargeld wollen wir nicht verbieten. Wichtig ist, dass Politiker das machen, was sie sagen. Und ich verstehe nicht – und es steht halt einfach nicht im Kontext –, wenn man dann auf anderer Seite eine Bargeldobergrenze von zwei- bis dreitausend Euro diskutiert. Dann passiert nämlich genau das, was die Menschen da draußen befürchten, nämlich, dass das Bargeldverbot kommt. Es bringt nichts, immer wieder hier zu betonen, dass wir das Bargeld erhalten wollen, weil es eine politische Mehrheit dafür gibt, sondern wir müssen aufhören, auf der anderen Stelle dann sozusagen das Bargeld einschränken zu wollen. Denn was sind denn heute zwei-, dreitausend Euro Bargeldobergrenze bei den vielen Fehlern, die Frau Lagarde gemacht hat in der Inflation? Was kann man heute für 2000 Euro kaufen und was kann man vielleicht in zehn Jahren noch für 2000 Euro kaufen, wenn diese Fehler nicht endlich behoben werden? Und deswegen: aufhören mit der Bargeldobergrenze!

Denis Nesci (ECR). – Signor Presidente, signora Commissaria, colleghi, il progetto dell'euro digitale potrà rappresentare un nuovo fondamento dell'economia digitale europea che, come indicato anche dalla BCE, ha intenzioni assolutamente condivisibili, quali il rafforzamento del ruolo dell'euro e il sostegno alla digitalizzazione. Inoltre consentirebbe ai consumatori una rapida modalità per i pagamenti.

Tuttavia, vorrei porre delle questioni che riguardano innanzitutto la diffusione, l'accessibilità e la possibilità di eseguire pagamenti offline in qualsiasi condizione. Potrebbero poi emergere dei rischi per la stabilità finanziaria, cioè occorre capire se il servizio sarà a pagamento o meno.

Per il primo caso, la moneta digitale potrebbe diventare un perfetto sostituto dei depositi bancari, limitando il ruolo delle banche e, aggiungo, in questo caso occorre fare un'ulteriore riflessione anche sul regolamento sui pagamenti istantanei, che proprio in questi mesi negozieremo, per evitare quindi di creare duplicati o sovrapposizioni non necessarie. Nel caso venisse concesso in maniera totalmente gratuita, il rischio potrebbe verificarsi in fasi di elevata instabilità finanziaria, dove ci troveremmo di fronte a una corsa all'euro digitale dei depositi bancari.

Quindi, sono d'accordo a portare avanti il progetto sull'euro digitale purché sia chiaro, facile da utilizzare e sicuro e permetta di effettuare pagamenti online anche a chi oggi è escluso dal sistema finanziario, e quindi risulti un valore aggiunto per i consumatori.

Jörg Meuthen (NI). – Herr Präsident, werte Kollegen! Die Digitalisierung birgt – das ist eine Binse – ohne jeden Zweifel Chancen und Nutzen wie auch Risiken und Gefahren in sich. Bei der von der EZB geplanten Digitalisierung des Euros als Währung überwiegen eindeutig die Risiken und Gefahren. Ökonomisch gefährdet ein digitaler Euro kleine und mittlere Banken in existenzieller Weise. Ihnen droht der Verlust von Liquidität. Der digitale Euro wird nicht, wie von der EZB behauptet, mehr Sicherheit bringen, sondern ganz im Gegenteil erhebliche Unruhe auf dem Finanzmarkt stiften.

Politisch ist die digitale Währung noch weitaus gefährlicher. Es ist vollkommen durchschaubar, dass dies nur ein erster Schritt hin zur vollständigen Abschaffung aller anderen Zahlungsmittel ist. Er ist ein großer Schritt hin zur Totalüberwachung aller Transaktionen und damit zur völligen Kontrolle der Bürger durch einen übergriffigen Staat. Warum wohl hat China seine Yuan bereits eifrig digitalisiert? Als demokratisch gewählte Volksvertreter ist es unsere Pflicht, die Bürger vor dieser totalen Kontrolle zu schützen und die Einführung eines digitalen Euros entschlossen zu verhindern. Das Bargeld, um das es hier sehr wohl geht, darf niemals abgeschafft werden.

Stefan Berger (PPE). – Herr Präsident, sehr geehrte Frau Kommissarin McGuinness, meine Damen und Herren! Über 100 Staaten arbeiten heute an einem digitalen Zentralbankgeld. Europa und die Europäische Zentralbank laufen in diesem Währungswettrennen vorne mit. In den USA sprechen Kongressabgeordnete und Gouverneure über ein Verbot von CBDCs. Hier in Europa wird darüber geredet, nicht nur darüber, dass wir den digitalen Euro brauchen, sondern auch, wie er aussehen soll. Und Apple, Google, PayPal, Visa, Mastercard wickeln zwar einen immensen Teil des europäischen Geldverkehrs ab, sie sitzen aber allesamt außerhalb der Europäischen Union.

Und es ist gut, dass wir an einer europäischen Lösung arbeiten. Ich betrachte den digitalen Euro als Chance. Aber er muss richtig gemacht werden. Und er braucht Eigenschaften, damit er gelingen kann. Digitales Zentralbankgeld muss so anonym sein wie Bargeld. Es muss ein Freiheitsgewinn und ein Innovationstreiber sein, sonst brauchen wir es nicht. Und der digitale Euro funktioniert auch nur in Verbindung mit unseren Geschäftsbanken und nicht an ihnen vorbei. Er darf das zweistufige Bankensystem nicht gefährden.

Und wir haben eben über Kryptowerte gesprochen. Der digitale Euro sollte eine Versöhnung sein zwischen dem traditionellen Finanz- und Währungssystem und der rasant wachsenden *decentralised-finance*-Wirtschaft. Wir sind aktuell in einer Phase, in der die EZB für dieses Vorhaben dezentralisierte Lösungen einschließlich *distributed-ledger*-Technologie prüft. Und eine dezentrale Lösung als unterliegende Technologie für den digitalen Euro wäre gut. Und ein programmierbarer digitaler Euro wäre geradezu die Spitze, denn er könnte mit Blockchain-basierten *stablecoins* wie *Euro Tether*, *circled eurocoins* und überhaupt mit vielen anderen Blockchain-Entwicklungen mithalten und würde Vorteile auch gegenüber SEPA bieten. Eine Sache soll der digitale Euro nicht beinhalten, wie heute Morgen zu lesen war: Der digitale Euro sollte gebührenfrei sein. Er muss gebührenfrei sein.

Marek Belka (S&D). – Mr President, Commissioner, David Bowie once said that tomorrow belongs to those who can hear it coming. By working on the digital euro, we prove to act on these words.

The digital euro will dramatically change how our financial system functions, but it may also increase our strategic autonomy in payments, strengthen the international role of the euro, and preserve the role of public money as a monetary anchor for the payment system. However, there are many questions to be answered in order to know where we are heading. Number one: what is the added value of such currency and do we really believe that our citizens need it? Number two: how will the Commission and the ECB guarantee privacy for the users of the digital euro without allowing it to be a great treat for money launderers and fraudsters? Number three: do we have the necessary robust and resilient infrastructure to support the widespread adoption of the digital euro? Without it, this project might simply become a beautiful failure.

Bert-Jan Ruissen (ECR). – Voorzitter, beste collega's, van alle kanten groeit de kritiek op de digitale euro. Dat is ook heel begrijpelijk. Voor welk probleem biedt dit nieuwe concept eigenlijk een oplossing? Is er wel een probleem?

Duidelijk is in elk geval dat de ECB met deze digitale euro een enorme machtspositie krijgt. Ze zou bijvoorbeeld negatieve rentes kunnen gaan instellen. Ze zou zelfs de euro ook programmeerbaar kunnen maken, met andere woorden zo kunnen instellen dat je je geld alleen kunt uitgeven aan zaken die de overheid acceptabel vindt.

Mijn vraag aan de Commissie is: hoe kijkt u daar eigenlijk tegenaan? Ziet u deze risico's ook? En hoe zit het met de borging van de privacy?

En dan te bedenken dat de recente analyse die de commissie ECON heeft laten uitvoeren, laat zien dat er nog helemaal geen markt voor de digitale euro bestaat. Ik zou zeggen: laten we de bezwaren serieus nemen en stoppen met dit project. De risico's en onzekerheden zijn eenvoudigweg te groot.

PŘEDSEDNICTVÍ: DITA CHARANZOVÁ

místopředsedkyně

Milan Uhrík (NI). – Vážená pani předsedající, bez ohledu na to, či digitálně euro bude, nebo nebude, právo na hotovostné platby musí zůstat zachováno. Totižto, čo by znamenal prechod len na čisto digitálnu menu? Na jednej strane úplne nekontrolované digitálne meny znamenajú vážne riziká prania špinavých peňazí, financovania terorizmu, štátnych prevratov alebo vojen. Na druhej strane príliš kontrolované digitálne meny môžu vlády zneužívať na sledovanie svojich občanov, kontrolu občanov, prípadne na nútenie, aby ľudia kupovali len tie správne veci, alebo, čo je horšie, v prípade potreby jednoducho dokážu nepohodlným občanom ich digitálne peniaze jedným kliknutím doslova a do písma vypnúť. Veď si len spomeňme na protestujúcich kanadských kamionistov, ktorým kanadská vláda počas covidu zablokovala prístup k ich súkromným peniazom, a zachránila ich vtedy jedine hotovosť. A práve preto hotovosť musí zůstať aj naďalej zachovaná nielen ako platobný prostriedok, ale najmä ako nástroj osobnej slobody občanov.

Isabel Benjumea Benjumea (PPE). – Señora presidenta, señora comisaria, verdaderamente me alegro mucho de que se esté celebrando este debate hoy, porque es un debate muy importante.

Es indudable que la propuesta del euro digital mejoraría la eficiencia de los pagos al reducir costes y tiempos de transacción. Asimismo, reforzaría el papel internacional del euro al permitir que la Unión diversificara sus reservas internacionales de divisas y redujera su dependencia del dólar estadounidense. En definitiva, nos posicionaría un paso más cerca de nuestros objetivos de digitalización y fortalecimiento de la posición de la Unión Europea en la economía global.

Sin embargo, en esta fase final de diseño de esta propuesta, debemos tener en cuenta que, el euro digital no debe presentarse, en ningún escenario, como un instrumento para crear depósitos de valor en el Banco Central Europeo y que debe ser un medio de pago que compita en igualdad de condiciones con los ya existentes. De lo contrario, la creación del euro digital tendría un impacto negativo en la financiación de la economía y la estabilidad del sistema bancario europeo.

En este sentido, es importante recordar que los bancos comerciales son el eslabón fundamental de la política monetaria de la Unión y que su papel esencial de intermediación financiera no debe ser socavado por la introducción del euro digital. De esta forma, el sistema financiero europeo podrá seguir funcionando de manera eficiente para apoyar a la economía real.

En conclusión, insto a la Comisión a que su propuesta establezca las salvaguardas necesarias para que el futuro euro digital cumpla con su propósito de mejorar la vida de los ciudadanos europeos, al mismo tiempo que preserva la estabilidad financiera y la integridad del sistema bancario europeo.

Ladislav Ilčić (ECR). – Poštovana predsjedavajuća, dragi ljudi, kad plaćate karticom, za to plaćanje zna samo vaša banka. Kad provodite pametno plaćanje preko svojeg mobitela, za to zna i središnji sustav koji u konačnici kontrolira država.

Jeste li sigurni da političarima želite dostaviti informacije o svim vašim transakcijama i dati im mogućnost da ih oni u konačnici kontroliraju ili ograniče? Mislite da je to nemoguće? Sjetite se samo Covid mjera i kako su vas političari ograničili. Zar mislite da je nemoguće da će ubuduće ograničiti vaše transakcije ako, recimo, zaključite da proizvodite previše CO₂ ili jedete previše mesa, a premalo kukaca?

Pitajte moje kolege s ljevice. Mnogi od njih će vam reći da bi takva ograničenja bila opravdana radi zaštite planeta ili dobrobiti životinja. Jasno je da je pametno plaćanje jednostavnije od kartice ili keša, ali i ostaviti otključanu kuću kad odlaziš jednostavnije od zaključavanja, pa ipak je zaključavate.

Dakle, nemojte biti naivni, čuvajte plaćanje karticom i kešom. Digitalni novac i pametno plaćanje su puni gubitak vaših temeljnih sloboda.

Peter van Dalen (PPE). – Voorzitter, in de discussie over de digitale euro wordt één vraag eigenlijk niet beantwoord: wie zit erop te wachten?

Mensen kunnen met de digitale euro direct bij de Europese Centrale Bank terecht. Oké, ze kunnen daar betalingen doen en ze worden dan misschien minder afhankelijk van commerciële banken. Maar de meeste mensen in Europa hebben gelukkig uitstekende toegang tot bestaande vormen van betalingsverkeer. Die zijn ook hartstikke efficiënt.

Waarom zouden we die digitale euro dan moeten hebben? Moeten burgers beschermd worden tegen de macht van grote banken? De Centrale Bank zelf stelt dat de financiële positie van die banken niet in gevaar mag worden gebracht door de digitale euro. Ik hoor aan de andere kant ook mensen vragen: wat gaat die digitale euro ons brengen? Ik hoor scepsis en wantrouwen. En die scepsis en wantrouwen hebben direct te maken met vragen over de privacy, over de programmeerbaarheid en over het mogelijk verplichte karakter van deze digitale euro. Ik neem aan dat de ECB er allemaal eervol en vertrouwenwekkend mee omgaat. Maar zit er dan iemand te wachten op dit nieuwe project, dat ook nieuwe problemen en wantrouwen met zich meebrengt?

Voor mij hoeft die digitale euro niet. Wij hebben hier vooral te maken met een oplossing voor een niet-bestaand probleem.

Danuta Maria Hübner (PPE). – Madam President, colleagues, I am among those who see the introduction of the digital euro as a meaningful opportunity for Europe. I see it as well as a chance to strengthen the international role of the euro.

The important question for me is whether the EU should focus its efforts on modernising the digital form of the euro for a wholesale purpose, or implement a retail digital euro first. At present, discussions in the euro system seem to be mainly focused on the retail option, but addressing the wholesale version could be easier and quicker as it would concern large-value payments, and these are common amongst euro system banks and counterparties which already have the necessary infrastructure in place.

With the exception of China and a few others, our global counterparts are focusing on the wholesale version of the digital currency. For both options, interoperability with other currencies will be a key aspect. CBDCs can make cross-border payments cheaper, faster and more efficiently settled compared with current payment systems. Making the digital euro usable for cross-border payments will significantly increase its international attractiveness.

I also think that it is critically important that the regulatory framework for the digital euro is fit for the future. That implies that the regulation that the Commission will present and the infrastructure that the ECB will build should not stifle future innovation, but rather be flexible enough to accommodate and incentivise future technological changes. To this end, it is fundamental that European Union authorities draw on the knowledge and experience of the private sector and provide them with a framework that they can leverage to develop new value-added services for citizens and businesses.

Othmar Karas (PPE). – Frau Präsidentin, Frau Kommissarin, meine sehr geehrten Damen und Herren! Es ist richtig und notwendig, dass wir uns mit den Fragen eines digitalen Zentralbankgeldes, dem sogenannten digitalen Euro, befassen. Es ist auch notwendig, dass die Europäische Zentralbank derzeit eine umfassende, ergebnisoffene Prüfung durchführt. Zum Ersten, weil über 90 Prozent der Zentralbanken weltweit an digitalen Währungen arbeiten, in zwölf Ländern Pilotprojekte gestartet wurden und es in neun Ländern bereits ein digitales Zentralbankgeld gibt. Zum Zweiten auch deshalb, weil die Zahlungssysteme, die wir derzeit haben – Visa, Mastercard und andere –, entweder national oder international, aber nicht europäisch sind und weil wir an einem europäischen europaweiten Zahlungssystem arbeiten müssen. Und drittens, weil wir mit einer Vielzahl von Innovationen konfrontiert sind, von Kryptowährungen bis Token.

Es ist also klar, dass der digitale Euro, das digitale Zentralbankgeld, ausschließlich ein ergänzendes Zahlungsmittel ist, das schnell, einfacher und sicherer ist. Es ist auch klar, dass es ohne gesetzliche Grundlagen keine digitale Währung geben kann. Diese können nur das Europäische Parlament und der Rat der Mitgliedstaaten gemeinsam beschließen. Damit haben die Bürgerinnen und Bürger das letzte Wort, und dieses ist noch nicht gesprochen.

Vystoupení na základě přihlášení se zvednutím ruky

Katarína Roth Nevedálová (S&D). – Vážená pani predsedajúca, pani komisárka McGuinness, ja by som sa chcela v prvom rade poďakovať, že ste dnes predstavili návrh Komisie, alebo teda to, čo si Vy myslíte, že by malo byť digitálnym eustom. Takisto je dôležité zdôrazniť aj pre občanov Európskej únie, že toto je vlastne prvá debata o digitálnom eure, ktorú my vedieme v Európskom parlamente, a určite neznamená jeho zavedenie, ani to, že s ním súhlasíme alebo nesúhlasíme, ale je to naozaj diskusia.

Vidíme naozaj rast kryptomien na celom svete a toto je vlastne naša odpoveď na to. Ale naozaj nám stačí to, že to je preto, že to robia všetci, budeme to robiť aj my?

Ja si myslím, že aj v dnešnej debate zaznelo veľa krát, že potrebujeme jasnú definíciu toho, v čom to digitálne euro bude lepšie ako euro, ktoré používame, aby sme to my vedeli vysvetliť vlastne aj občanom Európskej únie. Takisto pre našu politickú skupinu je veľmi jasne dôležité, aby bolo digitálne euro bezpečné, aby bolo ľahko použiteľné, aby bola ochrana vkladov a ochrana užívateľov tejto meny a takisto ochrana kupujúcich, a hlavne ich súkromia, keď budú toto euro používať. Čiže ja vnímam pozitívne to, že o ňom diskutujeme, ale určite by sme si mali definovať, v čom je naozaj tá pridaná hodnota a prečo ho použijeme, prečo ho máme používať a či to naozaj naši občania budú vnímať pozitívne. To je určite dôležité, pretože my ako politici môžeme mať názor, ale občania sú tí, ktorí ho budú používať.

(Konec vystoupení na základě přihlášení se zvednutím ruky)

Mairead McGuinness, Member of the Commission. – Madam President, this has been a really lively and very useful and important discussion. Now, whether you're for or against, sceptical or an enthusiast for a potential digital euro, it is a political project and this Parliament is having its say and that will continue as it should.

Mr Ferber, I think, is not in the chamber, but he asked a very big question, which, as a former journalist, I used to ask all the time: why? And I would say to this because we already have a very digitalised financial system and we need to look ahead and make sure that the digital euro is fit for the future.

But let me just try and imagine, had we never been discussing a digital euro right now. So if it was not on the agenda and no preparations were being done. In a few years' time, I think this House would be asking: why not? Why did you not prepare for the possibility of a digital central bank currency in Europe?

I also note the study prepared by Parliament for the ECON Committee, with a very catchy headline. It says 'Digital euro: when in doubt, abstain, but be prepared'. And I think that's exactly what we are doing today and what we've been doing with the ECB over the last number of months. And it is still a work in progress.

But I want to talk about cash because in my view, citizens, young and old, appreciate cash and appreciate choice. They may use a wallet for digital payments, but they appreciate access to cash. And I think it's important to outline what we are doing when it comes to protecting the right to have access to cash.

Issues concerning the acceptance of cash and access to it have emerged right across a number of our Member States, and it can lead to issues for people, particularly vulnerable groups. So unless we safeguard the acceptance of and access to cash, the effectiveness of legal tender could be undermined.

If the Commission decides to grant legal tender status to the digital euro and define its meaning, we believe that we need to do the same for cash. So in the second quarter, the Commission will also propose a regulation on the legal tender status of euro cash based. The legislative proposal will be based on the 2021 ECJ new ruling judgment, which defines three key principles of legal tender: mandatory acceptance at full face value and the power to discharge payment obligations.

I think when it comes to the issue of privacy, this was raised rightly by members in the House here and it is a very important topic, because privacy is a fundamental right and it's a highly valued issue for citizens. And this has been clearly substantiated by the ECB consultation and our targeted consultation.

We are also mindful of providing a solid framework to efficiently and effectively fight against money laundering and terrorism financing. So the regulation will aim to ensure that these objectives can be reconciled. So, for example, we could have an offline use to do proximity payments, peer-to-peer payments, and this would be important for citizens and in particular for unbanked people, as referenced in the debate. These offline payments could offer higher privacy.

On the issue which was raised and rightly by MEP Hübner on retail versus wholesale, the Commission is examining central bank digital currencies in the broad sense, so the current work is focusing on a retail digital euro, which is also in the regulatory competence of the Commission. That said, the wholesale use of a digital euro in security settlements can also be of interest.

The question also about the role of the euro for the future, the international role of the euro, the open strategic autonomy. All of these topics raised today are hugely important.

I repeat the point that the digital euro needs a strong democratic underpinning, and Parliament's views and support are essential within and beyond the legislative process.

The digital euro will ensure the continued availability of central bank money and payments, and this will protect the stability of our monetary and payment system and ensure our open strategic autonomy. The digital euro would be an additional pan-European choice available for payments, and we will aim to ensure competition with the private payment sector and to avoid the disintermediation of banks.

Let me just say something very clear in case you've missed it. This is not a Big Brother project or indeed a Big Sister project. But why does Big Brother sound much more alarming than Big Sister? But I say that in all sincerity and with some humour. I respect those who have that view. But frankly, I would ask us to calm down a little. We should not address this issue to citizens in this chamber as any sense of a project of control. It's a project of choice. It's also recognising that the citizens in this chamber, many of them use cash and digital payments and will want to continue to do that. We do have a euro, which is a unique currency for the eurozone, and it's very important that we do keep it fit for the future.

I dare say I have not convinced those who see it as that awesome project of control, but I hope the vast majority of Members in this House will view this debate as the start of a very important conversation, which you will, I'm sure, engage with your constituencies and citizens, and that we will continue this debate until such time as the legislative process is before you.

Jessika Roswall, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Madam President, honourable Members, Commissioner, I've listened very carefully and with great interest to this debate. Our exchange today has shown the importance that our institutions attach to the digital euro project and setting an appropriate regulatory framework that addresses both opportunities and risks for our citizens, for our businesses and for our economy at large.

A potential digital euro should build on the already established values within the Union of an efficient, safe, affordable and accessible payment system. Our discussion today has shown that these issues should deserve our attention once we start examining the forthcoming Commission proposal. And as many of you have pointed out – and as the Commissioner very clearly also said and I pointed out in my first intervention – it is important that this is an inclusive project. It will affect our citizens and our businesses and, therefore, it has to be built on a solid democratic basis. But thank you very much for this debate and thank you for your attention.

President. – That concludes the debate.

17. Dieselgate: suspected widespread use of defeat devices in cars to reduce effectiveness of pollution control systems (debate)

President. – The next item is the debate on Council and Commission statements on 'Dieselgate – suspected widespread use of defeat devices in cars to reduce effectiveness of pollution control systems' (2023/2647(RSP)).

Jessika Roswall, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Madam President, honourable Members, Commissioner. Air pollution remains, despite all efforts and improvements, the largest environment environmental health risk in Europe. Diesel vehicles are a major contributor to poor air quality, due to high nitrogen oxide emissions, and have a harmful effect on both human health and ecosystems.

The Dieselgate scandal in 2015 was an important catalyst for the extensive emission testing of diesel cars, as well as for greater public scrutiny of the car industry. In this respect, I would like to recognise the work of Parliament and its Committee of Inquiry into Emission Measurement in the Automotive Sector (EMIS) and Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) to achieve greater transparency in the automotive sector. I would also like to recall that we have made significant progress since 2015 to accelerate the green transition in the transport sector, for example, through the decision to ban the sale of new diesel and petrol cars from 2035.

The very recent report from the International Council on Clean Transportation has revealed the widespread use of defeat devices in Euro 5 and Euro 6 diesel cars manufactured before the Real-Driving Emissions test procedure was implemented. The use of these devices has also been the object of a ruling by the European Court of Justice, which consider them illegal.

A series of improvements have been implemented in the latest steps of the Euro 6 to prevent unauthorised use of defeat devices, for example, the Real-Driving Emissions test procedure. In this context, first of all, it remains important to check and sanction the use of defeat devices altering the performance of vehicle emission control systems. Secondly, when it comes to future cars, the Council has started working on the recent Commission proposal for a Euro 7 regulation, which introduces more comprehensive testing requirements for future vehicle certification. The Swedish Presidency is committed to advancing negotiations on this file.

I am convinced that both institutions are working towards the same objective, namely to prevent any future exhaust gas manipulation by any prohibited defeat devices. It is our duty to protect our citizens, their health, and consumer rights. Thank you very much for the attention, and I am looking forward to the debate.

Nicolas Schmit, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, dear Members of the Parliament, I am standing in for Commissioner Breton. We all became aware of the misuse of defeat devices in the automotive industry in the context of the 2015 Dieselgate scandal, when certain car manufacturers manipulated the emission control to pass the test foreseen by the legislation to prove compliance with their pollutant emission standards. Later on, various investigations by Member States have revealed the use of such devices by other manufacturers.

Since then, thanks also to the Parliament's efforts, the Commission – within the limits of our enforcement powers at the time – and Member States have taken several measures to sanction these practices and to prevent such a scandal from happening again.

First, in 2016, the Commission launched six infringement procedures against Member States who initially failed to report the necessary legislation or to impose sanctions on manufacturers who had vehicle types approved that did not comply with the legal requirements foreseen. In the meantime, these procedures were closed as the relevant Member States changed their legislation or impose the required penalties on the manufacturers. As of today, one case launched in 2017 against Italy is not yet closed. The evaluation of the latest changes in the Italian law are ongoing.

Second, the Commission rapidly recognised the need to improve the market surveillance regulatory framework. As such, we complemented checks of vehicles on the market by national authorities with the European oversight of type-approval and market surveillance activities through checks to be carried out by the Commission.

Third, we also changed the way how we react if it turns out that rules have been broken. This includes the possibility for the Commission to initiate EU-wide recalls and impose fines of up to EUR 30 000 per non-compliant car. These rules, however, only apply to new cars put on the market since September 2020.

And fourth, we have fundamentally changed the way we handle vehicle-emission type-approval. That implies new and improved mandatory emission tests in the laboratory and in real driving situations. Since these changes, vehicles are significantly cleaner than their predecessors. Real driving emission testing has led to a considerable drop in the real amount of NO_x emissions, well below the legal limit. This is good for air quality, notably in urban areas with heavy traffic and above all, consumers are better informed of the real environmental performance of the vehicles they purchase.

And finally, we also want to ensure that future generations of vehicles are developed according to the best environmental standards. This is why the Commission adopted in November 2022 a proposal for Euro 7, which sets new standards for air pollutant emissions from light and heavy duty vehicles, including from electric vehicles, which is currently under discussion by the European Parliament and the Council.

On 22 March, the NGO ICCT – the International Council on Clean Transportation – published a study on the emission behaviour of Euro 5 and Euro 6 vehicles. The study shows the results of emissions tests conducted by Member States covering the period from 2016 to 2020 in the framework of national post-Dieselgate investigations to reassess the excess NO_x emissions from European diesel cars. This study is complemented by tests performed by independent third parties and by an analysis of ICCT's own database of roadside measurements that collects a snapshot of the emissions of vehicles as they pass by.

The findings highlighted by the ICCT study are not new and are pointing to a legacy problem. Most of the worst results covered in the study relate to vehicles that were type-approved and therefore put on the market before the introduction of the real driving emission test. As such, this study is a reminder of Member States' responsibility to take corrective action urgently, since for the fleet predating 1 September 2020, the responsibility to take action lies with the Member States who have the legal possibility and responsibility to act.

In this context, let me remind you that since 2015, the Commission services have organised multiple discussions with Member States' authorities on the issue of prohibited defeat devices, reminding them of the obligation to investigate potential cases of non-compliance and to take all appropriate corrective measures. We have repeatedly called on Member States to carry out investigations into the possible presence of defeat devices in vehicles on their territories and to ensure that EU pollutant emission standards were scrupulously respected.

The Commission also requested Member States to identify the authors of the manipulations and apply national penalty procedures to sanction possible breaches of EU pollutant emissions rules. So far, Member States have reported on the ongoing review process on the issue of type approvals, and this has not yet led to withdrawals or sanctions.

And to finish, most recently, the Commission updated on 24 February 2023 its guidance on the identified action of the presence of defeat devices, which helps Member States to test vehicles for the identification of illegal defeat devices. The guidance helps interpreting the Commission's long-standing position confirmed by the decisions of the Court of Justice on illegal defeat devices that vehicles need to comply with the emission requirements in normal use, and that exceptions to this rule, including thermal windows, must be interpreted narrowly.

VORSITZ: NICOLA BEER

Vizepräsidentin

Jens Gieseke, *im Namen der PPE-Fraktion*. – Frau Präsidentin, Frau Ministerin Roswall, Herr Kommissar Schmit, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Den Bericht des ICCT sollten wir ernst nehmen. Und auch das Urteil des EuGH. Abschaltvorrichtungen sind nur dann legal, wenn sie dem Schutz des Motors dienen. Das muss von Einzelfall zu Einzelfall von den zuständigen Behörden geprüft werden. In Deutschland, in meinem Heimatland, ist dafür das Kraftfahrtbundesamt zuständig. Das kommentiert den ICCT-Bericht nüchtern: Die Messungen sind veraltet, und es hat seitdem zahlreiche Nachrüstungen und Rückrufaktionen gegeben.

Bevor hier also einige eifrig an der nächsten Kampagne gegen die Automobilindustrie arbeiten, schauen wir uns die Fakten an: Dass die europäische Gesetzgebung sich doch insbesondere vor dem Hintergrund des Dieselskandals weiterentwickelt hat, dass wir heutzutage schärfer und genauer prüfen – der Kommissar hat es gerade angeführt – und dass wir endlich Testuntersuchungen im Realbetrieb haben und nicht mehr nur auf reine Labortests zurückgreifen, dafür haben wir uns als EVP von Beginn an eingesetzt, auch im Abgasuntersuchungsausschuss EMIS und in der anschließenden Gesetzgebung.

Es ist auch Fakt, dass sich die Luftqualität in der EU in den letzten Jahren deutlich verbessert hat. So attestiert selbst das deutsche Umweltbundesamt, dass es in Deutschland so gut wie keine Überschreitungen der geltenden Grenzwerte mehr gibt. 2021 sei nur bei einem Prozent der städtischen Messstationen eine Überschreitung des Stickstoffdioxidgrenzwertes festgestellt worden. Das ist eine gute Nachricht. Darüber hinaus wird die Luftqualität durch Flottenerneuerungen und den Umstieg auf alternative Antriebe jährlich ja sogar noch weiter verbessert.

Wer jetzt also hetzt oder etwa polarisiert und wer einen neuen Skandal heraufbeschwört, der sollte ehrlich sein, dass er in Wahrheit andere Absichten hat, dass er jede Gelegenheit nutzt, die Automobilindustrie zu brandmarken, dass ihm die europäische Autoindustrie und auch die Arbeitnehmer in dieser Industrie egal sind. Es ist die gleiche Ideologie, die gleiche Technologiefeindlichkeit, die hier im Hause auch das Verbrennerverbot vorangetrieben hat.

Christel Schaldemose, *for S&D-Gruppen*. – Fru formand! Ja, i 2015 blev vi rystet over denne skandale. Voldsomt rystet. Biler udledte meget mere NO_x, end de måtte – bevidst manipuleret af dele af industrien for at omgå kravene. Og det var en skandale, fordi tilliden blev brudt. Det var en skandale, fordi vi på den måde tillod, at mennesker døde før tid, fordi bilerne forurenede mere, end de måtte. Fuldstændig uacceptabelt! Heldigvis tog vi fat på det tidspunkt. I Europa-Parlamentet lavede vi et udvalg, der kiggede på, hvad der var gået galt, og vi reviderede vores lovgivninger, hvilket gjorde, at vi trods alt har fået en bedre ramme til at sikre, at dette kan undgås i fremtiden. Men vi har stadigvæk rigtig mange biler, der kører rundt derude og forurenede. Men sagen er bare den, at vi bliver nødt til at lære af det her. Vi har stadigvæk rigtig mange af de gamle biler, der kører rundt. Det er utroligt, at vi tillader det, og vi har stadigvæk brug for at få strammet reglerne. Og nu ser vi igen, når vi er i gang med at ville stramme Euro 7-reglerne, at bilindustrien endnu en gang kommer her til vores hus og siger, at det ikke er nødvendigt, og at det ikke kan lade sig gøre, det er for dyrt og alt muligt. Jeg mener, at vi har brug for at gøre meget mere. Vi har brug for og tage ved lære af Dieselgate. Vi skal teste, og vi skal monitorere meget mere, end vi har gjort. Medlemslandene har stadigvæk et ansvar, men det har Kommissionen også. Og så skal vi have Euro 7-lovgivningen i mål hurtigst muligt inden udgangen af denne mandatperiode, selv om der er nogle, der ikke ønsker, det skal ske sådan. Og så skal vi have udfaset forbrændingsmotoren, for det er den, der er problemet i det her. Med en forbrændingsmotor får du også NO_x og andre forurenende partikler. Det skal vi selvfølgelig have gjort noget ved. Vi har brug for at vise borgerne, at vi tager dem alvorligt, at vi tager sundheden

alvorligt, og at vi tager vores eget demokrati alvorligt. Derfor skal der ske mere end det, der er sket på nuværende tidspunkt, og derfor håber jeg, at dette hus vil være med til at bakke op om, at vi får leveret på Euro 7-standarderne – det er nye standarder, der er brug for – og at vi i øvrigt fortsætter den udvikling, vi har med at få udfaset forurenende køretøjer til fordel for vores sundhed og til fordel for tilliden til vores system.

Róza Thun und Hohenstein, *on behalf of the Renew Group*. – Madam President, we all remember the Dieselgate scandal, and that was not only about companies cheating on emission limits and misleading consumers, but also about governmental bodies from different Member States not working together or turning a blind eye to the dishonest practices.

Now, thanks to the real driving emission tests, which we introduced, the extent of the damage done is very clearly visible. New rules and improved market surveillance of the automotive industry mean that such scandalous practices will not be possible in the future. However, we have to admit that the problem is not yet solved. There are still many cars on our roads with very high NO_x emissions, and most European consumers have not been compensated.

The cheating was already eight years ago, and evidently the existing consumer redress does not function properly. This also needs a very serious overhaul.

Bas Eickhout, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – Madam President, indeed, it's a bit like Groundhog Day when we are discussing Dieselgate again. And also when I hear the EPP say we should not start a witch hunt, this is exactly the first reaction after Dieselgate in 2015. Not much changed in those 10 years, you would say.

We're not here on a witch hunt. We are here trying to establish the facts. And Commissioner, you were a bit unclear, but you said basically yes, on this ICCT study, yes, we have a legacy problem. You call that a legacy problem? I call that a problem for the citizens' health, for our citizens who are driving in cars that are illegal, having illegal devices in itself. So yes, I think it's a legacy problem, but it's a problem that we should take seriously.

And for the rest you said there's nothing new coming out of this study, so with that I conclude that you concur that 16 million cars on the European roads are still driving with cheating devices in it. That's what you're saying. So you are acknowledging that 16 million cars on the European roads are having illegal defeat devices in it, because that is important, meanwhile – things have changed, Mr Gieseke.

Also, many court cases have made clear that all the arguments of the car industry, 'we need that software', they have been dismissed. It is illegal. And all the arguments the car industry used to say why it was needed have been dismissed. Defeat devices are illegal and the court cases have been very clear that even software updates that have been done, for example, by Volkswagen have been declared illegal and insufficient.

So then we do turn to the Commission. Yes, I know very well – I was there on all the changes that you did. But what are you going to do with those 16 million cars on the European roads that are having illegal defeat devices in it? What are you going to do to the car industry? Are you going to make sure that they are required to do something about that so that our citizens are not suffering from that? And most importantly, are you going to require and are you going to assess what all the different recalls, which are just nationally diverse, what they have achieved until now? What is the effect of those recalls and those fixes? That's the information that we want, and for the rest, we want a Commission that is really tougher on maintaining European law – something the EPP also always finds very important, last time I checked.

Zdzisław Krasnodębski, *w imieniu grupy ECR*. – Pani Przewodnicząca! Odpowiadając na pytania kolegi z grupy Zielonych, zastanawiałem się, dlaczego tak jest. I ja bym chciał wrócić do początków tej afery i może do kontekstu politycznego, bo rzeczywiście mamy do czynienia z oszustwem na skalę globalną – oszustwem, które nie spotkało się z odpowiednim zainteresowaniem Komisji Europejskiej mimo wszystko, co usłyszeliśmy, oraz Parlamentu Europejskiego. Nie przypominam sobie jakichś gorących debat w tamtym okresie, w poprzedniej kadencji. Wielu oszukanych nie uzyskało żadnego odszkodowania. Ciągłe jeżdżą tymi samochodami, jak słusznie pan powiedział. Wielu odpowiedzialnych za oszustwo nie zostało ukaranych.

Być może powodem tego stanu rzeczy jest to, że przemysł samochodowy w Niemczech ma ogromne wpływy polityczne. Dotyczy to szczególnie koncernu Volkswagen, bo od niego się wszystko zaczęło. Jak wiemy, Dolna Saksonia posiada 20% akcji Volkswagena, a jej przedstawiciele zasiadali w zarządzie Volkswagena. Wśród nich był Gerhard Schröder – wcale nie chadek, tylko socjaldemokrata. Obecny prezes Federalnego Trybunału Konstytucyjnego, będąc posłem do Bundestagu, był partnerem w kancelarii adwokackiej Schilling, Zutt & Anschütz, która doradzała koncernowi Volkswagen i reprezentowała go w aferze dieslowej. Oszustwo o tej skali oraz powiązania koncernów samochodowych ze światem polityki świadczyły, jak wiele innych skandali w Niemczech w ostatnich latach, o całym systemie politycznym i o praworządności w kraju, który uchodził za wzór liberalnej demokracji. Lepiej było więc milczeć i zając się na przykład praworządnością w Polsce.

André Rougé, *au nom du groupe ID*. – Madame la Présidente, chers collègues, en 2015 éclatait le «dieselgate», qui mettait en cause de nombreux constructeurs automobiles. Il leur était reproché de réduire frauduleusement les émissions polluantes de leurs moteurs thermiques lors des essais d'homologation.

Bien sûr, ces mensonges aux acheteurs et à l'Union européenne n'auraient jamais dû exister. Il faut néanmoins essayer de comprendre comment ces constructeurs en sont arrivés là. Les normes environnementales toujours plus irréalisables de Bruxelles ont fini par pousser ces constructeurs à la faute. C'est en effet une guerre réglementaire, relevant d'une écologie punitive, que mène l'Union européenne depuis des années à l'égard des automobilistes.

La préservation de la santé des Européens et la lutte contre la pollution sont louables, mais les moyens employés toujours déconnectés de la réalité, arbitraires et injustes. Hier, les Européens étaient incités à acheter des voitures diesel. Aujourd'hui, ils sont contraints de passer à l'électrique, et cela, en déplaçant géographiquement une pollution générée par l'extraction de terres rares, nécessaires à la fabrication de batteries. Qu'en sera-t-il demain?

La manœuvre entreprise avec ce débat est claire: s'en prendre une nouvelle fois aux moteurs thermiques, sans penser que, au fin fond de nos campagnes et de la France d'outre-mer, beaucoup de compatriotes fonctionnent encore avec des groupes électrogènes.

C'est donc avec impatience que nous attendons le débat sur la pollution générée par la fabrication des batteries électriques: pollution des cours d'eau, de l'air, des sols, venant s'ajouter aux pollutions qui touchent, parfois gravement, d'autres continents. Mais l'Union européenne fermera les yeux, estimant sans doute qu'il y a de bonnes pollutions et de mauvaises pollutions.

Nikolaj Villumsen, *for The Left-Gruppen*. – Fru formand! Dieselgate er historien om bilproducenter, der lyver deres biler grønnere og mindre forurenende, end de er. Det er en historie, der gentager sig. I marts i år kom det frem, at 77 procent af dieslbiler måske stadig forurener mere, end producenterne påstår. I de kommende måneder skal vi forhandle nye udledningsstandarder for biler og lastbiler. Her skal vi sørge for at gardere os mod bilindustriens snyd og humbug. Bilindustrien og deres venner påstår, at der ikke er råd til ambitiøse standarder. Men den grønne NGO Transport & Environment kan i dag fortælle os, at de store bilproducenter høster kæmpe profitter. Deres aktionærer høster profitter, og deres direktører høster kæmpe lønstillinger. Så der er råd til klimahandling. Kære kollegaer, én ting står desværre klart: Vi kan ikke stole på, hvad bilindustrien siger. Det er desværre realiteten.

Laura Ferrara (NI). – Signora Presidente, dal rapporto dell'International Council on Clean Transportation si evince che dallo scandalo Dieselgate del 2015 non sia cambiato nulla.

Il 77 % dei test rivela infatti ancora emissioni cosiddette sospette, un dato che potrebbe essere spiegato dalla possibilità che milioni di auto diesel in Europa usino un dispositivo di manipolazione.

Con la commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta EMIS emerge la mancanza di volontà politica di agire per proteggere la qualità dell'aria e la salute pubblica, nonostante la Commissione europea e gli Stati membri fossero a conoscenza da più di un decennio dell'esistenza di discrepanze tra i test sulle emissioni di ossido di azoto effettuati in laboratorio e quelli misurati su strada. Furono persino descritte le diverse strategie che suggerivano l'utilizzo di impianti di manipolazione per i veicoli leggeri e pesanti, oggetto di sentenze della Corte di giustizia dell'Unione europea.

E allora basta con questo inganno. Le istituzioni europee e gli Stati membri devono scegliere se continuare a fare gli interessi delle lobby automobilistiche o salvaguardare ambiente e salute dei cittadini.

Petar Vitanov (S&D). – Madam President, Commissioner, less than a month ago, the European Court of Justice decided that car buyers may be entitled to compensation in the event of an illegal defeat device. And this is a fair decision because the consumers need to get their rights protected and I would say that this is the most important thing.

The other important thing is that thermal windows are no longer allowed with Euro 7. The reason for this problem was laid down in the Euro 6, but this is – some people would say – basically a decision of the past. But there is one big problem, which is the reason for this debate, and this is the reporting of the ICCT, which shows that despite this huge scandal, despite the court ruling, there are still almost 17 million cars circulating which most likely still have the Dieselgate defeat devices. Nothing is being done to remove them or fix them. And this is absolutely unacceptable and we definitely need adequate and effective actions for that.

Valter Flego (Renew). – Poštovana predsjedavajuća, ma ljudi moji dragi, prošlo je gotovo osam godina od skandala Dieselgate.

S druge pak strane, sada Međunarodno vijeće za čisti prijevoz govori o tome da oko 77 posto EU automobila s dizelskim motorima proizvodi takve emisije koje ukazuju na prisutnost uređaja za varanje na emisijama u automobilima i imaju, pod navodnicima, sumnjive rezultate.

Znamo, pak, da je Sud Europske unije u dvanaestom mjesecu još 2020. proglasio takve uređaje u vozilima nelegalnim. I te dvije činjenice, znate, treba shvatiti vrlo, vrlo, vrlo ozbiljno.

Dakle, ako zbrojimo dva plus dva i dodamo još najvažniju stavku, a to je, naravno, zdravlje građana, a ne želja za profitom automobilske industrije, onda je jasno, poštovani povjereniče Schmit, što treba raditi.

Očekujem stoga vrlo rigorozne i pedantne kontrole svih novoprodučenih automobila kako bismo bili sigurni da se proizvode u skladu s donesenim normama. Prošlost ne možemo mijenjati, ali možemo utjecati na budućnost i zato vjerujem da hoćemo već danas znati kako kontrolirati i regulirati sve automobile da nam se, nedajbože, ne dogodi više nekakav „electrigate“.

Ciarán Cuffe (Verts/ALE). – Madam President, Commissioner, if you're drunk and you vomit in a taxi in my home city of Dublin, you pay the price: €160 to the driver as compensation for the damage that you have caused. That is fair and right. However, nitrogen dioxide emissions, largely produced by diesel vehicles, kill 64 000 people every year. So I ask when will car manufacturers pay for the damage of the Dieselgate scandal?

The ICCT tells us 16 million cars on European roads still carry pollution-cheating devices, even though they are banned in the EU. While car company profits soar, the health of European citizens suffers. How many recalls and fixes have been carried out? What actions are being taken by the Commission? Do you accept the ICCT's findings that defeat devices remain widespread? EU rules are clear: corrective action by car manufacturers through recalls and fixes is an obligation, and yet action is minimal, sporadic and ineffective. If taxi customers pay for the damage, why aren't car manufacturers forced to do the same?

Ангел Джамбазки (ECR). – Г-жо Председател, не разбрах много примера с това, когато някой пиян клиент повръща в таксито, но може би има и такива случаи, не знам. Това обаче, което знам е, че между 2000 и 2015 г. много всички препоръчваха дизеловите автомобили и хората в Европа си купуваха дизелови автомобили, защото бяха рекламирани като по-зелени, като по-спестяващи и като по-ефективни.

Сега обаче се оказва, че това не е било точно така, а тази година не е толкова далече назад и хората се запитват дали няма някакъв лобизъм, дали няма нещо, което кара зали като тази и политици, които взимат решения да им пробутват през 10 - 15 години промяна на автомобилния парк и на начина, по който работят, и по начина, по който всъщност изкарват и своите доходи, работейки и използвайки своите автомобили.

Изглежда, че Европейският парламент и Европейската комисия всъщност работят лобистки, работят за някакви лобистки фирми. Ще е интересно да чуем след няколко години колко е била вредна електрическата кампания, за която се говори в момента.

Sylvia Limmer (ID). – (*Beginn des Redebeitrags bei ausgeschaltetem Mikro*) ... von ICCT, dem Internationalen Rat für sauberen Verkehr, aufgrund eher nicht nachvollziehbarer theoretischer Berechnungen zu dem Schluss, dass angeblich bei 70 Prozent der Dieselmotoren Euro 5 und Euro 6 verbotene Abschalttechnologien verbaut sein könnten. Übrigens: Der pompöse Name dieses ICCT soll vermutlich darüber hinwegtäuschen, dass es nur eine der unzähligen Klima-Agitprop-NGOs ist, die ganz gerne auf politische Bestellung hin liefern und übrigens bereits zuvor Prügel bezogen haben wegen unwissenschaftlicher Behauptungen. Und da ist es dann schon ganz interessant, dass laut eigener Angaben des ICCT die Kommission einer der Hauptsponsoren ist – aha. Damit will man nun die bestehende Diesel-Fahrzeugflotte reduzieren, denn das Verbot der Verbrennungsmotoren ab 2035 betrifft ja nur die Neuzulassungen. Nicht wahr?

Kateřina Konečná (The Left). – Vážení kolegové, jako bývalá místopředsedkyně vyšetřovacího výboru pro měření emisí v automobilovém průmyslu vidím výsledek kauzy Dieseltgate v Evropské unii jako jednu velkou prohru pro všechny. Prohrál náš průmysl, který ztratil dobyté pozice na trhu ve Spojených státech. Prohráli naši spotřebitelé, kteří nebyli ani zdaleka odškodněni jako ti za oceánem, a prohrály i evropské instituce, které se prostě nepoučily.

Co byl hlavní důvod vzniku celého skandálu? Přece to, že se uzákoněné cíle snižování emisí odpojily od toho, co je fyzikálně, cenově a sociálně možné. Když se podívám na schválený konec prodeje nových aut se spalovacím motorem v kombinaci s nově navrženou normou Euro 7, nemohu dojít k jinému závěru, než že se historie prostě bude opakovat. Obsahuje-li nová Euro 7 požadavky, které nelze v současnosti za použití nejlepších senzorů změřit, k čemu asi tak dojde? Kolegové, kauza Dieseltgate nebyla přece ojedinělým selháním našich výrobců, ale vyústěním dlouhé řady špatných politických rozhodnutí. Nerespektují-li přijaté cíle to, co je reálně v praxi možné a společensky únosné, je pak jasné, že je ti, co je mají uvést v život, je obchází a ignorují. V tomhle nadále pokračujeme.

Carlos Zorrinho (S&D). – Senhora Presidente, Senhor Comissário, integrei a comissão de inquérito que, em 2017, concluiu que a existência de discrepâncias entre as emissões de óxidos de azoto nos automóveis a diesel durante os ensaios em laboratório e em condições reais de condução era efetiva.

O escândalo do *Dieseltgate* teve um impacto muito negativo na reputação da indústria automóvel europeia, além dos prejuízos causados ao ambiente e aos consumidores, que foram ressarcidos de forma diferenciada nos diferentes mercados.

O relatório da comissão de inquérito foi também muito claro nas suas recomendações, de forma a garantir melhor legislação, ensaios independentes e melhor supervisão dos carros em circulação.

Passaram mais de seis anos. Com resistências, a visão europeia para o futuro da indústria automóvel tem-se vindo a focar cada vez mais na eletrificação e na descarbonização. A transição tem que assegurar a competitividade da indústria, mas também a sustentabilidade ambiental das soluções. O progressivo enfraquecimento das regras previstas no pacote Euro 7 não é um sinal positivo.

Errar uma vez é lamentável. Repetir o erro é inaceitável. Como se verificou em 2017, há poupanças imediatas que apenas transportam para o futuro custos brutais e impactos que deixam pegadas negativas e impossíveis de apagar.

Jorge Buxadé Villalba (ECR). – Señor presidente, señor comisario, lo importante del caso diésel no es la sentencia tardía del Tribunal de Justicia, sino lo que hicieron ustedes después del escándalo —acelerar la delirante agenda climática obligando a la electrificación—, ya que, así, Europa, líder mundial en motores de combustión limpios, pierde la posición que habían ido ganando sus empresas durante décadas.

Pero ¿qué le deben ustedes al Partido Comunista chino? Cuando hace pocas semanas ustedes decidieron la prohibición de los motores de combustión sabían, como yo, que las importaciones de China habían crecido en 2021 un 160 %, que Europa en cinco años ha perdido el 31 % del mercado, y que un 20 % ha sido ganado por China.

Pero yo apreté el botón correcto; ustedes apretaron el botón verde. Su botón verde es un enemigo de las empresas y de los trabajadores de Europa. Han logrado con un dedazo que Europa pierda toda la ventaja competitiva en el motor de combustión, mientras China podrá seguir contaminando sin freno.

Ford ha anunciado el despido de 1 100 trabajadores en Valencia. En España hay dos millones de empleos puestos en riesgo. Son ustedes culpables, y la única salida es revertir su delirio. En España tenemos una expresión: «si no sabes torear, ¿para qué te metes?». Así que, si no saben, déjenlo.

Georg Mayer (ID). – Frau Präsidentin! Das Dieseldgate hat Europa und vor allem die Konsumenten in Europa tief erschüttert in ihrem Vertrauen in die Automobilindustrie. Uns und auch den Menschen in Europa ging es ja ähnlich beim Katargate unserer sozialistischen Freunde im Haus. Nur hier ging es ganz glasklar um Korruption der S&D-Fraktion, die – nebenbei erwähnt – auch dringend Aufklärung bedarf. Hier hat man ein bisschen das Gefühl, es wird hier der Mantel des Schweigens darübergerlegt.

Auf der anderen Seite, beim Dieseldgate, geht es um einen Betrug am Konsumenten, dem Konsumenten gegenüber, der ja immer eine schwächere Stellung gegenüber der Industrie hat. Deshalb sind diese Vorabentscheidungen oder ist dieses Vorabentscheidungsverfahren auch so wichtig, nämlich um einen Kräfteausgleich zwischen einer finanziell starken Industrie und den Konsumenten hier in Europa zu erreichen.

Matthias Ecke (S&D). – Frau Präsidentin, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Der Abgasskandal hat uns gerade auch in Deutschland viel beschäftigt. Ich bedauere, dass das deutsche Traditionsunternehmen VW hier Schaden angerichtet und Vertrauen in die Autoindustrie verspielt hat. Die EU hat aber gut und richtig reagiert. In allen Mitgliedstaaten ist nun vorgeschrieben, dass Prüfungen von Fahrzeugen im realen Fahrbetrieb erfolgen müssen. So kann die doch erhebliche Kluft geschlossen werden zwischen den auf dem Prüfstand gemessenen CO₂-Emissionswerten und denen im Straßenverkehr.

Auch zur Messung der Stickoxidemissionen wurde die Untersuchung im praktischen Fahrbetrieb eingeführt. Diese Entscheidung ist richtig, und sie liegt auch der neuen Abgasnorm Euro 7 zugrunde, an der wir gerade arbeiten. Diese *real driving emissions* müssen aber an realistischen Alltagsbedingungen orientiert werden und nicht an missbräuchlichen Testfahrten. Abgasnormen, die ambitioniert, klar und erfüllbar sind, stärken das Vertrauen in Industrie und Behörden. Dieseldgate darf sich nicht wiederholen.

Vera Tax (S&D). – Voorzitter, met Dieseldgate hebben de autofabrikanten het vertrouwen van de consument verraden. We wisten het niet en je zag het niet, maar het heeft desastreuze effecten. Ik zal ook een voorbeeld geven. De regio Limburg, waar ik woon, is één van de groenste en mooiste regio's van Nederland, met prachtige groene weides en heerlijke fietslandschappen. Maar in diezelfde regio leven mensen gemiddeld elf maanden korter dan in de rest van Nederland. Dat komt door luchtvervuiling van de industrie en het wegvervoer. Dat is niet alleen in mijn land het geval, maar in heel Europa. Jaarlijks sterven 300 000 mensen eerder door luchtvervuiling. Dat is dus de reden waarom we in de EU ook wetgeving maken zodat auto's minder en uiteindelijk niks meer uitstoten.

Het verraad van de auto-industrie staat in de annalen. Maar het effect voelen we nog steeds. Veel van deze vervuilende auto's rijden nog steeds in onze straten. Van Dieseldgate hebben we geleerd dat de auto-industrie er alles aan doet om regels in het belang van mens en milieu te omzeilen. Laat dit een les zijn die we niet vergeten. Vertrouwen is goed, maar controle is beter.

Spontane Wortmeldungen

Katarína Roth Neveďalová (S&D). – Vážená pani predsedajúca, v roku 2015 označili odborníci kauzu Dieseldgate za prelomovú a mali pravdu. Kauza podnietila nedôveru voči naftovým motorom a odštartovala prudký tlak na prechod na elektromobily. K všetkému treba pripočítať zvýšenú prevádzku a prevádzkovú cenu vozidiel, pretože každé nové diesellové auto musí tankovať AdBlue, ktorého cena stále rastie. Oproti minulému roku, keď to bolo 20 centov, je to dnes 70 centov a viac, pretože sa vyrába zo zemného plynu. Nová štúdia navyše ukazuje, že manipulácia s emisiami je stále realitou. Tri štvrtiny európskych áut s naftovým pohonom majú pravdepodobne nainštalované zariadenie, ktoré ovplyvňuje výsledky testov emisií a umelo ukazuje nižšie emisné hodnoty. Je to obrovské množstvo vozidiel. Sú to desiatky miliónov automobilov, ktoré sú stále v obehu. Jednoznačne to považujeme za zradu dôvery spotrebiteľov a verejnosti a úrady nemôžu naďalej nechať výrobcov automobilov vyklznuť bez trestne. V mnohých prípadoch v súvislosti s touto kauzou neboli výrobcovia automobilov v Európe ani potrestaní, ani hnaní k zodpovednosti. Niečo podobné môže nastať aj pri zavedení diskutovanej novej emisnej normy Euro 7 a pri elektromobiloch, kde sa umelo znižuje dopad na životné prostredie, a v konečnom dôsledku na to doplatia iba spotrebiteľia.

(Ende der spontanen Wortmeldungen)

Nicolas Schmit, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, honourable Members, first I would like to thank you very much for this important debate, which citizens are certainly interested in.

Yes, the automotive industry is a key industry in the EU. We have to recognise this. Many regions in many Member States depend on this industry. More than 13 million jobs – direct and indirect – are at stake. So we have to ensure that this industry is developing on a blameless basis. And we all agree that Dieseldgate, obviously, was not an hour of glory for a certain number of car manufacturers. Cheating is not an option and never should be, and cheating should be sanctioned. And in this case, it's a question of clean air. It is also about consumers' rights that have to be better protected.

In the New Deal for Consumers adopted in 2018 by the Commission, consumers should be assisted when they encounter problems – and here obviously there are problems, and this applies to the past as well as to the future.

It remains an important issue now to continue to check vehicles for compliance with emission regulations and to take appropriate measures. The Commission is doing its part to live up to its responsibility to ensure that in the future, cars circulating on European roads comply with the latest emission rules.

And in that spirit, a swift adoption of the Euro 7 proposal would also contribute to that aim.

Jessika Roswall, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Madam President, honourable Members, Commissioner, thank you for your valuable and interesting contributions. I will be quite short. This debate has shown that there is a clear need to address the use of prohibited defeat devices at many levels, and that there is an important role for all of us to play.

With regard to the defeat devices that were installed before the real driving emissions test procedure was implemented, we agreed that, with the underlying motivation to reduce nitrogen oxide emissions from these vehicles, we will further engage in legally sound corrective actions.

Again, thank you for the efforts by the European Parliament and others. We have made a lot of progress for reducing the emissions from diesel vehicles, and now we are taking the next step towards entirely emission-free cars. In the meantime, we need to close loopholes in EU legislation. But thank you again for the debate and for your attention.

Die Präsidentin. – Die Aussprache ist geschlossen.

Schriftliche Erklärungen (Artikel 171)

Clara Aguilera (S&D), *por escrito*. – Ocho años después de la irrupción del escándalo Dieseldgate, el informe del Consejo Internacional de Transporte Limpio (ICCT) ha señalado que todavía más de un 40 % de los coches en circulación en Europa presentan con niveles «extremos» de emisión de óxido nítrico (NO_x). Los resultados del informe evidencian una presencia extendida de dispositivos de manipulación declarados ilegales por el TJUE, estimada en 16 millones de vehículos.

Este es un asunto de preocupación para la salud de los ciudadanos europeos, principalmente en zonas urbanas. Es necesario redoblar esfuerzos para asegurar el cumplimiento de la legislación vigente y garantizar que los vehículos en las carreteras europeas no contienen dispositivos de manipulación.

De cara al futuro, la propuesta de la Comisión para establecer los nuevos estándares Euro 7, actualmente siendo debatida por ambos colegisladores, plantea introducir métodos de evaluación más exhaustivos. Asimismo, la transición hacia vehículos eléctricos será un paso decisivo para reducir la contaminación del aire de coches y furgonetas.

César Luena (S&D), *por escrito*. – Ocho años después de la irrupción del escándalo Dieseldgate, el informe del Consejo Internacional de Transporte Limpio (ICCT) ha señalado que todavía más de un 40 % de los coches en circulación en Europa presentan con niveles «extremos» de emisión de óxido nítrico (NO_x). Los resultados del informe evidencian una presencia extendida de dispositivos de manipulación declarados ilegales por el TJUE, estimada en 16 millones de vehículos.

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Cristina Maestre Martín De Almagro (S&D), *por escrito*. – Ocho años después de la irrupción del escándalo Dieselgate, el informe del Consejo Internacional de Transporte Limpio (ICCT) ha señalado que todavía más de un 40 % de los coches en circulación en Europa presentan con niveles «extremos» de emisión de óxido nítrico (NO_x). Los resultados del informe evidencian una presencia extendida de dispositivos de manipulación declarados ilegales por el TJUE, estimada en 16 millones de vehículos.

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18. EU Global Health Strategy (debate)

Die Präsidentin. – Als nächster Punkt der Tagesordnung folgt die Aussprache über die Erklärungen des Rates und der Kommission zur EU-Strategie für globale Gesundheit (2023/2642(RSP)).

Jessika Roswall, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Madam President, honourable Members, thank you for inviting me to this important topic. The Swedish Presidency considers global health as a key priority and an essential pillar of the EU's external action. Health is a basis for sustainable development with important implications for the safety, stability and prosperity of all societies, including within the EU. We believe that the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health is a human right.

Today, the EU and its Member States play a leading role for global health, both financially and politically. Lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic and other health emergencies point to the need for a renewed approach to global health. The ongoing discussions in the Council on this topic are based on the Commission's communication on a new EU Global Health Strategy 'Better Health for All in a Changing World' to replace the previous strategy from 2010.

To provide political and strategic direction from the Council, the Swedish Presidency is working on conclusions on global health that we aim to adopt in May. While the new strategy stands in its own right, allow me to highlight three ways in which we believe the new strategy represents a renewed approach to global health.

First, by building on a comprehensive understanding of global health in line with the World Health Organization's Triple Billion targets: healthy societies, health systems and health security.

Second, through an increased focus on engaging all relevant sectors and available instruments to improve health. And third, through renewed and different partnerships, especially with regional partners. This also represents a shift from a focus mainly on saving lives and reducing the spread of diseases, to also promoting health and ensuring that people can remain healthy.

To deliver on its objectives, the implementation of the strategy will require a Team Europe approach, bringing together national and international actors and partners, public and private, as well as civil society and academia, and so on. It will also require coordination across all relevant EU financial instruments and financial institutions to promote synergies with relevant EU frameworks, initiatives and policies.

Knowing about the longstanding and active engagement by the European Parliament in the area of global health, I'm really looking forward to the discussion today, but thank you for the attention for now.

President. – So now we have the problem that Commissioner Kyriakides is on her way, and Commissioner Schmit cannot step in. She should be here in one or two minutes, so we will take the political group speakers while we wait for her. The EPP speaker is here, I see, so if you are ready to start, Mr Sokol, then we will take the Commissioner afterwards.

Tomislav Sokol, u ime Kluba PPE. – Poštovana predsjedavajuća, nakon što se svijet prije tri godine suočio s pandemijom velikih razmjera, globalno zdravlje postalo je još veći prioritet djelovanja Europske unije.

EU danas ima golemu priliku preuzeti važnu ulogu u uklanjanju postojećih nedostataka u upravljanju zdravstvom na globalnoj razini. Iz tog razloga pozdravljam donošenje EU strategije za globalno zdravlje i njezina tri prioriteta: osiguranje boljeg zdravlja i dobrobiti ljudi tijekom cijelog života, jačanje zdravstvenih sustava uz promicanje univerzalnog zdravstvenog osiguranja i osnaživanje primarne zdravstvene zaštite, sprečavanje i suzbijanje prijetnji zdravlju primjenom pristupa „jedno zdravlje“.

Prvenstveno moramo raditi na uklanjanju temeljnih gospodarskih, socijalnih i okolišnih uzroka lošeg zdravlja. Dalje, moramo omogućiti pravedan pristup svim osnovnim zdravstvenim uslugama, od promicanja zdravlja i prevencije bolesti do pristupačnog, kvalitetnog liječenja, rehabilitacije te borbe protiv zaraznih i nezaraznih bolesti, koji i dalje predstavljaju golemi javnozdravstveni problem u mnogim zemljama.

Osim toga, moramo raditi, a to je posebno važno, na rješavanju problema nedostatka zdravstvene radne snage, što je problem i u mnogim zemljama Europske unije, te nedovoljnih vještina u mnogim krajevima svijeta. Na kraju, na nama je da jačamo kapacitete za prevenciju, pripravnost i odgovor te rano otkrivanje prijetnji zdravlju na globalnoj razini.

Da bismo to postigli, nužno je širenje strateških partnerstva Unije u području zdravlja i preoblikovanje suradnje s različitim dionicima sukladno uzajamnom interesu i strateškim prioritetima, uz dodatno jačanje uloge Svjetske zdravstvene organizacije.

U strategiji kao jedan od ključnih preduvjeta za bolje globalno zdravlje navodi se digitalizacija. Nadovezujući se na svoj revolucionarni rad u kontekstu reguliranja zdravstvenih podataka, EU može iskoristiti potencijal zdravstvenih podataka u cijelom svijetu u skladu s načelima planiranog europskog prostora za zdravstvene podatke.

Ključno je riješiti problem nedovoljnih ulaganja u digitalno zdravstvo u zemljama s niskim i srednjim dohotkom i tu Europa može napraviti svojim financijskim doprinosom jako puno.

Da zaključim, ova strategija usmjerena je na bitne prioritete, jačanje zdravstvenih sustava, univerzalno zdravstveno osiguranje, primarnu zdravstvenu zaštitu, javno zdravstvo, odrednice zdravlja te rješavanje problema neravnoteže u radnoj snazi. I upravo iz tih razloga smatram da je trebamo podržati.

Heléne Fritzon, för S&D-gruppen. – Fru talman! Jag vill lyfta ett avgörande perspektiv på global hälsa som jag saknar i strategin. Det handlar om jämställdhet. Om du föds till kvinna eller man kommer att vara avgörande för din hälsa. Jämställdhet spelar roll för liv och död. I vissa länder lever kvinnor numera i snitt ett decennium längre än män, men fler män än kvinnor dör i suicid. Samtidigt är det så att en tredjedel av världens flickor gifts bort innan de fyller 18 år. Allt fler unga kvinnor riskerar att dö i förtid av osäkra aborter.

Vi vet också att inkomstgapet mellan kvinnor och män ökar igen. Med dagens takt skulle det dröja mer än 200 år innan kvinnor har samma inkomst som män. Både pandemin och den konservativa anti-abortrörelsen har slagit hårt mot flickors och kvinnors hälsa och det är vi som måste ta ansvar för att vända den trenden.

Jag tycker att det saknas ett jämställdhetsperspektiv i EU:s hälsostategi. Både kvinnor och män förtjänar att leva goda, fria och hälsosamma liv. Mitt land, Sverige, har länge varit ledande för jämställdhet i världen, och jag förväntar mig att den svenska regeringen och det svenska ordförandeskapet gör mer för att lyfta den ökande ojämställdheten i diskussionerna i rådet och med kommissionen. Vi kan bättre.

President. – I propose that we continue with the third group speaker so that you have time to arrive, Commissioner. In a debate about health we do not want to cause health problems because of stress!

Véronique Trillet-Lenoir, au nom du groupe Renew. – Madame la Présidente, Madame la Commissaire – chère Stella –, nous avons bien lu cette stratégie globale et nous sommes heureux de cette vision très intégrative de la santé dans toutes les politiques, de cette proposition ambitieuse et que nous partageons: la santé non plus comme un coût, mais comme un investissement, non plus comme une charge, mais comme une chance pour l'Europe. Mais, alors, pourquoi la réserver aux pays tiers? Pourquoi ne pas l'appliquer à nous-mêmes? Car, enfin, sommes-nous si exemplaires sur la lutte contre les inégalités, sur une véritable politique de prévention sur le renforcement des soins primaires?

Le rapport d'initiative sur une stratégie des soins nous a bien révélé la similitude de nos faiblesses au sein même de l'espace Schengen. Alors pourquoi ne pas s'emparer de cette stratégie globale pour l'appliquer au sein de l'Union? Et, même si on vous oppose les prérogatives nationales, pourquoi ne pas lancer des programmes de coopération renforcée entre pays luttant pour une seule et même belle cause: la santé des Européens?

Stella Kyriakides, Member of the Commission. – Madam President, dear members, thank you for the flexibility and thank you for adding this debate to the agenda today. As has already been said, the pandemic has made it very clear that health challenges do not stop at borders and concern us all. It has revealed structural health inequalities and underlined the importance of international coordination towards health security globally.

On 30 November, we launched the new EU Global Health Strategy to achieve real impact on the ground and strengthen our voice at the global level. We have listened to you and the strategy is a response to the calls made by this House. And with it, we put forward our vision to step up EU global leadership in health. We have also listened to other key players during an extensive consultation of Member States, partner countries, civil society and global health initiatives. This effort is reflected in the positive welcome the strategy received, and I want to thank everyone for that.

Health is an essential pillar of EU policy and global health has become an essential pillar of EU external policy, reflecting the external dimension of the European Health Union and the key component of global gateway, which is all about partnerships – essential partnerships rooted in equity, in solidarity and in human rights. Concrete examples of such partnership efforts include the regional Team Europe initiatives in health in Africa and Latin America, and the collaboration with global health stakeholders such as the Global Fund, Gavi and the new Pandemic Fund.

Our Global Health Strategy presented three key, interrelated priorities. The first is to tackle the root causes of ill health – whether they are economic, social or environmental – keep putting people always at the centre. The second is to strengthen global health with a 'one health' and 'health in all policies' approach in order to prevent diseases before they become health threats and pandemics. And the third is to strengthen health systems and advance universal health coverage. These will put us back on track to achieve the health-related Sustainable Development Goals.

Global governance, health sovereignty and strategic autonomy are also important considerations in the strategy. We set out a vision for a new global health order. As a champion of multilateralism, the EU believes the WHO should be at the core of a strong and responsive multilateral system where the EU should finally have a seat at the table in the form of a formal observer status at WHO. Such a new global health order should be based on stronger rules to deliver better health for all, such as the binding pandemic agreement currently under negotiation.

To achieve our goals, it is crucial that we collectively boost our financing for global health. This should include financing at global, regional and bilateral levels. We encourage the use of innovative financial instruments and new ways of financing with an effective Team Europe approach. It also highlights the prospects of co-investment initiatives and domestic resource mobilisation.

On the EU level, global health will be prioritised across relevant EU budget financing mechanisms, including NDICI-Global Europe, EU4Health and Horizon Europe programmes. The key to all this is a Team Europe approach, which I know is a central issue for this Parliament. Only together – and with one voice between the Commission, Parliament and Member States – will we increase our impact on the ground and in international fora. We're also working closely with the Swedish Presidency towards strong Council conclusions to be adopted in two weeks, endorsing the ambitions of our strategy.

Only with political commitment coupled with concrete actions, monitoring and accountability mechanisms will we see a real change. We will keep listening. We will continue, of course, to engage. And by working together, we can make global health a reality.

Joanna Kopcińska, w imieniu grupy ECR. – Pani Przewodnicząca! Szanowna pani komisarz! W ostatnim czasie globalna debata na temat zdrowia publicznego stała się żywo dyskutowanym tematem. Z jednej strony bezsprzecznie opowiadam się za priorytetowym traktowaniem zdrowia na świecie poprzez odpowiednio dobrane programy finansowane m.in. z budżetu Unii Europejskiej, takie jak program EU4Health, „Horyzont Europa”, Instrument Sąsiedztwa i Współpracy Międzynarodowej oraz Instrument Pomocy Przedakcesyjnej.

Z drugiej zaś strony uważam, że wciąż musimy dokładać większych starań, aby budować solidne partnerstwo w obszarze polityki zdrowia między Unią a resztą świata. Należy przemyśleć takie działania, które przyczynią się do osiągnięcia większej synergii między wdrażanymi programami, aby dotychczas zainwestowane fundusze zyskały jeszcze większą efektywność.

Jednocześnie Unia, pozostając największym darczyńcą pomocy międzynarodowej na świecie z wkładem 50 mld euro rocznie, wciąż musi aktywnie odpowiadać na wewnętrzne problemy państw członkowskich w dziedzinie zdrowia publicznego, zwłaszcza gdy większość gospodarek państw unijnych zmagają się z deficytem.

Uważam, że priorytety strategii powinny być tak skalibrowane, aby stanowiła ona wsparcie dla działań pozaunijnych, ale również wewnątrzunijnych, gdyż efekt poprawy globalnego bezpieczeństwa zdrowotnego i zapewnienie lepszego stanu zdrowia musi być działaniem solidarnym.

W podejmowanych działaniach zrobmy wszystko, ale rozsądnie, aby głoszone hasła o zrównoważonym finansowaniu globalnej agendy zdrowia realnie przyczyniły się do ochrony i poprawy zdrowia pacjentów.

Christine Anderson, im Namen der ID-Fraktion. – Frau Präsidentin! Die EU-Strategie für globale Gesundheit ist in wenigen Sätzen zusammengefasst: Schmeiße Big Pharma Milliarden von Steuergeldern an Gewinnen in den Rachen für ein nutzloses, schädliches, gar tödliches Produkt. Wälze die Kosten der durch die Todesspritzen verursachten Schäden auf den Steuerzahler ab. Ermächtige die Kommissionspräsidentin, ihren eigenen Ehemann im Rahmen ihrer Amtsausübung persönlich zu bereichern. Übertrage die Regierungsgewalt auf die WHO und entmündige damit die für Demokratien konstitutiven Völker. Verkaufe all dies als dem Wohl des Volkes zuträglich, stigmatisiere, beschimpfe, verhöhne und ächte all jene, die das anders sehen.

Hier geht es nicht um Gesundheit, meine Damen und Herren, sondern darum, den souveränen Völkern Europas die Volksherrschaft zu entreißen. Die letzten drei Jahre haben gezeigt: Das Interesse der EU, der WHO und Big Pharma an öffentlicher Gesundheit ist genauso groß wie das Interesse der Waffenindustrie am Weltfrieden, nämlich überhaupt nicht.

Kateřina Konečná, za skupinu The Left. – Paní předsedající, vážená paní komisařko, ve strategii máte jako jeden z cílů uvedeno přijetí opatření pro spravedlivější přístup k vakcínám a lékům posílením místních farmaceutických systémů a výrobní kapacity. To je krásná proklamace, která se objevila již ve farmaceutické strategii pro Evropu tři roky zpátky. Já se vás ptám, co jste pro to jako Evropská komise udělali? Vždyť Komise není schopna měsíce řešit ani výrobní kapacity a výpadky léků uvnitř Evropské unie. Každý občan, který se v těchto dnech dostaví do lékárnky, vidí, co vše není k dostání.

Další věc – očekávala bych, že jak strategie, tak jednotlivé dílčí kroky Evropské unie budou odrážet postoj Evropského parlamentu, že zkušenost z pandemie COVID-19 ukazuje, že chudé země nemohou spoléhat na dary vakcín a léků. Potřebují mít přístup k technologiím a receptům, aby vakcíny a léky mohly vyrábět samy. Má frakce léta tvrdí, že k tomu je nezbytná výjimka z dohody TRIPS. Nesouhlasíme s tím, že evropská strategie pro vývoz vakcín do chudých zemí byla úspěšná. Naše budoucí strategie pro svět by se měla řídit zásadou globální rovnosti ve zdravotnictví, což vyžaduje naprosté přehodnocení právního rámce ochrany duševního vlastnictví. Jenom tak můžeme něco opravdu změnit.

Maria Angela Danzi (NI). – Signora Presidente, signora Commissaria, colleghi, negli ospedali italiani siamo al collasso, come in quello di Saronno, dove sono scesi in piazza un migliaio di cittadini la settimana scorsa.

Scarseggia il personale medico sanitario nei pronto soccorso e nei reparti di rianimazione, dove spesso il confine tra la vita e la morte è labile e dove la qualità del servizio fa la differenza fra vita e morte, appunto.

I limiti imposti dal patto di stabilità alla spesa del personale sanitario hanno ostacolato nuove assunzioni e un'adeguata retribuzione. Per aggirare questi limiti vengono stipulati contratti di prestazione di servizio che spesso mascherano rapporti di lavoro subordinato. Ci ritroviamo quindi con medici chiamati «a gettone», con scarsa conoscenza della struttura sanitaria, che effettuano turni di lavoro massacranti e fuori dagli orari massimi previsti dalla disciplina europea.

Escludiamo questa spesa dal patto di stabilità, stabiliamo norme sanitarie comuni in termini di salari e modalità di lavoro e in materia di formazione e certificazione degli operatori.

Occorre includere la salute e l'assistenza sanitaria tra le competenze condivise fra Unione e Stati membri, non bastano le raccomandazioni.

Nicolae Ștefănuță, on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group. – Madam President, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the fragility of our healthcare systems. There is No One Health – there is not a European health if we don't have a universal health. We have shown that borders are useless when we are facing a pandemic. Solidarity should be our answer.

Antimicrobial Resistance, AMR, is a cross-border health threat that affects countries in pandemic proportions. As a response, we urge the EU to expand access to affordable antibiotics and ensure that they are balanced against misuse and overuse. We also advocate for specific operation funds to operationalise the One Health priorities in low- and middle-income countries.

Lastly, we must strengthen health systems and increase universal health coverage to combat AMR more holistically. It is crucial that EU investments in third countries go where they are needed and that they are sustainable in the long term, because by working together with global solidarity, we can transform healthcare systems, not only for ourselves, but also for countries that badly need it.

President. – Thank you all very much for your flexibility during that first round of speakers.

Bartosz Arłukowicz (PPE). – Pani Przewodnicząca! Pani komisarz! Myślę, że pandemia wszystkim nam, politykom i przede wszystkim obywatelom, pokazała, że Unia dłużej nie może wstydliwie zasłaniać oczu i – potrafiąc wspólnie budować drogi i stadiony, prowadzić wspólną gospodarkę rolną – patrzeć spokojnie na to, jak w jednej części Europy pacjentka z rakiem piersi musi umrzeć, a w innej części Europy taka sama pacjentka z takim samym rakiem piersi ma szansę na przeżycie. Bo tutaj nie było dostępu do nowoczesnych technologii czy nowoczesnych leków. Ten czas się musi skończyć. I coś się chyba już wydarzyło, bo skoro Parlament Europejski powołał Komisję Specjalną ds. Walki z Rakiem, w której braliśmy udział, stworzono specjalny raport na rzecz wspólnej walki z rakiem, to znaczy, że zrobiliśmy krok do przodu.

W ciągu ostatnich tygodni nastąpił także kluczowy, historyczny moment w Parlamencie Europejskim. Pierwszy raz w historii tej instytucji powołano specjalną Podkomisję Zdrowia Publicznego. Jutro odbędzie ona swoje pierwsze posiedzenie, na które serdecznie panią zapraszamy, na którym się jutro zobaczymy i rozpoczniemy wspólną pracę.

Myślę, że oczekiwania wobec nas są bardzo duże. 500 milionów ludzi chce, żeby wspólnota, która buduje razem drogi, która buduje razem politykę rolną, w końcu zajęła się wspólnie rakiem, zdrowiem i życiem. Musimy rozpocząć od tego, co już przeżyliśmy w pandemii. Skoro udało się kupić wspólnie szczepionki, wynegocjować ceny, to musimy rozpocząć wspólny proces zakupu najnowocześniejszych technologii medycznych. Żeby były dostępne dla pacjenta na wschodzie i zachodzie, południu i północy. I musimy zapobiegać brakom leków w Europie, bo to jest coś, na co w nowoczesnym świecie nie możemy sobie pozwolić. Do zobaczenia jutro, pani komisarz!

Karsten Lucke (S&D). – Frau Präsidentin, Frau Kommissarin! Gesundheit ist grundlegend für Frieden und Sicherheit, und Gesundheit ist ein Menschenrecht. Damit haben wir schon die internationale Dimension von Gesundheit definiert. Globale Gesundheit ist ein essenzieller Part von EU-Außenpolitik, und die globale Gesundheitsstrategie ist der externe Pfeiler der Europäischen Gesundheitsunion, wichtiger Baustein im Global Gateway, im Team Europe und – extrem wichtig, dürfen wir nicht vergessen – natürlich auch im Hinblick auf die Ziele, die Erreichung der SDGs Richtung 2030.

Im letzten Jahr haben wir im Entwicklungsausschuss darauf hingewiesen, welche Bedeutung im strategischen Dialog die globale Gesundheit hat, und haben dazu Maßnahmen aufgerufen und gefordert, und deswegen stehen wir heute auch hier und sprechen über die globale Gesundheitsstrategie. Geopolitische Rivalität, politischer Wettbewerb und natürlich auch neue Partner im Globalen Süden – das paart sich alles mit Klimaveränderung, mit Umweltverschmutzung, mit Landnutzungswandel, mit dem Verlust von Biodiversität und mit Antibiotikaresistenz und vielen, vielen anderen Geschichten.

Das sind die strategischen, globalen Herausforderungen in der Gesundheit. Die EU kann hier Partner in Führung werden, und das sollten wir auch tun. Multilateralismus, Fachkräfte, neue Standards, Arzneimittel, Technologien, viele, viele Aspekte, die extrem wichtig sind. Das Zeitalter der Pandemien ist keine Sequenz mehr aus irgendeinem Science-Fiction-Film, sondern wir müssen Gesundheit wirklich global begreifen und unsere Politik auch entsprechend ausrichten.

Lassen Sie mich das noch sagen, Frau Kommissarin, nehmen Sie das bitte mit: Was mir fehlt, ist eine Strategie für post-akute Infektionssyndrome. Das ist heute schon ein Problem. Es wird ein noch größeres werden. Wir müssen jetzt die 20 - Leitlinien der globalen Gesundheitsstrategie ausfüllen, durchdeklinieren und mit Leben füllen.

Irena Joveva (Renew). – Gospa predsednica. Potrebovali smo pandemijo, da je Komisija po trinajstih letih predstavila prenovljeno strategijo globalnega zdravja.

Ampak, dobro, vsaj dobili smo jo. In zastavljena je dobro in bo, če bo uspešno izpeljana, Unijo v geopolitičnem merilu postavila kot vodilno silo na področju zdravstva.

To nedvoumno odločno podpiram, še posebej zato, ker je strategija označena kot zunanji vidik evropske zdravstvene unije.

Zdaj pa, ali to pomeni, da smo resnično, in ne samo idejno, pripravljeni vzpostaviti zdravstveno unijo ter prenesti pristojnosti glede zdravstva z držav članic? Brez tega namreč težko zastavljamo strategije za vzpostavitev učinkovitih zdravstvenih sistemov, medtem ko znotraj Unije ti zelo trpijo, ponekod celo že razpadajo.

Verjamem v solidarnost in podpiram pomoč vsem pomoči potrebnim, tudi ali pa predvsem v zdravstvu. Ampak pri uresničevanju strategij ne smemo pozabiti na urejanje lastnih težav.

Michèle Rivasi (Verts/ALE). – Madame la Présidente, Madame la Commissaire, mes chers collègues, on ne peut qu'être d'accord avec le fait d'avoir une stratégie de l'Union européenne en matière de santé mondiale. On va y voir de la solidarité, de l'équité, le respect des droits de l'homme. Toutefois, l'Union européenne n'a pas montré l'exemple, notamment pour ce qui est de la levée temporaire des brevets sur les vaccins, les traitements et les diagnostics, qui avaient tout de même été réclamés par plus de 150 États. Et que dire de la gestion, pas très glorieuse, de COVAX!

J'ai une question à vous poser, Madame la Commissaire. Vous dites que la Commission, au vu de sa stratégie, doit devenir membre à part entière de l'Organisation mondiale de la santé. Mais vous avez eu un veto des États membres. Les États membres ne veulent pas que la Commission siège au sein de l'OMS. Alors, comment établir cette stratégie mondiale si vous n'avez pas l'accord des États membres? Faut-il y voir une conséquence de la gestion de la COVID-19? D'ailleurs, les États membres vous demandent de vous cantonner au transfert de technologies, au financement et à la diplomatie mondiale. Donc, c'est vraiment une question qui se pose.

(La Présidente retire la parole à l'oratrice)

Margarita de la Pisa Carrión (ECR). – Señora presidenta, señora comisaria, señorías, queremos que la inversión en salud —por ejemplo, para encontrar soluciones para el cáncer o tratar enfermedades raras— sea una prioridad política. Sin embargo, vemos que no es así cuando se analizan cuáles son los intereses y a dónde destina la Unión Europea los recursos.

Hay una carencia de profesionales sanitarios y se desincentiva la innovación hasta el punto de que la investigación se está desplazando fuera de nuestras fronteras. Y, en cambio, se insiste en una estrategia que, bajo el pretexto de la salud, pretende socavar la soberanía de los Estados miembros y de terceros países con «un nuevo orden sanitario mundial» en «una nueva gobernanza mundial», cuya preocupación no es solo la salud, sino también la promoción de unos nuevos valores que degradan al ser humano y la ética de la práctica médica, como ocurre con la dramática práctica del aborto en la llamada salud sexual y reproductiva.

¿Saben los ciudadanos de la Unión Europea que esta nos deja en manos de organizaciones mundiales que, además, no han sido elegidas con sus votos?

Gilles Lebreton (ID). – Madame la Présidente, chers collègues, la santé publique est, d'après les traités européens, un domaine qui relève de la compétence des États et non de l'Union européenne. Hélas, un article ambigu du TFUE, l'article 168, autorise quand même l'Union à, je cite, «compléter les politiques nationales».

C'est sur le fondement de cet article que la Commission nous propose aujourd'hui une stratégie de l'Union en matière de santé mondiale. Des éléments de langage affriolants nous y promettent, je cite, «une couverture sanitaire universelle portée par l'équipe Europe». Je fais grâce aux personnes qui m'écoutent du long exercice d'autocélébration qu'on y trouve.

La réalité est plus sinistre. La Commission a apporté la preuve de son incapacité à gérer la santé publique lors de la pandémie de COVID-19: vaines tentatives d'empêcher les contrôles sanitaires aux frontières nationales, achat d'un médicament inefficace, le remdesivir, pour 1 milliard d'euros, négociation d'achats de vaccins dans des conditions particulièrement opaques.

À la lumière de cette expérience, je condamne cette nouvelle tentative de la Commission de gérer la santé publique à l'échelle du monde entier. Qu'elle laisse faire les États et l'Organisation mondiale de la santé! En tant que Français, je ne veux pas mettre aujourd'hui la Commission en situation de décider demain, guidée par l'ultralibéralisme qui l'inspire, du démantèlement de notre service public hospitalier.

Marcel de Graaff (NI). – Voorzitter, de EU wil een wereldbestuur van de WHO met bindende regels tijdens een pandemie. Dit is een volstrekt foute strategie.

De COVID-19-pandemie heeft bewezen dat een gewone griep wereldwijd tot een levensgevaarlijke pandemie werd verklaard, dat onzinnige maatregelen – zoals mondklapper en avondklok – universeel verplicht werden en dat miljoenen mensen door experimentele vaccins zijn overleden of ernstige gezondheidsschade hebben opgelopen.

De COVID-19-pandemie heeft een enorme belangenverstrengeling onthuld. Drijvende krachten achter deze COVID-19-hysterie en -vaccins waren namelijk de GAVI Alliance en de Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Beide organisaties zijn de grootste particuliere geldschietsters van de WHO. Bill Gates heeft door de COVID-19-pandemie bijna een half miljard USD verdiend met aandelen in big pharma. EU-baas Ursula von der Leyen, wier echtgenoot directeur is van een farmaceutisch bedrijf, heeft per EU-burger tien vaccins gekocht in een schimmige miljardendeal.

Dus de enige juiste conclusie is dat lidstaten zélf hun gezondheidsstrategie moeten bepalen.

Liudas Mažylis (PPE). – Pirmininke, komisare, kolegos, Europos Sąjungos visuotinės sveikatos strategiją, kuriai jau virš dešimt metų, atėjo laikas atnaujinti. Nuo tada patyrėme nemažų sukrėtimų ir praradimų: COVID-19 pandemija, vėžio ir kitų lėtinių ligų plitimas paskatino mus imtis aktyvesnių veiksmų sveikatos srityje. Pandemijos metu Europos Sąjunga pademonstravo lyderystę, tačiau iššūkių nemažėja. Palaikau šioje strategijoje išskirtą orientaciją į tokius geresnės sveikatos užtikrinimo veiksnius, kaip skaitmeninimas, moksliniai tyrimai, kompetencijų stiprinimas, o ypač pabrėžčiau sveikatos registrų svarbą, keitimosi sveikatos duomenimis būtinybę. Būtina plėtoti novatoriškus gydymo būdus ir diagnostiką, tarp jų ir naujų vakcinų kūrimą. Geresnių galimybių gauti reikiamas sveikatos paslaugas nusipelno visi, todėl sveikintina, kad naujoji strategija orientuota ir į tarptautinį bendradarbiavimą. Veikti globaliu mastu yra siektina, bet gal mes pirmiausiai sumažinkime atskirtį tarp Rytų ir Vakarų valstybių pačioje Europoje. Juk Europos Sąjungos piliečiams vis dar nevienodai prieinami gydymo būdai ir vaistai. Todėl Europos sveikatos sąjunga turi įgyti realesnę pavidalą, pagrįstą

atitinkamais resursais.

Sara Cerdas (S&D). – Senhora Presidente, Senhora Comissária, Senhor Membro do Conselho, esta estratégia de saúde global na União Europeia era há muito esperada e necessária e representa aquela que é a dimensão externa e um passo muito importante rumo a uma verdadeira União Europeia da Saúde, que se baseie numa só saúde, que se baseie em saúde em todas as políticas, como tenho vindo aqui a defender, no Grupo dos Socialistas e Democratas, desde o início da pandemia.

A União Europeia tem de reforçar a sua posição como um dos principais doadores da Organização Mundial da Saúde, falando a uma só voz aquando das negociações do Tratado das Pandemias.

E urge também a Comissão esclarecer uma questão sobre uma das maiores ameaças de saúde global até à data: a resistência aos antimicrobianos, a maior ameaça que estamos a enfrentar a par das alterações climáticas. De que forma o atraso na apresentação da estratégia farmacéutica está a prejudicar esta batalha importante?

Não bastam documentos, estratégias e comunicações. A União Europeia já deu provas, já ultrapassou momentos difíceis em saúde pública, mas na hora de criar soluções práticas e duradouras não podemos ficar aquém.

Susana Solís Pérez (Renew). – Señora presidenta, señora comisaria, tal y como dijo el alto representante, el señor Borrell, la salud ya no es un tema solo de farmacéuticos y médicos, es también un problema geopolítico. La pandemia ha situado la salud mundial en un lugar prioritario de la agenda política multilateral. Ha puesto de manifiesto las graves desigualdades en la distribución de vacunas y la necesidad de una vigilancia más eficaz de las enfermedades en todo el mundo y de mecanismos de cooperación internacionales mucho más sólidos. Así que la estrategia que debatimos hoy debe cambiar las reglas para que la Unión Europea sea líder en salud mundial y actúe con mucha más determinación.

Las amenazas del futuro pueden ser químicas o biológicas, o ser pandemias silenciosas como la resistencia antimicrobiana, y, para prevenirlas y combatirlas, debemos actuar con un enfoque global, el del concepto «Una sola salud». También necesitamos que haya más presencia europea en las estructuras de gobernanza de una Organización Mundial de la Salud mucho más fuerte y eficaz. Y, finalmente, necesitamos recursos: si queremos una estrategia global realmente transformadora, habrá que explorar instrumentos financieros innovadores en colaboración con el Banco Europeo de Inversiones o con el Banco Europeo para la Reconstrucción y el Desarrollo.

Die Präsidentin. – Ich bedanke mich bei allen, die jetzt die deutsche Übersetzung hören wollten, die gerade nicht funktioniert hat, für die Flexibilität, auf einen anderen Kanal umzuschalten. Das wird gerade gefixt. Wir fahren trotzdem fort, es hat nur einen Hinweis gegeben. Wir kriegen das beide hin in einer anderen Sprache. Ganz herzlichen Dank!

Tilly Metz (Verts/ALE). – Madam President, dear Commissioner – I know the Germans speak English very well – I would like to congratulate the Commission for its efforts to put health on top of its agenda with this strategy and remind the Council that citizens want more action from the EU on health, not less.

I could not agree more with the objectives to build stronger global partnerships, to face new common challenges and to make universal health coverage the norm globally. However, I believe some consistency is needed here. We cannot truly advocate access to care for all globally without recognising that IP rights are the main obstacle to foster access to care globally. Let's not avoid the elephant in the room. Let's not discuss a TRIPS waiver behind closed doors.

Also, we need to concretely demonstrate the importance we give to One Health in Europe so that our partners are interested in joining these efforts. Let's build a stronger case for global health by being coherent in our efforts.

Cristian Terheş (ECR). – Madam President, dear colleagues, it would have been totally irresponsible to hand over more power to the WHO and the European Commission, under the pretext of effectively fighting future health crisis, when they failed to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

The WHO was notified by Taiwan in December 2019 that there was a deadly pulmonary virus in China, but the WHO refused to alert the whole world about it because it was more interested in protecting the image of China than protecting the health of billions of people.

The WHO declared a global pandemic only on 11 March 2020, after it said initially that the coronavirus was not human-to-human transmissible. The first two months of 2020 would have been essential in stopping the spread of COVID by isolating China until they could contain the virus. But that did not happen. Instead, the Western world was in lockdown as of April of 2020, which didn't stop the spread of the virus but actually killed our economies. Also, healthy people were considered symptomatically infected while autopsies were not conducted on people who died of COVID so we would know on time how this virus kills.

Clearly, the WHO and the European Commission does not need more power to deal with this future pandemic, but actually to be made accountable for how they handled the last one!

Sylvia Limmer (ID). – Frau Präsidentin! Also ehrlich gesagt graut mir bereits vor einer EU-Kommission, die sich anmaßt, nur innerhalb der EU mal schnell den Gesundheitsnotstand auszurufen, zum Beispiel aufgrund von – Obacht, ich zitiere wörtlich aus einer neu in Kraft getretenen Verordnung – „klimabedingten Gefahren“. Also wenn ich es richtig verstehe: ein Gesundheitsnotstand wegen Starkregen, Sturm oder zu viel Sonnenschein? Irre! Aber praktisch. Konnte man sich ja schon während der Pandemie bequem allerhand Machtbefugnisse in Brüssel dauerhaft unter den Nagel reißen – von Kompetenzen will ich im Fall der Kommission eher nicht sprechen.

Und jetzt wollen Sie global die Menschheit mit Ihren grünen Machtfantasien – getarnt als Besorgnis in puncto Gesundheit – beglücken, und das im Angesicht von Ermittlungen der Europäischen Staatsanwaltschaft. Alles in Vorbereitung der im Herbst geplanten Impfkampagne mit dem Corona-Ladenhüterimpfstoff: kaum Wirkung, dafür aber vielseitige Nebenwirkungen.

Sunčana Glavak (PPE). – Poštovana predsjedavajuća, poštovana povjerenice, kolegice i kolege, čuli smo već danas – pandemija Covida 19. naučila nas je da je zdravlje globalni problem te da su suradnja i, naravno, zajedništvo ključni u rješavanju izazova s kojima se suočavamo.

Globalna zdravstvena strategija Europske unije prepoznaje tu činjenicu i ističe predanost Europske unije u radu sa svojim partnerima na izgradnji zdravijeg i otpornijeg svijeta. Države članice uz potporu europskih institucija trebaju raditi na jačanju zdravstvenih sustava, što znači održavanje razvoja otpornijih sustava koji moraju učinkovito odgovoriti na krize i pružiti osnovne usluge onima kojima su potrebne.

Ovaj dokument, koji ne bi trebao biti kratkoročan, i raniji reformski propusti moraju sada uključiti ulaganje u zdravstvenu infrastrukturu, obuku zdravstvenih radnika i poboljšanje prikupljanja i analize zdravstvenih podataka.

Zdravlje je temeljno pravo i ključna komponenta globalnog razvoja sustava i osiguravanja univerzalnog pristupa zdravstvenim uslugama. Moramo dati značajan doprinos poboljšanju globalnog zdravlja i postizanju održivog razvoja.

Stoga mi nije jasno kako brojnim kolegama koji su danas ovdje govorili, a vjerojatno će govoriti i za mene, kako ne možemo naći zajednički jezik da stanemo iza nečeg što Europska unija želi učiniti boljim? Jedino što ne možete kupiti novcem, dijamentima, nekretninama jest zdravlje. Imajte to na umu kada sumnjate u ovaj dokument.

István Ujhelyi (S&D). – Elnök Asszony! Támogatok minden globális stratégiát, ha abban megtalálom az európai polgárok érdekét, jelen esetben az egészségügyi közellátásnak a biztonságát és egyenlő hozzáférési lehetőségét minden európai polgár számára. Ez a kép, amit felmutatok és tudom, hogy kevésbé látszik, ez a kép egy kis támfal, hátfal nélküli kis szék egy gyermekórházban Budapesten. Nem, nem 400 kilométerre Magyarország fővárosától, vidéken, hanem a fővárosban. Egy kisszék, amin egy édesanya napokat kell, hogy eltöltsön, mert nincs lehetőség, pénz arra, hogy bővebb, normálisabb, minőségi ellátáshoz jusson. El sem hinném, hogy így van, hogy ha ez nem a saját feleségem fotója lenne tegnaptól, amikor a kisgyermekünkkel napokig kórházban volt.

Én azt követelem, hogy legyen egy olyan egészségügyi minimumszolgáltatás az Európai Unióban, amely minden polgárnak megadja a biztonságos és egyenlő feltételeket. Ehhez el kell végezni egy stressztesztet az Európai Unióban, ehhez várom a Bizottság partnerségét. Köszönöm szépen, Elnök Asszony, dolgozzunk tovább az európai egészségügyi unióért!

President. – Please do not stress, because normally it is not allowed to show pictures, and not to have 20 seconds over time.

Vlad-Marius Botoș (Renew). – Doamna președintă, dragi colegi, pandemia ne-a arătat că sănătatea nu mai poate fi tratată ca o problemă regională sau națională. Nu poate fi tratată nici ca o problemă doar a unei entități politice mari, pentru că sănătatea și, mai ales, pandemiile nu țin cont de granițe. Uniunea Europeană a fost un factor major în găsirea soluțiilor la începutul pandemiei și apoi în asigurarea dozelor necesare de vaccin, atât în statele noastre, cât și în țările terțe care aveau nevoie de ajutor. Însă nu a fost destul pentru a reduce numărul sutelor de mii de victime.

Sistemele de sănătate nu au fost suficient de pregătite, iar multe state nu își permit să prioritizeze sănătatea nici acum, din păcate. Chiar în interiorul Uniunii Europene există diferențe majore în sistemele de sănătate. Pentru ca Uniunea Europeană să fie un factor esențial pentru îmbunătățirea sănătății la nivel mondial, trebuie să creăm o unitate, un mod de lucru, proceduri comune în interiorul Uniunii noastre. O strategie viabilă, trebuie să țină cont de acestea.

Tomas Tobé (PPE). – Madam President, the pandemic has shown the critical need to strengthen our global health architecture. The adoption of the EU global health strategy is an important step forward in this regard, and I as DEVE Chair strongly welcome it.

There are, however, three crucial points to consider in order to ensure effective implementation of the strategy. Firstly, the EU needs to take the lead in strengthening international cooperation in health and ensure that the issue remains at the top of the international agenda. Secondly, it is crucial that the European Union effectively supports partner countries in strengthening their own health systems. We should pay particular attention to this in the mid-term review on the NDICI Global Europe Instrument. And thirdly, we will need more effective funding and sustainable investments in health infrastructure, both from public and private sector. The rapid rollout of the Global Gateway Initiative is crucial in this regard.

I welcome the ambition of the Swedish Presidency to adopt Council conclusions on the strategy. This will take us one step closer to making this strategy a reality, which is in the interest of the citizen and the world as a whole.

Carlos Zorrinho (S&D). – Senhora Presidente, Senhora Comissária, a parceria europeia é uma parceria multilateral baseada na partilha de valores comuns. É também uma parceria humanista, no sentido em que é centrada na liberdade das pessoas de fazerem escolhas e opções no quadro do Estado de direito. E são estes fundamentos que nos permitem não hesitar na defesa intransigente da soberania da Ucrânia, nem na condenação total da invasão russa, sem que isso signifique um caminho de fechamento ou de protecionismo egoísta.

Esta estratégia é disso exemplo. A saúde não tem fronteiras. A Estratégia da União Europeia para a Saúde a Nível Mundial é uma resposta sólida para proteger os cidadãos da União, ao mesmo tempo que promove, de forma sustentável, a capacidade de outras regiões do globo, nossas parceiras, para protegerem os seus próprios cidadãos e criarem capacidades próprias de prevenção e resposta.

Esta abordagem multilateral implica a partilha de um ecossistema que combina políticas e capacidades de saúde, competências, novos modelos de financiamento e o recurso aos instrumentos do desenvolvimento sustentável e da digitalização inclusiva.

O sonho de uma saúde melhor para um mundo em mudança é possível. É também urgente e está nas nossas mãos fazê-lo acontecer.

Stéphane Bijoux (Renew). – Madame la Présidente, Madame la Commissaire, de toute évidence aucune frontière ne peut stopper une pandémie. De la même façon, aucun mur ne peut arrêter une catastrophe naturelle. La menace est mondiale, il faut donc des solutions globales.

La santé humaine est directement connectée à la santé environnementale, et c'est bien là que l'Europe a un rôle à jouer avec l'aide au développement. Il faut renforcer nos coopérations: coopération pour les infrastructures de santé, coopération pour la recherche médicale, coopération pour le partage de solutions.

De toute évidence, si la planète est malade, nous serons tous malades. Il faut donc travailler ensemble, travailler plus, travailler mieux. Nous sommes déjà très en retard.

SĒDI VADA: ROBERTS ZĪLE

Priekšsēdētājas vietnieks

Dolors Montserrat (PPE). – Señor presidente, comisaria, la primera lección de la pandemia es que la protección de la salud debe ser una prioridad. ¿Somos conscientes de que se duplicarán las muertes en el año 2030 por la resistencia antimicrobiana? ¿Somos conscientes de que estamos ante una pandemia silenciosa en salud mental? ¿Saben ustedes lo que pasó en el ciberataque que sufrió uno de los grandes hospitales de Barcelona el pasado mes? Se suspendieron más de 300 intervenciones, 11 000 consultas y 4 000 análisis. ¿Somos conscientes, por tanto, de lo que supondría un ciberataque masivo en nuestros hospitales en Europa?

Todos estos desafíos, amenazas y ataques no entienden de fronteras. Por ello, debemos construir la Unión Europea de la Salud fuerte, para crear un escudo frente a estas amenazas y ataques. Europa debe liderar, coordinar y armonizar las políticas de salud con los Estados miembros.

Europa tiene la oportunidad de liderar en el mundo la promoción de la salud y la prevención de la enfermedad con los mejores investigadores y profesionales sanitarios; apostar por la innovación e investigación para conseguir los mejores tratamientos en enfermedades raras, cáncer y neurodegenerativas. Necesitamos una industria farmacéutica competitiva y debemos compartir el espacio europeo de datos de salud para que nunca más dependamos exclusivamente de terceros países y para tener los mejores sistemas nacionales de salud para nuestros pacientes europeos.

Jiří Pospíšil (PPE). – Pane předsedající, já jsem pozorně poslouchal celou debatu a dovolu mi také několik poznámek ke strategii Evropské unie v oblasti zlepšování celosvětové zdravotní bezpečnosti. Já tu strategii velmi vítám. Je velmi dobré, že po zkušenostech s pandemií COVID-19 se snažíme připravit celosvětovou strategii, a připravit se tak preventivně na budoucí možné pandemii.

Není možné řešit problémy zdravotnictví pouze na území národních států, ani pouze na území Evropské unie. Jsem velmi rád, že zde přebíráme globální odpovědnost i za třetí svět. Ale je třeba zmínit, že ty návrhy, které jsou v té strategii obsaženy, jsou někdy příliš obecné, ale hlavně jejich naplnění bude stát obrovské množství peněz. A jak na jedné straně vítám celou tu strategii, tak musím říci, že o financování jednotlivých částí strategie jsem se příliš nedozvěděl. Jsou to spíše obecné teze o spolufinancování jednotlivých opatření, o zapojení soukromého sektoru a tak dále. To znamená, já bych byl velmi rád, aby se podařilo strategii uvést v život, ale musím upozornit na to, že finanční zdroje na konkrétní opatření zde chybí a toto může být, podle mého názoru, určitý problém.

Stejně tak chci podtrhnout to, co říkali někteří kolegové. Dívejme se také na zdravotní systémy v rámci Evropské unie a na rozdíly mezi zdravotními systémy v jednotlivých členských státech. I zde můžeme hrát roli v tom, jak vylepšit přístup Evropanů k zdravotní péči.

Maria Walsh (PPE). – Mr President, Commissioner, colleagues, the EU Global Health Strategy aims to ensure our health policies protect our citizens in the best possible way, and I welcome the Health in All Policies. A coordinated approach between EU Member States serves our citizens best when it comes to health and social policy. However, it is fundamentally lacking, I believe, when it comes to the protection of our citizens mental health. Our health services and facilities are not fit for purpose when it comes to addressing both preventative and reactive mental healthcare.

In France, the incidence of depression has doubled in the years since the beginning of the pandemic, and the rates of attempted suicide are among the highest in Europe. Mental health care in Poland is described as being in a permanent state of crisis. Rates of death by suicide remain much higher in Polish men compared to the EU average. In my own country of Ireland, 1 in 10 adults have attempted to die by suicide. Reports show in EU right now, the second-leading cause of death for our young people is death by suicide.

Across the EU, our spending on mental health remains low, and charities and civil society organisations have plugged the gap for far too long. If we are truly to protect people's physical and mental health in the EU, strategies on health need to include such and finally end the underinvestment in mental health services and facilities.

Catch-the-eye procedure

Mick Wallace (The Left). – Mr President, the EU has repeatedly, again and again, promoted the interests of Big Pharma and trade at the expense of people's health. Predictably, then, the new EU global health strategy proposes no overhaul of the existing monopoly-based, market driven principles of healthcare provision and vaccine development.

The EU should help and empower countries to set up publicly funded and publicly delivered healthcare. The EU should stop blocking countries from making their own medicines and treatments and should put patients before profits. The Global South does not want more aid dependency. It wants vaccine justice and real equity in terms of healthcare access.

We need future advance purchase agreements that guarantee downstream global access and affordability, as well as a transfer of manufacturing knowhow that ensures vaccines are a public good. It's mind-blowing that the production of medicines is still treated as a money-making initiative instead of a life-saving initiative. We need to prioritise saving lives instead of protecting corporate and political interests.

(Brīvā mikrofona uzstāšanās beigās)

Stella Kyriakides, Member of the Commission. – Mr President, dear Members, thank you very much for this very productive discussion. A great deal has been touched upon. I will try to pick up as many of the points as possible.

First of all, there was a lot of discussion on what the Commission has done in terms of medicine, affordability, availability and access. And we are coming forward with a new package on pharmaceuticals in the coming days. This will also be addressing an issue that was raised by several of you, which has to do with AMR, which you are absolutely right. AMR is a silent pandemic. We lose over 35 000 lives in the EU every year, and we will be addressing this as well in this package.

There were several points raised to do with what we are doing in terms of treating cancer. I'd just like to thank the Parliament for the support for Europe's Beating Cancer plan. There was a one of the MEPs raising the issue to do with breast cancer and inequality in access of treatment. Just to say that for the first time we issued in February the Cancer Inequalities Register, highlighting where in Member States and within Member States there are differences in access to screening and treatment so that we can give support where it is necessary.

Of course, health remains a Member State competence and we are all aware of that. And Tilly Metz MEP said that we hear many citizens saying that we want more EU action at the level of health and not less, and I wanted to say thank you for the support in this Parliament so that now we have strong proposals that have been discussed for the European Health Union and this is where we can really give support to citizens at its best at the European level. And of course the proof of that – and I think that again, we need to recognise the important work and support of this Parliament – is that we had vaccines for COVID reaching every citizen of Europe at the same time, irrespective of what country they lived in, and that is EU health at its best.

MEP Montserrat and MEP Walsh mentioned the issues to do with mental health, and you are absolutely correct in saying that this is one of the, I would say, most important issues that we are facing at the moment, not only due to the pandemic. And I wanted to just share with you that we will be coming forward with our first comprehensive strategy on mental health in early June this year. So we are taking an important first step, and that is no less thanks to the important work done in this Parliament highlighting this very important issue.

Now, there were several points raised about vaccine nationalism, vaccines and what we did in terms of the pandemic and global health. And I wanted to say that the global response to the pandemic took place in record time, I believe no small thanks due to the EU leadership, and I believe that a core priority of the global health strategy is to combat current and future health threats. And we call for enhanced equity. And this is very important, and it's for this reason that we have launched the Team Europe initiative on manufacturing and access to vaccines and health technologies, MAV+, in Africa. And we're also proposing to consider a permanent vaccine countermeasure platform, drawing on the experience of ACT-A. We have shown that as the EU, we are the pharmacy of the world and that the solidarity during the pandemic was exemplary. And now what we want to do is to work towards a permanent global mechanism to foster this development and equal access to vaccines.

Now I want to just touch on an issue that was raised about the EU, the observer status in the WHO. Formal observer status is our concrete political objective. Full membership is aspirational. It would necessitate a modification of the WHO Constitution, but the observer status would not lead to any implications. Its political importance is obvious. It shows that Team Europe's value to global health will now be showing its worth and the EU will be a meaningful actor on the world stage. There are no legal obstacles. And I wanted to tell you that Dr Tedros confirmed this to us during the event when we presented the Commission communication on the EU global health strategy to the WHO. So to obtain EU observer status in the UN General Assembly, this could be done in the form of a simple resolution.

There were some issues raised on the issue to do with sexual and reproductive rights in the context of the global health strategy, and we do see that there is a pushback against sexual and reproductive health worldwide. We must uphold the EU's strong commitment to the sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls. These commitments are central to our global health strategy and, of course, the EU is very firmly committed to that.

There were issues to do with universal health coverage, and of course we must lead with this, putting the EU first. And I just wanted to say that we will be working very strongly towards this in the global health strategy. We also need to work to reverse the tide and regain the lost ground for the universal health targets in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. We need to focus our firepower on strengthening our health systems, on universal health coverage, on primary healthcare, on public health and health determinants, on fixing the workforce imbalances – I know that you're very aware of those – and paying particular attention to women and children and those in vulnerable situations.

And last but not least, the issue to do with funding – I apologise, I am over time, but there were many points raised. Effective funding is a key element to the global health strategy and we have already looked at the way that we will be funding this and the EU financial contribution, and we will be working with the European Development Bank and the Bank for Reconstruction and Development to develop a framework for global health financing. This needs to be aligned with our priorities and those of our partner countries.

I have tried to cover as many points as possible, but I just wanted to end by saying that we saw the difference that Team Europe can make and has made during the pandemic in the difficult times that Europe has been through and is going through. And with our global health strategy, we will be stepping up, because health is really the basis of the well-being of our citizens and for the stability of our economies and our societies. Thank you once again for a very constructive discussion.

Jessika Roswall, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Mr President, honourable Members, Commissioner, the Swedish Presidency is sparing no efforts to ensure a renewed and ambitious approach to global health by the EU and its Member States.

Our reflection on the Global Health Strategy focuses on three priorities: deliver better health and well-being for people across the life course, strength the health system and universal health coverage, and prevent and combat health threats. As was raised in the debate, the Swedish Presidency is also raising the issue of gender equality in the Council conclusions.

Our goal is that the EU show proactive leadership based on mutually-beneficial partnerships, engagement of all relevant sectors, clear priorities and a 'team Europe' approach. The new EU Global Health Strategy and the upcoming Council conclusions will be instrumental tools to achieve these objectives.

So thank you very much for an interesting debate and, once again, thank you for your attention.

Sēdes vadītājs. – Debates ir slēgtas.

Rakstiski paziņojumi (171. pants)

Stefania Zambelli (ID), *per iscritto*. – La pandemia e la crisi che ne è conseguita hanno messo in luce i numerosi problemi dei sistemi sanitari nei singoli Stati membri.

Purtroppo anni di politiche di bilancio orientate all'austerità hanno fatto sì che nel tempo venissero tagliati posti letto ordinari e in terapia intensiva e interi reparti e che ci fosse una diminuzione di tutto il personale del comparto sanitario, medici, infermieri e operatori.

Oggi, con il peggio della pandemia alle spalle, è necessario che l'Unione europea e gli Stati membri imparino dagli errori del passato, investendo di più nel rafforzamento dei singoli sistemi sanitari. L'UE in tale contesto, nel rispetto delle competenze nazionali dei singoli Stati in materia sanitaria, si deve far promotrice di un maggior coordinamento, incentivando lo scambio di buone pratiche e delle migliori tecnologie a nostra disposizione.

Un ambito nel quale l'UE deve agire e coordinare le attività degli Stati membri è la lotta al cancro: dobbiamo recuperare in fretta tutti gli screening e le diagnosi ritardate a causa della COVID-19, assicurare a tutti le migliori cure e investire sempre più nella ricerca medica e scientifica.

19. Universal decriminalization of homosexuality, in light of recent developments in Uganda (debate)

Sēdes vadītājs. – Nākamais darba kārtības punkts ir debates par Padomes un Komisijas paziņojumiem par vispārēju homoseksualitātes dekriminalizāciju, ņemot vērā neseno notikumu attīstību Ugandā (2023/2643(RSP)).

Jessika Roswall, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Mr President, honourable Members, Commissioner, the European Union and the Member States are deeply concerned by the passing of an anti-homosexuality bill by the Uganda Parliament, which introduces severe punishment for same-sex intimacy, including the death penalty. These concerns have been conveyed to members of the Ugandan Government and Parliament during the process of adoption of this bill. Bilaterally, several EU Member States have also expressed their strong concerns with the consequences of this law.

The criminalisation of homosexuality is contrary to international law and violates the enjoyment of human rights by LGBTI persons. It reinforces and legitimises existing stereotypes, increases the risk of stigmatisation, discrimination and violence, and can make LGBTI persons more vulnerable to human rights violations and abuses. Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, and 2023 marks its 75th anniversary.

Equality and non-discrimination are core values enshrined in the EU Treaties and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The European Union is committed to fighting all forms of discrimination, including on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, and continues to actively promote and protect the human rights of LGBTI persons, as Prime Minister Bettel of Luxembourg so strongly reminded us today in his speech here in the Chamber.

It is important to recall that the African Union also shares these values, and that the African Union Commission condemned violence and other human rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The EU will continue to work constructively with partners in Africa to counteract and denounce all discriminatory laws, policy and practices, including the criminalisation of consenting same-sex relations and, in particular, the use of the death penalty, torture or ill treatment in this respect.

The human rights of LGBTI persons remain part of the EU's diplomacy efforts in bilateral relations and in multilateral fora. The EU will continue to work with and support civil society organisations working for increased respect for human rights, including those protecting and promoting the enjoyment of human rights by LGBTI persons. I'm looking forward to this debate, but thank you for the attention.

Stella Kyriakides, *Member of the Commission*. – President, honourable Members of the European Parliament, let me start off by appreciating the long-standing and broad-based partnership the EU has with Uganda, including in the areas of private sector development, the green transition and good governance.

We recognise Uganda's contribution to regional security, including providing sanctuary for the more than 1.5 million refugees in the country, as well as the continuous contribution of troops to AMISOM – now ATMIS – to provide security in Somalia. We also recall our excellent collaboration in addressing the Ebola outbreak in 2022.

We look forward to cooperating with Uganda in the implementation of the recently-adopted Council conclusions on the Great Lakes strategy, as well as enhancing bilateral and regional economic cooperation through the Economic Partnership agreements, and we are considering a strategic partnership on critical raw materials.

Our important partnership with Uganda only emphasises our serious concerns regarding the Anti-Homosexuality Bill. Immediately after its announcement, there have been numerous contacts and démarches from the EU towards the government, parliament and the President expressing our concern and reconsideration of the bill. At the end of March, the head of the EU delegation and the Italian ambassador met in private with President Museveni to discuss the Anti-Homosexuality Bill and the EU's continued concerns with the promulgation of the law.

If the Anti-Homosexuality Bill is signed into law, Uganda will seriously undermine its international and continental human rights obligations. It is important to recall that the EU is opposed to the death penalty in all circumstances. The EU strongly encourages Uganda to reconsider the Anti-Homosexuality Bill and believes that the Ugandan Government and lawmakers should engage in dialogue with all sectors of society to foster a greater sense of tolerance towards the rights of all people to live free from fear, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

The bill calls into question Uganda as a country where rights and freedoms are guaranteed to all citizens – an essential feature not only of an open and democratic society, but also an environment conducive to business and foreign investment.

Tomas Tobé, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – Mr President, Commissioner, Minister, the extreme anti-LGBTI legislation adopted by the Parliament of Uganda is unacceptable. It is horrible, and the European Union must do more than simply express its deep concern and condemn these types of laws. For Uganda in particular, we need to be ready to take concrete action if the law is signed into force.

I have three concrete questions for the Commission from the EPP Group: firstly, will the Commission make further development aid conditional upon Uganda upholding fundamental freedom and human rights? Secondly, is the Commission considering imposing any other measures if the anti-LGBTI legislation is signed into force? And thirdly, what measures is the Commission taking through its development cooperation to better protect LGBTI people and decriminalise homosexuality around the globe?

You need to make it absolutely clear that the European Union will never, *never* accept anti-LGBTI legislation, or any type of legislation that violates human rights and fundamental freedoms for that matter. Let there be no doubt: action must have consequences.

Karsten Lucke, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – Mr President, today we are talking about one of the toughest anti-LGBTIQ laws that hopefully will not see the light of day. This must be rejected in the strongest way possible, but before I do this, colleagues, let me first make one thing clear: I think it's essential that we as the EU have a real partnership on equal footing with our partners in the Global South, and we have to implement this on eye level. And it doesn't help that we present each other as teachers trying to tell the others, according to accusations that they very often hear, how to live and how to organise your country and your society.

But if we today talk about the law criminalising homosexuality in Uganda, then we speak on the basis of our partnership. The EU is not coming around the corner as a teacher here because we have agreed as partners in international treaties, in conventions, in agreements that human rights are essential elements of our partnership and a key aspect of development of the people in our countries. And this law doesn't take one step, doesn't take 10 steps, but countless steps back into what feels really like Middle Ages.

The proposed criminalisation of homosexual people tramples human rights in such a way that it's really unbearable. And a climate of fear and denunciation is created. And anyone who wants in the country to grow and prosper is doing exactly the opposite what this law is doing. And don't tell me that this is coming somehow from an African culture or these human rights contemplating positions have grown out of society. We have very good other examples in Africa that show that things can be done differently and that is not undermining human dignity.

In essence, President Museveni should not sign this law. It really sends the wrong signal in all directions and massively harms Ugandan society with regard to peaceful, secure and sustainable development.

Pierre Karleskind, *au nom du groupe Renew*. – Monsieur le Président, qui suis-je, qui sommes-nous pour dire aux autres ce qu'ils doivent penser? Qui sont-ils ceux qui entendent dire aux individus ce qu'ils doivent être ou comment ils doivent aimer?

Dans le monde, nul ne peut, nul ne devrait s'arroger le droit de dire à l'autre qui il est. Car il ne s'agit pas, ici, de parler de la liberté de ce que l'on veut faire; il s'agit bien de parler du droit d'être. D'être ce que l'on est. De vivre sa vie comme on est. D'aimer comme on est. Il s'agit du respect, du respect du droit d'être hétéro, gay, lesbienne, bi, trans, d'être comme on est né. Il s'agit simplement d'être. D'être qui l'on est. D'être vivant. De vivre.

Aussi, Mesdames et Messieurs, ne devrait-on pas, dans le monde, être en prison pour ce que l'on est. On ne devrait pas être condamné à mort pour ce que l'on est. Il s'agit aujourd'hui de cela, uniquement de cela. Et c'est bien pour cela qu'ici, dans cette enceinte de la démocratie européenne, nous devons ensemble appeler à la dépenalisation de l'homosexualité et de la transidentité.

Kim Van Sparrentak, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – Mr President, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. But in many places in the world, our community is far from equal. Even worse, being who we are or loving who we want can put us into jail or can lead us to being sentenced to death.

This new law in Uganda is another example of a law that criminalises people for being who they are. It's a *de facto* blanket ban on being anything but straight or cis, with death as the ultimate penalty. We cannot stand by and not recognise that this limited view on what or who a person can be is, in many places in the world, including Uganda, a result of colonialism and is currently also promoted and funded by Western evangelical churches.

This is why we in Europe should also take our responsibility and why I'm very happy that tomorrow we will call on the European Commission to establish an EU strategy for the universal decriminalisation of homosexuality and transgender identity, to ensure that everyone in the world will be able to live and love freely.

Know that we in the European Parliament will continue standing by the side of the LGBT community all over the world. We will fight for you when your rights are under attack, like in Uganda or Ghana or the United States. But we will also celebrate with you when progress is made, like this past weekend in the Cook Islands. Because when we all stand together, a world where all human beings will truly be born free and equal in dignity and rights can be just around the corner.

Veronika Vrecionová, za skupinu ECR. – Pane předsedající, to, s jakou sexuální orientací se někdo narodí, nikdo neovlivní, stejně jako neovlivní barvu svých vlasů nebo očí. I přesto je na světě přes šedesát zemí, kde je homosexualita jako taková trestným činem. Nedávno takový obdobný zákon přijala Uganda. Za něco tak samozřejmého, jako je láska mezi dvěma lidmi, hrozí gayům nebo lesbám až doživotí nebo dokonce trest smrti. To je něco, co pro nás pro všechny musí být absolutně nepřijatelné. Takové zákony musíme jednoznačně odsoudit. Základní lidská práva musí platit pro všechny na celém světě.

Malin Björk, on behalf of The Left Group. – Mr President, the proposed Ugandan bill imposing the death penalty for consensual same-sex relations is simply horrific. Death for being who we are. Death for loving another person that the majority doesn't think you should have the right to love. And the very process of driving bills like this is dangerous. It releases an avalanche of hate, violence, scapegoating. It's life-threatening already while it's being proposed, and I hope that everyone realises that.

And I want all my LGBTQI sisters, brothers, siblings to know that you have our support in your struggle for freedom, for equality, for rights, the right to live. And I am proud to have negotiated, together with colleagues in this House, a text where the European Parliament steps up and we ask you, the Commission, and we ask you, the Council, to also step up. We acknowledge in our resolution the link between the colonial rule and the criminalisation of homosexuality in many of the countries. We also acknowledge that we have to do everything we can to stop that certain Western powers and countries and movements, evangelical churches and others, are actually fuelling the campaigns of hatred in Uganda and other countries. We have to do what we can to stop that.

We will ask you in the European Commission and in the Council to step up the work. The European Union must be a champion for the decriminalisation and for the rights of LGBTI people, in the EU, of course, but also globally. We can do so much better, and this House is asking you to do more.

Maria Walsh (PPE). – Mr President, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, without distinction of any kind, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Currently, as mentioned, there are 64 countries that have laws that criminalise homosexuality.

Homosexuality is already illegal in Uganda, and last month we saw the parliament in Uganda vote to strengthen anti-LGBTQI laws. Members of the LGBTQI community in Uganda now face up to life imprisonment. This bill is an assault. It's an assault on freedom and human dignity, and seeks to further institutionalise discrimination, hatred and prejudice. This bill could also stigmatise HIV prevention efforts and criminalise people with HIV regardless – even if they're heterosexual or, of course, homosexual.

As an Irish MEP, I am reminded quite sadly that homosexuality was only decriminalised 30 years ago. It was an Irish senator's – Senator David Norris – landmark case at the European Court of Human Rights, where it was ruled that Ireland's criminalisation violated the right to privacy in personal affairs. We as a European Union must always stand for the protection of fundamental rights and the rights of LGBTQI people, both within the EU and across the world.

Enough is enough. I'm tired of saying this to an empty plenary, but I do hope our LGBTI community in Uganda and across those 64 countries hear us united on this.

Marc Angel (S&D). – Mr President, dear all, violence, harassment and hate speech in Uganda: these are not made-up allegations, but realities that activists have relayed to us. Speaking out against these attacks and protecting LGBTI rights is not a Western cultural construct, just as harassment and hate speech are not in the DNA of Ugandan citizens. This violence is a consequence of cynical choices driven by political and by religious interests.

Since the Ugandan vote in favour of the total prohibition of homosexuality in the country, Kenya and also Tanzania have tabled similar texts. This is worrying, and all institutions must condemn criminalisation of homosexuality and trans identity. Europe must engage itself in the fight in favour of the universal decriminalisation of homosexuality and trans identity, not only for Ugandans, Kenyans and Tanzanians, but for all persecuted LGBTI people in the world. Europe shall commit itself to preventing the enactment of this law in Uganda or elsewhere. And to achieve this, Europe and the Commission must act strongly, going so far as to sanction the regime in place or denounce the existing trade agreements with the country, while guaranteeing the presence of special envoys in Uganda responsible for assessing the situation, and while also preserving – and foremost supporting – civil society.

Karen Melchior (Renew). – Mr President, universal human rights and our democracy are based on us being equal, based on non-discrimination. So when you talk about LGBTI rights, trans rights and transgender rights as being part of a culture war and a wokeism, you are actually fighting against the basis of our democracy.

In 2011, David Kato was murdered in his own home. Last year we received Frank Mugisha, who is a lifelong LGBTI activist in Uganda and the head of Sexual Minorities Uganda, an organisation which last year was banned by Uganda. In 2011, the killers entered David Kato's home and killed him. In 2023, the killers are sitting in the parliament in Kampala calling for the death sentence for people exercising their democratic rights and having their universal human rights. We have a radicalised Ugandan Parliament.

So what is this strategy of partnership that we're talking about from the European Union? Where are our demands for respecting democracy and human rights in Uganda? Where are the sanctions against the individuals that are promoting this discrimination in Kampala?

We need a European strategy for universal decriminalisation. I want to see the Amsterdam rainbow dress at the next World Pride to have removed all of the country flags to replace them by pride flags, showing that we have achieved universal decriminalisation of being who you are.

Malte Gallée (Verts/ALE). – Mr President, dear Commissioner, dear colleagues, and especially dear colleagues, Members of Parliament outside of Europe: if you criminalise homosexuality, people are going to kill themselves. Children are going to commit suicide for what they are. Be aware of this.

Who brought these laws to so many countries in the world? It was the colonisers. Do you really want to follow this path? I doubt it. Two thousand four hundred years before Christ, they found statues in Egypt of men loving each other. Do you really think this is something new? I don't think so.

Jiří Pospíšil (PPE). – Pane předsedající, dámy a pánové, já bych se chtěl připojit ke svým předřečníkům a také podpořit rezoluci, ve které jednoznačně odmítáme parlamentem schválený zákon v Ugandě, který naprosto šíleným způsobem kriminalizuje homosexualitu. To není běžná kriminalizace. To je zákon, který za takovýto projev chování, který je lidstvu a člověku přirozený, navrhuje tresty smrti a drakonické tresty odnětí svobody.

Já si myslím, že není možné zůstat pouze u odsouzení tohoto zákona a dál konstatovat, že vztahy s Ugandou jsou v pořádku a že Uganda plní mezinárodní závazky. Pokud Uganda tento zákon nakonec přijme a bude účinný, je třeba, aby toto mělo dopad na vztah mezi civilizovaným světem – Evropskou unií – a Ugandou. Je třeba, aby toto ovlivnilo ekonomické vztahy s Ugandou. Je třeba, aby bylo jasné, že cynický postup tamního prezidenta jen tak nenecháme být a jsme připraveni na to reagovat.

Je třeba si uvědomit, že podobné návrhy zákonů projednávaly i jiné africké země, přesto nakonec naštěstí nebyly přijaty. Uganda je země, kde je opravdu absolutní většina zákonodárců ochotna přijmout zákon, který tvrdí, že za určité formy homosexuality má následovat trest smrti. My to musíme jasně odsoudit, a pokud bude takový zákon přijat, musí to mít dopad na vztahy mezi Evropskou unií a Ugandou.

Evin Incir (S&D). – Herr talman! Attackerna mot hbtqi-personer i Uganda är en attack mot mänskliga fri- och rättigheter. Kärleken ska vara fri och ingen ska någonsin tvingas avstå från att uttrycka sina känslor för en annan människa. Livstid i fängelse för att ha uttryckt sin kärlek till en annan människa är faktiskt bortom allt förstånd. I Uganda innebär det till och med dödsstraff i vissa fall.

Attacker på hbtqi-personer och människorättsförsvarare är grymhet. Stenåldersmentalitet hör hemma i papperskorgen, inte i lagstiftningen. Var än hbtqi-personer och människorättsförsvarare är under attack så är det vårt ansvar att öka stödet till dem. Vi måste se över våra avtal med länder där vi ser en tillbakagång, och respekten för hbtqi-rättigheter måste stå i centrum för både EU:s inrikespolitik och dess utrikespolitik. Vi måste få slut på häxjakten på hbtqi-personer en gång för alla.

Och till min vän Sam Muyizzi, som bor i Uganda och är människorättsförsvarare, vill jag säga: "Er frihet är vår frihet".

Moritz Körner (Renew). – Herr Präsident, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Wenn ich heute in Uganda leben würde, dann säße ich wahrscheinlich schon im Gefängnis und würde möglicherweise die Todesstrafe erwarten, weil ich die Person bin, die ich bin, und liebe, wen ich liebe. Das ist die ganze unglaubliche Fassungslosigkeit, die mit diesem Gesetz in Uganda Realität wird. Ich spüre heute ein unglaubliches Mitgefühl mit den Menschen, die dort jetzt Opfer dieses unglaublichen, verbrecherischen Gesetzes werden.

Ich spüre heute große Dankbarkeit, in der Europäischen Union leben zu dürfen, wo die sexuelle Orientierung in der Grundrechtecharta geschützt ist. Aber ich sehe, dass wir für diese universellen Rechte in der ganzen Welt kämpfen müssen. Und wir dürfen sie auch in der Europäischen Union nicht für selbstverständlich nehmen, weil die Rechten in diesem Hause heute sogar zu feige sind oder zu faul, hier an dieser Debatte überhaupt teilzunehmen, aber sonst bei jeder Möglichkeit für die traditionelle Familie sprechen und uns Rechte wegnehmen wollen. Jeder sollte leben können, wie er liebt und wie er lebt, und nicht die Todesstrafe dafür fürchten müssen.

Alice Kuhnke (Verts/ALE). – Herr talman! Ugandas nya lagförslag straffar kärlek med döden. Brottet som de begått är att vara den de är och älska den de vill. Lagen måste ogiltigförklaras, och jakten på hbtqi-personer i Uganda måste få ett slut.

Våra fördömanden har stoppat liknande lagar förut, och det måste vara vårt *default*-läge – nu mer än någonsin – att när hbtqi-personers mänskliga rättigheter kränks så protesterar vi, högljutt. Och när dödsstraff används mot hbtqi-personer, i Uganda och runt om i världen, ska det få kännbara konsekvenser för makthavarna.

Men för att ord inte ska stanna vid att vara vackra ord måste vi också erbjuda förföljda människor vårt skydd. EU ska vara en fristad där hbtqi-personer kan leva i frihet.

Thijs Reuten (S&D). – Mr President, Commissioner, Council, you, I, each of us here – also there – has the duty to stop this global authoritarian onslaught on LGBTQ rights fought so hard to win. These rights to be treated as a human being, to be who you are, to love who you want. Is that too much to ask? For the 387 Ugandan lawmakers who voted for this extremist bill, the answer is clearly ‘yes’.

President Museveni: veto this bill. Stop scapegoating the vulnerable, for the sake of all your citizens. If not, the EU must and will take strong measures in response.

Ik veroordeel de walgelijke homofobe mishandeling van een COC-vrijwilliger in Eindhoven en medewerkers van Dorothy's Drag Bar in Groningen met kracht. Weet, jullie staan niet alleen, niet in Uganda, niet in Nederland, niet in Europa. Wij staan schouder aan schouder met de LGBT-gemeenschap in Europa en daarbuiten.

Frédérique Ries (Renew). – Monsieur le Président, Madame la Ministre, Madame la Commissaire, «il n'y a pas de place pour les homosexuels dans ce pays». Ces paroles nous choquent profondément. Elles sont pourtant du ministre ougandais Musa Ecweru, qui les a prononcées le mois dernier devant le Parlement de Kampala, après l'adoption quasi unanime d'une loi anti-LGBT+. Quatorze ans de prison minimum, voire la peine de mort pure et simple, pour des relations homosexuelles. Un devoir de délation pour tous dans le pays, un parfait manuel de discrimination et d'incitation à la haine, au nom «de la morale, des enfants, de la lutte contre le colonialisme culturel».

L'Union européenne doit user de tous les leviers pour empêcher la promulgation de cette loi, y compris des sanctions contre les leaders politiques et religieux responsables, et garantir la liberté des droits sexuels en Ouganda et au-delà, partout dans le monde. Madame la Commissaire, onze pays dans le monde condamnent toujours les homosexuels à la peine capitale. Ce sont onze pays de trop.

J'aimerais conclure en faisant écho à ce qu'a dit mon collègue Pierre Karleskind, en le paraphrasant: «Chacun dans le monde a le droit d'être. Chacun a le droit d'aimer. Chacun a le droit d'être aimé, comme il le sent. Ce n'est pas négociable.»

(Applaudissements)

Rasmus Andresen (Verts/ALE). – Herr Präsident! „Mit diesem Gesetz bleibt uns nichts anderes übrig als Angst und Gefahr. Der beste Weg ist, dieses Land zu verlassen.“ Mit diesen Worten beschreibt eine 23-jährige Transfrau die Ängste der ugandischen LGBTI-Community. In der Stadt Jinja wurden vor kurzem sechs Männer wegen der Praktizierung von Homosexualität festgenommen. Wir können uns, glaube ich, alle nicht vorstellen, wie es sein muss, mit Todesangst zu leben, und wie mutig es ist, in dem Umfeld für gleiche Rechte aufzustehen. Wir sind solidarisch mit LGBTI-Aktivistinnen in Uganda wie Kasha Nabagesera.

Ugandische LGBTI haben unsere Solidarität für ihren Freiheitskampf verdient. Ihr Freiheitskampf ist unser Kampf. Nicht nur Homosexualität, sondern auch die Unterstützung von LGBTI soll nach dem neuen Hassgesetz unter Strafe gestellt werden. Im schlimmsten Fall droht sogar die Todesstrafe. Es ist unsere Pflicht, dagegen aufzustehen – in diplomatischen Beziehungen, mit ökonomischen Sanktionen und auch mit leichterem Zugang zu Asyl für ugandische LGBTI.

Catharina Rinzema (Renew). – Voorzitter, de situatie voor de inwoners van Uganda is ronduit choquerend. Uitkomen voor je geaardheid – de normaalste zaak van de wereld – kan je zomaar een gevangenisstraf of zelfs de doodstraf opleveren. Dit is voor Ugandezen die gewoon zichzelf willen zijn, de hel op aarde.

De Ugandese regering misbruikt volstrekt onschuldige burgers om de rest van de bevolking af te leiden van de echte problemen in het land, zoals corruptie, de arrestatie van journalisten en de ontmanteling van de rechtsstaat. Deze tactiek zien we in steeds meer landen gebruikt worden en dit is zorgelijk.

Ik wil dan ook dat de Europese Commissie direct actie onderneemt. Wij gaan geen landen belonen met handelsvoordelen en vrije toegang tot onze Europese markt wanneer zij besluiten de doodstraf in te stellen voor lhbt'ers. Dat lijkt me volstrekt helder. Deze handelsvoordelen moeten meteen worden ingetrokken.

Wij kunnen hier niet stil over zijn. We moeten actie ondernemen. Dit moet stoppen.

Asger Christensen (Renew). – Hr. formand! Mennesker bliver dræbt på grund af deres kærlighed. Det handler om de grundlæggende menneskerettigheder. Mennesket skal ikke dømmes til døden for at elske et andet menneske af samme køn. Det er absurd, og det er umenneskeligt. Jeg priser mig lykkelig hver eneste dag for, at mine børn og børnebørn er født i Danmark, hvor man kan elske den, man vil. Selv om vi er foregangsland i EU i forhold til LGBT+-rettighederne, så skal vi ikke være blinde for, at LGBT+-mennesker dagligt oplever diskrimination også EU. Og flere medlemsstater laver hadefulde og diskriminerende lovgivning mod disse personer. Det skal stoppes! Lad os se fremad og gøre vores fremtid endnu bedre for LGBT+-mennesker. Det kan vi! Det skal vi! Det skylder vi dem!

Catch-the-eye procedure

Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D). – Señor presidente, esta ley de Uganda, aprobada en marzo de este mismo año 2023, que condena a muerte por homosexualidad, sacude la conciencia del Parlamento Europeo, como pone de manifiesto este debate con la Comisión y con el Consejo. Es un hecho inaceptable en un país que recibe ayuda masiva por parte de la Unión Europea, y la diplomacia debe servir para que esta ley no pueda aplicarse en ningún caso.

Pero esta mañana hemos escuchado un alegato apasionado del primer ministro de Luxemburgo, Xavier Bettel, en defensa de la no discriminación y del respeto a la identidad sexual y de género de todas las personas.

El Sr. Bettel nos ha recordado que también en la Unión Europea hay tarea por hacer. Este Parlamento protestó ante una ley húngara de junio del año 2021 en que se prohibía, nada más y nada menos, la difusión de contenidos homosexuales en los medios de comunicación y en la escuela, como si la homosexualidad fuese un mal o fuese contagiosa, lo que es completamente inaceptable.

El Parlamento Europeo, con quince Estados miembros, ha decidido unirse a la demanda de la Comisión ante el Tribunal de Justicia de la Unión Europea para que se declare la ilegalidad de esta ley de acuerdo con el Derecho europeo por contradecir el Derecho europeo. Lo contradice, del mismo modo, la última ley adoptada por el Parlamento húngaro, que permite denunciar a las familias homosexuales que tengan hijos a su cargo; algo completamente inaceptable y contrario al Derecho europeo. Por tanto, esa ley también deberá ser recurrida por la Comisión con el apoyo de este Parlamento Europeo.

Pierre Karleskind (Renew). – Monsieur le Président, je reprends la parole. J'ai compris que je n'avais pas parlé très fort et que, dès lors, beaucoup de monde ne m'avait pas entendu. Rassurez-vous, je ne vais pas répéter ce que j'ai dit. Simplement, la commissaire Kyriakides, elle, a parlé nettement plus fort, et malgré tout il y a des choses que je n'ai pas entendues.

Madame la Commissaire, je ne vous ai pas entendue condamner cette loi. Je n'ai pas entendu la Commission condamner cette loi. Je n'ai pas entendu la Commission demander le retrait de cette loi. «Reconsidérer...» *Reconsidérer*, ça veut dire repenser et modifier, pas retirer.

Je ne vous ai pas non plus entendue parler des mesures que vous prendriez si cette loi était promulguée.

Madame la Commissaire, j'ai entendu parler des partenariats stratégiques que l'Union européenne comptait avoir avec l'Ouganda. Je tiens à vous dire que votre intervention,

considérant ce que j'y ai entendu et, surtout, ce que je n'y ai pas entendu, eh bien elle nous fait honte!

President. – Mr Karleskind, normally if you are speaking on debates you are not taking the catch-the-eye but this time I allowed you to speak, and because of technical reasons my staff members around me tell me that Mr Comín i Oliveres also requested the floor but for technical reasons it was not registered.

Antoni Comín i Oliveres (NI). – Monsieur le Président, oui, le Parlement ougandais a adopté une loi criminelle contre la communauté LGBTI. Mais l'Union européenne a laissé tomber la communauté LGBTI lors des négociations de l'accord post-Cotonou avec les pays ACP, y compris l'Ouganda. En effet, elle n'a pas veillé à ce que l'accord comprenne un engagement explicite en faveur des droits de cette communauté, qui est aussi la mienne.

Compte tenu du niveau de violence et de persécution dont souffrent ces groupes dans de nombreux pays ACP, il est clair que nous, l'Union, sommes confrontés à un échec dramatique en matière de droits de l'homme au vu de cet accord post-Cotonou.

Dans des négociations aussi importantes que celles-là, l'Union doit être plus courageuse, beaucoup plus courageuse, pour défendre ceux qui voient leurs droits, leur intégrité physique, voire leurs vies menacés en raison de leur orientation sexuelle.

L'Union doit être l'espoir de tous les hommes et femmes LGBTI de la planète, pas seulement en tant qu'endroit où vivre son orientation sexuelle sans discrimination, mais aussi et surtout en tant que puissance géopolitique qui s'efforcera toujours, avec tous les moyens démocratiques qu'elle a à sa disposition, de combattre les persécutions de la communauté LGBTI, où qu'elles se produisent.

(End of catch-the-eye procedure)

Stella Kyriakides, Member of the Commission. – Mr President, honourable Members, the debate today testifies to our continuous interest and engagement in the rights of LGBTIQI persons. The trajectory Uganda would follow if the bill in question would become law, eroding the core values on which our relation is built, is very worrying and could jeopardise the prospect of a strengthened partnership.

Let me say once again, as I did say in my opening remarks: this law should not be promulgated. If the Anti-Homosexuality bill is signed into law, Uganda will seriously undermine its international and continental human rights obligations. It is important to recall that the EU is opposed to the death penalty in all circumstances. The EU strongly encourages Uganda to reconsider the Anti-Homosexuality Bill and believes that the Ugandan Government and lawmakers should engage in dialogue with all sectors of society to foster a greater sense of tolerance towards the rights of people to live free from fear, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

The Commission will use all opportunities of engagement with the Ugandan authorities and civil society in the context of our broader partnership to promote that all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity, are treated equally with dignity and respect, in line with the EU guidelines on the death penalty and on the promotion and protection of the enjoyment of all human rights by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons.

So let me stress once again that the EU will continue to follow the human rights situation in Uganda very closely, including through our bilateral political dialogue. But we will stand ready to support and assist Uganda in its agenda to advance human rights.

Jessika Roswall, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Mr President, honourable Members, Commissioner, this debate testifies to our continued strong commitment to the enjoyment of human rights by LGBTI persons in the EU and globally. As the situation for human rights faces increasing challenges, the EU continues to stand determined in the defence of universal human rights. The EU is fully committed to addressing inequalities and challenges affecting LGBTI persons in Europe and beyond. And let me be clear: we will not compromise on our principles and values, and we are always ready to act and to address discrimination and hatred.

I will not close my statement today to say thank you for the debate, as I usually do. I will instead thank the Parliament for being so engaged and for your strong engagement and the strong message here tonight.

President. – That concludes the debate. The vote will take place tomorrow.

(The sitting was suspended at 19.01)

20. Resumption of the sitting

(The sitting resumed at 19.05)

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

21.1. The crackdown on the right to education and education rights activists in Afghanistan, including the case of Matiullah Wesa

Sēdes vadītājs. – Nākamais darba kārtības punkts ir debātes par sešiem rezolūciju priekšlikumiem attiecībā uz tiesību uz izglītību apspiešanu un šo tiesību aktivistiem Afganistānā, tostarp Matiullah Wesa lietu (2023/2648(RSP)) (*).

David Lega, *author*. – Mr President, this topic is very serious. The Taliban have banned girls from returning to secondary schools and universities, depriving an entire generation of proper education. Today, we are pointing out the Taliban's unkept promise that girls and women's access to education would be restored.

Afghanistan is now the only country in the world which refuses to allow women and girls to be educated beyond primary level, and this recent decision reflects the Taliban's goal to have women and girls locked up in their homes. This medieval attitude deserves our strongest condemnation and firm action from the EU.

The Taliban's systematic violation of the rights of women and girls since 2021 may even amount to crimes against humanity, according to the UN. Therefore, we call on the EU to hold the perpetrators of these grave violations accountable, including by sanctions.

At the same time, we ask the EU and the Member States to increase support to Afghan groups providing education to women and girls. The EU should support alternative education options both online and via community education. Young girls belong in schools, on an equal footing with boys. Girls' rights are human rights.

Carina Ohlsson, författare. – Herr talman! Afghanistan är i dag världens värsta land för kvinnor och flickor att leva i. Vi bevittnar nu hur kvinnors och flickors rättigheter fortsätter att inskränkas. Vi vet att detta är en medveten strategi från talibanerna för att radera kvinnor från det offentliga rummet.

Sedan talibanerna tog över makten hösten 2021 är bakslagen för jämställdheten ett faktum, och det får enorma konsekvenser. Att förbjuda utbildning för kvinnor och flickor kommer inte bara att påverka alla barns utveckling, utan det kommer allvarligt att hämma kvinnors möjligheter till ekonomiskt oberoende och ett självständigt liv. Utbildning är inte bara en rättighet i sig själv, utan det är en väg till ett arbete, till en rimlig levnadsstandard och till att kunna delta i samhället. När talibanerna nu förbjudit utbildning för kvinnor och flickor över 12 år får det också andra förödande konsekvenser. Tvångsäktenskapen blir fler, det könsbaserade och sexuella våldet ökar och prostitutionen växer.

I denna djupt oroväckande utveckling finns det civila organisationer och individer som gör heroiska insatser för att främja mänskliga rättigheter och allas lika värde. Detta trots att de riskerar sin egen säkerhet och sina egna liv. En av dem är Matiullah Wesa, en 30-årig aktivist som sedan 2009 drivit organisationen Pen Path. Organisationen jobbar med att säkerställa utbildning för unga tjejer. Därför är det djupt beklagligt och helt oacceptabelt att talibanska säkerhetsstyrkor grep honom i Kabul den 27 mars. I dag har varken vi eller hans familj någon information om var han är eller hur han mår. Den talibanska regimen bör omedelbart släppa honom och andra aktivister som blivit gripna för sitt kampanjande för flickors och kvinnors rätt till utbildning.

Kommissionen och EEAS måste öka sitt stöd till de organisationer som trots läget hittar lösningar för att flickor och kvinnor ska få utbilda sig i Afghanistan. Europa får inte svika alla dessa unga tjejer och kvinnor som drömmer om en bättre värld och ett bättre liv, både för sig själva och för sina familjer.

Petras Auštrevičius, author. – Mr President, Commissioners, dear colleagues, the return of the Taliban has plunged Afghanistan into the Dark Ages. At least half of the Afghan society, Afghan girls and women have been deprived of basic rights and freedoms. They have been excluded from public life, confined within the four walls of their homes, which are tantamount to prison. By denying girls and women an education and replacing modern, secular education with religious training for boys, the Taliban are depriving Afghanistan of its future.

I call on the European Union to continuously raise the issue of education of Afghan girls and women in all international forums. I also call on joint action with Islamic countries to hold the Taliban accountable and to lift bans that violate the rights of Afghans and are incompatible with Islam. The future of Afghanistan is shaped by people who value education and are not afraid of women's emancipation, such as Matiullah Wesa, Rasul Abdi Parsi, Noorayel Kaliwal and Mortaza Behboudi.

Hannah Neumann, author. – Mr President, the Taliban has started a new attack against women and against education. Only one and a half years after the Taliban took power, women are banned from public life – no education, no parks, no work. In their latest cynical decree, women are no longer allowed to work for the UN.

Today's Taliban are willing to sacrifice the lives of more than one million Afghans threatened by starvation only for their gender apartheid ideology. They attack the future of their country, the education of its youngest. The Taliban's self-proclaimed Minister of Education announced the preparation of a new jihadi – yes, that's the word he used – curriculum. Private schools are being forced to close by now in at least two districts, and madrassas are being built across the country, providing the only means of education for many boys.

At the same time, those advocating for education in line with Afghan tradition in line with Islamic teaching, are put behind bars like Matiullah Wesa from Pen Path. He spent more than 14 years of his life travelling throughout Afghanistan, finding local solutions for local problems, working with tribal leaders to open schools in rural areas. This guy is an Afghan national hero.

Let's face the terrible truth. The Taliban are holding women captive in their homes and they want to raise a new generation of jihadi fighters. I know there is no easy answer, no easy solution for this, but this is precisely why we can't turn our backs. This is precisely why we have to watch carefully what is happening in the country, why we shouldn't even think about recognising the Taliban, and why we should all jointly demand the release of Matiullah Wesa and all those unjustly held in Taliban prisons.

Ryszard Czarnecki, *autor*. – Panie Przewodniczący! Przedstawiciele Komisji Europejskiej! Szanowni Państwo! Niestety po tym przeprowadzonym w chaosie wycofaniu Amerykanów we wrześniu 2021 r. ostrzegałem, że nie mają racji ci, którzy mówili nam, że te nowe władze to już inni talibowie, że już nie są tacy radykalni, że są otwarci na dialog, że są wykształceni na zachodnich uniwersytetach i że to już jest lepsza twarz talibów w porównaniu z tymi, którzy rządzą w Kabulu przed dwudziestoma laty.

Przestrzegałem, że tak naprawdę to taktyka, że talibowie są tacy sami. I to się potwierdza. Potwierdziło się to, co się stało trzy tygodnie temu, to aresztowanie, o którym tu mowa. Wydaje mi się, że trzeba bardzo twardo egzekwować wszelkie sankcje wobec Afganistanu, bo tylko to może skłonić rząd w Kabulu do tego, aby ten kraj starał się przynajmniej zachować pewne minimalne standardy. Choć tutaj jestem jednak pesymistą.

Marisa Matias (The Left), *Autora*. – Senhor Presidente, o direito à educação continua a ser negado às mulheres e raparigas no Afeganistão. Matiullah Wesa, um proeminente defensor da educação feminina e fundador da *Pen Path*, foi detido arbitrariamente, como tantos outros já o foram antes, nomeadamente ativistas e manifestantes pelos direitos das mulheres.

Condenamos veementemente o retrocesso devastador dos direitos das mulheres e a situação mais ampla dos direitos humanos no Afeganistão, e temos uma enorme preocupação com a crise humanitária que aí se vive, que afeta mais as mulheres, as meninas e as famílias chefiadas por mulheres.

Mas não nos iludamos. No Afeganistão há um legado, um legado desastroso de décadas de intervenção internacional, de ocupações ilegais, como foi a da NATO. E também devemos fazer uma reflexão sobre isso. É por isso que a União Europeia deve aumentar a sua contribuição para a ajuda humanitária ao Afeganistão e facilitar a reinstalação segura de afegãos em risco, nomeadamente através do aumento da concessão de vistos humanitários, dando prioridade às mulheres e raparigas.

É também com grande preocupação que ouvimos as declarações da Secretária-Geral Adjunta das Nações Unidas, Amina Mohammed, de que a ONU está a preparar um roteiro para o reconhecimento oficial dos talibãs.

Mas, colegas, não esqueçamos o legado desastroso do que foram as décadas de intervenção internacional, das ocupações ilegais. Não apaguemos o que foi a ocupação ilegal da NATO.

Seán Kelly, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – *A Uachtaráin*, the situation in Afghanistan worsens. I am gravely concerned for the safety and well-being of Afghan citizens, particularly women and girls, members of the LGBTQ community and ethnic minorities. We have witnessed the Taliban taking away women's freedom of movement, their right to work and their right to education. We have reached crisis point and it is time for the EU to take swift action.

One avenue in which the EU can provide tangible support to Afghan women is through academic networks. Keeping Afghan women in education would be crucial for the future of Afghanistan. Afghanistan will need educated women in rebuilding itself in the wake of the Taliban, and the EU has the potential to contribute towards this. I am therefore calling for the European Commission and Member States to facilitate scholarships exclusively for Afghan women and girls. By bringing women back into education, we are not saving them from Afghanistan, but saving them for the future of Afghanistan.

Dietmar Köster, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – Mr President, it is 576 days since the Taliban banned teenage girls from education. Half of Afghanistan's population is denied the right to education and work. Last month's arbitrary arrest of Matiullah Wesa is a severe blow to the already dire situation, yet girls' education is a central key to a country's sustainable social, democratic and economic development.

In 2001, almost zero girls attended secondary education in Afghanistan, compared with 1.1 million in 2021. And what is happening now? Zero girls again. Given the current situation under the Taliban, this can only mean one thing: Afghan women must be recognised as refugees under the Geneva Refugee Convention, as the European Union Agency for Asylum has advised.

Salima Yenbou, *au nom du groupe Renew*. – Monsieur le Président, Madame la Commissaire, chers collègues, vingt-quatre jours. Vingt-quatre jours que Matiullah Wesa a été arrêté arbitrairement par les talibans. Quel crime odieux a-t-il pu commettre? Il a traversé l'Afghanistan rural avec un mégaphone sur sa bibliothèque mobile, plaidant pour le droit à l'éducation des femmes et des filles afghanes.

L'Afghanistan est le seul pays au monde interdisant aux filles et aux femmes d'aller à l'école au-delà de la primaire, ce qui les rend invisibles dans l'espace public. Matiullah Wesa leur apportait l'école, le savoir, l'ouverture au monde et l'esprit critique.

Nous connaissons les méthodes des talibans. En jetant en prison Matiullah Wesa, les défenseurs des droits de l'homme et les journalistes, c'est l'avenir de toutes les filles afghanes et de tous les garçons afghans qui est jeté aux oubliettes, avec les voix dissonantes.

Il est de notre devoir d'assurer la libération des filles et des femmes afghanes et ce faisant de délivrer leur droit inaliénable à l'éducation et à la liberté. En écho à leurs sœurs iraniennes, les Afghanes scandent elles aussi «Femme! Vie! Liberté!» en dari: «Zan! Zendegi! Azadi!».

Tineke Strik, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – Mr President, Commissioner, the detention of education activist Matiullah Wesa is yet another display of the crackdown on all freedoms in Afghanistan under the Taliban's rule. Especially for women and girls, the country has turned into a real nightmare. Banned from education, banned from the labour market and *de facto* erased from public life.

While this should ring all our alarm bells, the EU's support and commitment is still falling short. Afghan human rights defenders cannot leave the country because Member States refuse to issue visas. Asylum claims are rejected, leaving people in Europe in limbo while they can't go back, of course. In this and so many other areas, we could and should do so much more.

Last week, the UN Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan reminded us of the banner we have attached on our building, saying that the support of Ukrainians will take as long as needed – and rightfully so. But why not make the same commitment to Afghans? The Afghans need our concrete support. Let us not forget them.

Patricia Chagnon, *au nom du groupe ID*. – Monsieur le Président, soyons clairs: lorsque l'on parle de l'Afghanistan, on parle d'un régime obscurantiste. Nul n'ignore que l'Afghanistan est un émirat islamiste placé sous le joug des talibans, qui y imposent la charia – la loi islamique. Les talibans sont des islamistes moyenâgeux, qui soutiennent des dogmes religieux venus d'un autre temps. Cet islam, archaïque et rétrograde, est incompatible avec la liberté d'éducation et de formation car il refuse à plus de 50 % de la population – à savoir les femmes – le droit de vivre.

Si notre Parlement veut sincèrement débattre des droits dans ce pays, il doit en préambule constater que le régime politique et religieux afghan ne peut ni ne veut garantir l'accès des femmes à l'éducation et au savoir dans le pays. Seules 30 % des adultes afghanes savaient lire, en 2022, soit deux fois moins que les hommes. Pis: les tribunaux islamiques prononcent des châtiments corporels et peuvent aller jusqu'à la lapidation des femmes accusées d'adultère. Les filles prépubères y sont mariées de force. Pourquoi le Parlement se focalise-t-il sur la situation des défenseurs des droits de l'homme dans ce pays, qui n'est que la pointe émergée d'un gigantesque iceberg, celui d'une idéologie barbare, à l'opposé de tout humanisme?

Je refuse pour ma part de déplorer les inégalités d'accès à l'éducation ou autre dans ce pays sans y avoir auparavant dénoncé l'idéologie islamiste.

Michaela Šojdrová (PPE). – Mr President, dear colleagues, dear Commissioner, it has been only five months since our last debate on Afghanistan. Sadly, we must address this issue again since women's persecution continues.

It is a shame that women in Afghanistan cannot basically travel without a male companion, but they are also denied the fundamental right to education beyond the primary level. I invite you to look into the painful testimonies of young Afghan girls who, by their own words, feel 'broken' and 'in pain' as a result of these unjust restrictions. The recent arrest of Matiullah Wesa is just the tip of the iceberg. We call on Afghanistan's authorities to immediately and unconditionally release her and others imprisoned for exercising their fundamental rights.

We urge the same authorities to fulfil their pledge and to restore girls' access to education. Moreover, we must maintain a strict conditional engagement with the Taliban and comply with the benchmark set by our Council, because women's rights are human rights.

Łukasz Kohut (S&D). – Panie Przewodniczący! Często jest tak, że ci, którzy Boga mają na ustach, tak naprawdę diabła mają w sercu. Tacy właśnie mężczyźni urządzili piekło na ziemi dla swoich kobiet – urządzili Afganistan. Bo to właśnie na przykładzie tego kraju najlepiej widać, jak kończy się sojusz tronu z ołtarzem: pozbawienie dostępu do oświaty, szerzenie ciemnoty i prześladowanie aktywistów działających na rzecz edukacji. To także na przykładzie tego kraju widać, jak wygląda ostatnie stadium arbitralnego decydowania o losie kobiet: ograniczenie dostępu do środków antykoncepcyjnych, zabieranie możliwości zatrudnienia, przymusowe małżeństwa. Na tej ziemi przegrywasz na starcie, rodząc się kobietą.

Z tego miejsca chciałbym wyrazić głęboki szacunek i solidarność dla prześladowanych Afganek. Wierzę, że nadejdzie moment, w którym wyzwolą się z tego koszmaru. Państwo musi być świeckie. Świeckie państwo nie jest wrogiem religii, ale sojusz władzy z ołtarzem jest zawsze wrogiem wolności.

Samira Rafaela (Renew). – Mr President, here we are again to discuss the horrible situation of women and girls in Afghanistan – and it's endless.

What the Taliban has done is introduce gender apartheid. That's what it is. Under this regime, women and girls will never be safe and secure. We can absolutely not allow, the international community cannot allow, to recognise the Taliban and its regime, because we cannot bow down for this kind of regime.

Women and girls in Afghanistan are not safe to follow education. What can we do about that? I've seen Denmark and Sweden already introducing good examples to introduce special humanitarian visas for women and girls, and this is exactly what the European Union and all the Member States need to do directly to make sure that these women and girls can work and build on their future, that they can educate themselves, that they can educate the next generation, and that we can protect fundamental rights.

We should not abandon them, and I'm asking the European Commission urgently to see what you can do about introducing special humanitarian visas for women and girls as quickly as possible.

Isabella Tovaglieri (ID). – Signor Presidente, con i talebani al potere le condizioni femminili in Afghanistan sono tornate indietro di vent'anni.

Nel nome di un'interpretazione arcaica ed estremista della sharia alle donne è stato imposto il velo integrale ed è stato vietato non solo di lavorare, ma anche di studiare. Quasi tutte le scuole femminili infatti sono state chiuse e chi studia o insegna di nascosto lo fa a rischio della propria vita.

Il recente arresto di Matiullah Wesa, colpevole di aver promosso la scolarizzazione delle bambine e delle adolescenti, infrange le ultime speranze di un'intera generazione di donne a cui vengono rubati non solo i diritti, ma anche il futuro.

Se vogliamo essere davvero coerenti nel condannare il regime talebano, ribadiamo la necessità che i diritti negati in Afghanistan siano sempre garantiti nella nostra civile Europa, dove purtroppo molte giovani immigrate o figlie di immigrati spesso vengono avviate a matrimoni precoci invece che agli studi superiori con la complicità miope delle sinistre, che promuovono il velo islamico anziché i nostri valori occidentali di uguaglianza e di libertà.

Ivan David (ID). – Pane předsedající, ženy v Afghánistánu nemají možnost se zúčastnit společenského života a dosáhnout vyššího vzdělání. Zítřka budeme hlasovat o protestním usnesení. Zástupce velvyslance Spojených států amerických v OSN Robert Wood nedávno řekl: „Tálibán nemůže očekávat, že se stane legitimním členem mezinárodní komunity, aniž by respektoval práva všech lidí v Afghánistánu, obzvláště lidská práva a základní svobody žen a dívek.“ Byly to ale Spojené státy americké, které přivedly muslimské fanatiky k moci, když dodávaly Tálibánu zbraně, aby Afghánistán ovládl. S pomocí Spojených států amerických tak Tálibán zavedl veřejné popravy, bičování, kamenování. Armáda Spojených států amerických byla nedávno z Afghánistánu vyhnána.

Ani vlády v Evropě nedokáží zajistit lidská práva ženám v no-go muslimských komunitách, kde se praktikuje právo šaría. Můžeme si tedy odhlasovat cokoli, ale nenapravíme tyto důsledky špatné politiky Spojených států amerických a Evropské unie.

Alessandra Moretti (S&D). – Signor Presidente, è un tracollo tragico quello a cui assistiamo in Afghanistan riguardo ai diritti delle donne.

In poco più di un anno le donne afghane sono state licenziate dai loro impieghi e radiate dai ruoli amministrativi, è stato vietato loro di fare sport e comprare contraccettivi, sono state allontanate dalle scuole superiori e dalle università, impedendo loro di costruirsi un futuro dignitoso.

Vietare alle ragazze l'accesso all'istruzione è una violazione dei diritti umani. Significa negare ogni speranza a milioni di giovani. Ma non solo, queste norme criminali mettono in pericolo la stessa vita delle donne. Basti pensare alla loro salute: le afghane non possono essere visitate dai medici uomini ma, se alle donne non è consentito studiare medicina, a chi possono rivolgersi?

Chiedo alla Commissione europea di sostenere le organizzazioni che, con grandissimi sforzi, cercano di offrire servizi alternativi per l'istruzione delle giovani afghane. Invito inoltre tutte le istituzioni europee e gli Stati membri ad esercitare pressioni sui talebani affinché rispettino i diritti umani.

La cultura, la conoscenza e le competenze sono gli unici strumenti che possono permettere al popolo afghano di risollevarsi dalla crisi economica e ambientale e dall'emergenza alimentare che tengono in ostaggio il paese, e il contributo delle donne, anche in questo caso, è fondamentale.

(¹) Sk. protokolu.

IN THE CHAIR: DITA CHARANZOVÁ

Vice-President

Karsten Lucke (S&D). – Frau Präsidentin! Was kann der Beweggrund eines Regimes sein, Mädchen und Frauen des eigenen Landes Zugang zu Bildung zu verwehren? Was ist es, das die Machthaber in Afghanistan antreibt, sich derart menschenunwürdig zu verhalten? Völlig aus der Zeit gefallenes Geschlechterverständnis, die Angst, die eigene Machtposition zu verlieren, mangelndes Selbstbewusstsein – irgendwas muss kompensiert werden, ich weiß es nicht, ich kann es ahnen. Letztendlich sind die Beweggründe unerheblich.

Dass Mädchen und Frauen letztlich das Recht haben müssen, sich frei zu entfalten, das ist wichtig. Durch Bildung wachsen wir. Und wir gedeihen, wir entwickeln uns, und wir machen Dinge möglich, die in uns schlummern und die durch Bildung gefördert und zur Entfaltung gebracht werden. Keine Bildung ist kein physischer Schmerz, aber keine Bildung ist auch ein Vergehen an der gesamtheitlichen Entwicklung eines jeden Menschen. Dass Mädchen und Frauen das verwehrt wird, das macht wütend und traurig gleichermaßen. Ich hoffe auch kurzfristig, dass wir wirklich Wege finden und verstärkt Alternativen, die wir jetzt auch anwenden können, um informelle Bildung zu unterstützen, und dass der Druck auf die afghanische Regierung hochgehalten wird. Denn die Hoffnungsträger sind die mutigen Frauen und Männer und die Vertreter wie Matiullah Wesa, die jetzt aus dem Gefängnis entlassen werden müssen.

Catch-the-eye procedure

Mick Wallace (The Left). – Madam President, the US and NATO destroyed Afghanistan for 20 years, the end result being the return of the brutal Taliban and, according to the UN, almost 23 million facing life-threatening food insecurity and 9 million close to famine.

While the US was ending its destructive war in Afghanistan, politicians and the media were overflowing with concern for the Afghan people. Now that the US sanctions are adding to the mass suffering and debt in the country, they have lost interest. It was only a few months ago that the press and wider political establishment took part in one of the most brazen pro-war campaigns in recent memory to undermine and reverse a US withdrawal from the horrific war there.

That push, we were told at the time, was because of political and media figures' intense, overwhelming love and concern for the Afghan people, particularly the women and girls relentlessly cited by people whose hearts suspiciously only started bleeding once there was a prospect of Western bombs and bullets no longer killing them. The hypocrisy in this place is too bad.

Clare Daly (The Left). – Madam President, in many countries, women and girls are denied an education, but only in Afghanistan is this gender apartheid a deliberate policy implemented by the state in violation of international law, Islam and all morality. It is, of course, an abomination that educators are arrested and those seeking an education hunted down, and we condemn it utterly, but can we get real here? These issues did not drop from the sky. In the 1960s and 1970s, before the Soviet invasion and the subsequent Western creation and support for the Mujahideen, women and girls were equal and educated.

We cannot ignore the decades of external interference which have got Afghanistan to this place. It's almost two years since the US withdrawal and the Taliban's takeover of the entire country. The strategy of ignoring them isn't working. There's a humanitarian crisis of catastrophic proportions; the economy is barely functioning; people are surviving on remittances; millions are stranded in Iran and Pakistan, and our borders are closed to them. This in a country where USD 300 million a day was spent for 20 years on war. That's the origin of the present nightmare, and we have a responsibility to fix it.

(End of catch-the-eye procedure)

Stella Kyriakides, Member of the Commission. – Madam President, honourable Members of the European Parliament, since the Taliban forcefully took power in Afghanistan, they have structurally and systematically violated the economic, social and cultural, political and civil rights of the people of Afghanistan, especially of women and girls.

Afghanistan is the only country in the world that prohibits education beyond primary level for girls. The Taliban's decisions on denying girls access to secondary and higher education are blatant violations of the fundamental right to education based on equal opportunity and enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and several other international human rights treaties to which Afghanistan is a state party.

No religious or social reason could ever justify such unequal treatment. At a time when Afghanistan is facing one of the worst economic and humanitarian crises in the world, the Afghan people's predicament is steadily made worse by the Taliban, who deprive women and girls of their right to education, work and other opportunities to contribute to socio-economic life.

The UN estimates that since March 2022, 1.1 million girls have been deprived of secondary education as their schooling was banned. Almost 4 million children are out of school in Afghanistan, 60% of them girls. In certain provinces it is reported that the official curriculum is being replaced by religious education in madrassas and that forced marriages of girls have increased significantly. Activists who are advocating for girls and boys education are being threatened, arrested, tortured, and many are being pushed to exile.

The European Union's position is very clear. We remain committed to providing support for the Afghan people as long as this can be continued in line with the EU's principled approach, particularly the rights of women and girls. The EU will continue to call for, and exert pressure, to ensure that all Afghan children – girls and boys alike – have the chance to learn.

We will also continue to support Afghan human rights activists and civil society as we do worldwide, reflecting a fundamental principle of the EU. This support increases raising individual cases of human rights defenders in our engagement with the *de facto* authorities and continuation of safe passage operations for those Afghans particularly at risk.

Matiullah Wesa is the head of PenPath, a civil society organisation in Afghanistan campaigning for the reopening of girls schools. He was detained on 27 March, when leaving a mosque in Kabul, by a group of armed men who claim to represent the General Directorate of Intelligence of the Taliban. His arrest was confirmed by Taliban representatives on 29 March. The EU delegation in Kabul has been in close contact with Matiullah over the past months. He had visited Brussels in December last year.

Education activist Matiullah Wesa remains in custody, among other Afghan human rights defenders. You can rest assured that we are following, and we will be continuing to follow, his case very closely.

President. – The debate is closed and the vote will be held tomorrow.

Written statements (Rule 171)

Dominique Bilde (ID), par écrit. – Chers collègues, J'ai été parmi les députés les plus engagés s'agissant de la situation des femmes en Afghanistan, dans un contexte où, faut-il le rappeler, l'Union européenne et d'autres donateurs continuent de soutenir ce pays indirectement, via l'aide humanitaire. Le recul spectaculaire des droits fondamentaux de ces dernières, notamment en matière d'éducation ou de travail, constitue pour nous un cas de conscience.

Comment réagir, en effet, lorsque les talibans empêchent désormais l'exercice des femmes au sein des organisations non gouvernementales, ou bien, plus récemment, de l'Organisation des nations unies ? De telles restrictions impliquent, du reste, que les Afghanes pourront également être privées de ce précieux soutien humanitaire — de même, d'ailleurs, que leurs enfants.

Par ailleurs, en limitant l'éducation des femmes, notamment, en ce qui concerne l'enseignement universitaire, c'est l'avenir de générations entières qui se trouve hypothéqué. Et l'arrestation scandaleuse de l'activiste Matiullah Wesa démontre que les autorités talibanes n'entendent aucunement reculer sur cette question. Bref, il est urgent que l'Union européenne se détermine enfin sur ses relations avec l'Afghanistan, à mesure que la condition féminine ne cesse de se détériorer.

22. Composition of committees and delegations

President. – The ECR Group has notified the President of decisions relating to changes to appointments within committees and delegations. These decisions will be set out in the minutes of today's sitting and take effect on the date of this announcement.

23. Debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law (continuation of debate)

23.1. Repression in Russia, in particular the cases of Vladimir Kara-Murza and Alexei Navalny

President. – The next item on the agenda is the debate on six motions for resolutions on repression in Russia, in particular the cases of Vladimir Kara-Murza and Alexei Navalny (2023/2657(RSP))*.

*See minutes.

Andrius Kubilius, *author*. – Madam President, dear colleagues, there is no need to explain who Vladimir Kara-Murza is and what the Kremlin regime is doing with him when they put him into prison for 25 years because he was criticising the Kremlin's war against Ukraine.

I know Kara-Murza personally. I admired his fight for Global Magnitsky sanctions legislation, for democracy in Russia, for a different, for a normal Russia. With Vladimir we were dreaming about such a different Russia during our webinars of the Forum of the Friends of European Russia. He decided not to leave Russia. In the same way like Navalny, Yashin and others.

He was twice poisoned. Now we know that it is normal Kremlin practice to poison its opponents. Navalny suffered the same.

Both Navalny and Kara-Murza are facing a rapid deterioration of their health condition. The regime would be very happy if they would simply die while in prison. Boris Nemtsov, whom I knew also personally, earlier was simply killed.

The Kremlin has waged two wars at the same time: a war of aggression against Ukraine and a war of oppression against the Russian people, against the opposition.

We Europeans, we are living in the XXI century with humans rights, the rule of law, democracy. Putin is bringing Russia back to the years of Stalin, where instead of the rule of law, human rights or democracy there is only brutal persecution.

Here the question comes to us: can we stay only as silent watchers, who are able to make only traditional bureaucratic statements of concern and deep concern?

Kara-Murza, Navalny, Yashin, sacrifice and suffering, should be the strongest argument for a new type of our strategic fight for the freedom of oppressed people – at least on the European continent in Russia, in Belarus.

All the prosecutors, judges and others, responsible for inhuman detentions and tortures should be personally named by the European Parliament and immediately included on the sanctions list.

Second – it's clear that only sanctions are not stopping the regime and its henchmen. What they are perpetrating may amount to crimes against humanity, and such crimes should be investigated by the ICC or a special tribunal.

Nothing will be forgotten, nothing will be forgiven.

Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, *autor*. – Pani Przewodnicząca! Rosyjski pseudo-sędzia skazał Władimira Kara-Murzę na 25 lat łagru za mówienie prawdy o dyktaturze Putina i sprzeciw wobec agresji Rosji na Ukrainę. Chcę w swoim głosie przedstawić reakcję Adama Michnika, polskiego intelektualisty i dawnego dysydenta, który był więziony przez wiele lat za odwagę walki o wolną i demokratyczną Polskę.

Cytuję część jego artykułu w Gazecie Wyborczej, szczególnie zasłużonej dla tworzenia takiej Polski: Trwa wojna reżimu Putina z niezależną Ukrainą. W tym samym czasie trwa wojna putinowskiego reżimu z resztkami rosyjskiej demokracji. Ta wojna dyktatury z wolnością rosyjską ma przebieg traumatyczny, ale ta wolna Rosja istnieje. Rosja Sacharowa i Kowalowa, Rosja Chodorkowskiego, Nawalnego, Jaszyna czy Kara-Murzy. Wszyscy oni płacili wysoką cenę za niezgodę na imperialną dyktaturę i sprzeciw wobec konformizmu.

Sacharow potępił rosyjską agresję na Afganistan, Kowalow piętnował krwawą wojnę w Czeczenii, Niemcow potępił putinowską agresję na Krym i Donbas, Nawalny, Jaszyn i Kara-Murza potępiają bandycki napad putinowskiego reżimu na Ukrainę.

Kara-Murza oskarżony o działalność antyrosyjską powtarza, że prawdziwą antyrosyjską działalność prowadzi Putin, gdyż pcha Rosję do katastrofy. Natomiast on jest patriotą rosyjskim, gdyż chce wolności dla swojego narodu. Spór Kara-Murzy z Putinem i jego lokajami, którzy tworzą w Rosji nowy totalitarny system, to konflikt o przyszłość Rosji.

I to oni, ci najlepsi z Rosjan, którzy upominają się o prawo Ukrainy do życia w suwerennym państwie, dziś więzieni i bezsilni, gdy Ukraina spływa krwią, są przecież nadzieją dla przyszłej Ukrainy, dla przyszłej Rosji, dla nas wszystkich.

Pozostanie po Putinie i jego lokajach tyle, co po Hitlerze i całej hitlerowskiej szajce. Pozostanie więc Putin symbolem bandytyzmu, mordów i grabieży. Nawalny i Kara-Murza pozostaną na zawsze chlubą naszego czasu.

Bernard Guetta, *auteur*. – Madame la Présidente, nous admirons le courage, nous admirons l'héroïsme avec lequel ces deux hommes, Alexeï Navalny et Vladimir Kara-Mourza, bravent Vladimir Poutine pour faire entendre la voix de l'autre Russie. Mais ce n'est pourtant pas la seule raison pour laquelle nous les défendons et exigeons leur libération.

Ces hommes ne sont pas seulement valeureux, ils sont également indispensables: à leur pays, à l'Europe et au monde. Car, si cette guerre dure, la Russie sera bientôt menacée de fractionnement et de chaos. Ce jour-là verra une nouvelle ère de troubles menacer le plus étendu des pays, et tout le continent – le nôtre pourrait en être déstabilisé. Ce jour-là, nous aurons tous besoin, en Russie comme ailleurs, de l'expérience et de la sagesse de ces hommes, que le despote du Kremlin veut faire mourir dans ses cachots.

Alors nous vous le disons, Monsieur Poutine: vous êtes comptable d'eux. Vous devez vous assurer qu'ils vivent et leur rendre la liberté.

Nikolaj Villumsen, *stiller*. – Fru formand! 25 år i en russisk straffekoloni, det er nu konsekvensen for de modige russere, der vover at fordømme Putins ulovlige og brutale invasion af Ukraine. Det er nu, hvad der venter Vladimir Kara-Murza efter en farce af en retssag. Hans eneste forbrydelse er at bruge sin ytringsfrihed til at tale imod krigen og Putins regime. Den slags frygter Putin og hans håndlangere. Kære kolleger, Vladimir Kara-Murza skal frigives! Aleksej Navalnyj skal frigives! Alle politiske fanger i Rusland skal frigives! Vi skal ramme de ansvarlige for brud på menneskerettighederne med målrettede sanktioner. Vi skal åbne vores grænser og vores hjerter for desertører og krigsmodstandere, når de flygter fra Putins rædselsregime. Den demokratiske opposition i Rusland har brug for vores støtte. Befolkningen i Rusland har ret – har ret til menneskerettigheder og demokrati. Kære kolleger, det er derfor, denne vedtagelse er så vigtig. Putin er bange for ytringsfrihed, Putin er bange for demokrati, Putin er bange for Vladimir Kara-Murza, Putin er bange for Aleksej Navalnyj, Putin er bange for de tusinder og atter tusinder af modige borgere i Rusland, der står op imod hans regime og kræver fred, kræver demokrati og kræver frihed. Vi står side om side med de modige borgere i Rusland. Vi glemmer dem ikke. Vi husker dem, og det er derfor, jeg håber, at et stort flertal vil stemme for denne vigtige vedtagelse.

Viola von Cramon-Taubadel, *Verfasserin*. – Frau Präsidentin, Frau Kommissarin, verehrte Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Es gibt in Russland nicht mehr viele, die sich öffentlich kritisch zum Krieg äußern, die die Fakten benennen und vor allem, die sich solidarisch mit der Ukraine erklären. Wladimir Kara-Murza ist einer dieser wenigen. Er ist ein besonderer Politiker und Publizist, der außerordentlichen Mut bewiesen hat, aber nicht nur das. Er hat sein relativ sicheres und bequemes Leben aufgegeben und ist trotz mehrfacher Drohungen nach Russland zurückgekehrt, weil er – genauso wie sein Vater und sogar sein Großvater zu Zeiten der Sowjetunion – getrieben ist von dem Wunsch, mit seinem eigenen Handeln einen besseren Staat zu schaffen. Sein Ziel ist – wie unser Ziel auch – ein freies Russland. *Free Russia!*

Von Putin wird ihm derzeit vorgeworfen, die russische Armee diskreditiert zu haben. Aber niemand diskreditiert die russische Armee mehr als Putin selbst. Die sogenannte dreitägige Spezialoperation, die nun schon in über 14 Monaten das Leben von fast 200 000 russischen Soldaten gekostet hat, ist zweifelsohne das größte Versagen für die selbst ernannte zweitgrößte Armee der Welt. Für das Aussprechen dieser offensichtlichen Wahrheit erhielt Kara-Murza die unvorstellbare Strafe von 25 Jahren Lagerhaft. Nichts fürchten Putin und seine Mittäter mehr als die Wahrheit. Es bleibt daher für uns alle und für die aufrechten Menschen in Russland die Hoffnung, dass Putins Regime deutlich früher fällt als das Haftende von Kara-Murza und den vielen anderen politischen Gefangenen in Russland.

Ich kann mich Kara-Muras Worten nur anschließen: Russland wird frei sein und das bedeutet auch *Slava Ukraini* und *Žyve Belarus*.

Miriam Lexmann, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – Madam President, dear colleagues, I am extremely saddened and abhorred by the sentencing of Vladimir Kara-Murza, whom I know as a brave and principled man. His crimes? Exposing the Kremlin's kleptocracy, speaking out against a cruel war and fighting for a free Russia. It is no coincidence that the same regime that wages aggression against its neighbours and steals from its people also jails those who speak out against these crimes.

That's why we must continue to speak out for Vladimir and other political prisoners and hold those responsible to account. One day Vladimir will be free, Russia will be free. In Vladimir's own words 'I also know that the day will come when the darkness over our country will evaporate. When black will be called black and white will be called white.'

Thank you, Vladimir, for bringing light to darkness. We stand by you.

Evin Incir, *för S&D-gruppen*. – Fru talman! Putins klor blir längre och längre och trycker djupare och djupare. Samtidigt som han just nu gör sig skyldig till brott mot mänskligheten i Ukraina så försöker han kväva oppositionella till tystnad i Ryssland. Domen mot människorättskämpen Vladimir Kara-Murza och behandlingen av demokratikämpen Aleksej Navalnyj är vidrig.

Jag beundrar demokrati- och människorättskämparna i landet, som står upp mot en tyrann som Putin. Med sina liv som insats vägrar de låta sig tystas. Men det räcker inte med vår beundran. Vi måste också agera till deras försvar. Vi måste stödja oppositionen och införa sanktioner dem som konstant kränker mänskliga fri- och rättigheter i Putins regim. Och de politiska fångarna måste frisläppas omedelbart.

Guy Verhofstadt, *on behalf of the Renew Group*. – Madam President, it is fantastic here in this debate to hear described the courage of these two men – Vladimir Kara-Murza and Alexei Navalny. I think they have enormous courage to go back to their country, to Russia, to fight for a free and democratic Russia after they have been poisoned by Putin –both of them.

I have to tell you that I would not have this courage, very honestly, to return in such circumstances. But the question is, are we courageous here in these two cases? I have to tell you, President, that we have sent with a number of colleagues, already on 6 April, a letter to the Commission, to Mr Borrell, asking for Magnitsky sanctions the fastest as possible in the case of Vladimir Kara-Murza. That's from 6 April. The Americans have already two months ago taken Magnitsky sanctions in that case – and we are still waiting.

So what I ask, Mr Commissioner, is that the Commission and Mr Borrell come forward, with the Council, with the Foreign Affairs Ministers, with Magnitsky sanctions in the case of Vladimir Kara-Murza, in the case of Mr Navalny and in the case of all these political prisoners, the fastest as possible.

I ask, we will ask – and we will have a majority in this parliament – that the point is again on the agenda in May or in June. We expect then that these packages will be announced in the coming weeks. Otherwise, in my case in any way, I will cancel my trust in the European leadership of today.

Hermann Tertsch, *en nombre del Grupo ECR*. – Señora presidenta, me alegra mucho estar totalmente de acuerdo con el señor Verhofstadt hoy.

Otra vez está condenada Rusia a que sus mejores hijos estén en la cárcel y sus peores bandidos, en los palacios del poder. Otra vez están condenados los rusos a que se ignoren todos sus derechos como personas. Otra vez están condenados los rusos a morir por los caprichos de un tirano. Otra vez, como en 1937, los rusos que dicen la verdad desaparecen de sus casas. Los enfermos que están ahora en las mazmorras no son Mandelstam, Bábel, Solzenitsin ni Sájarov, sino Vladímir Kara-Murza y Alexéi Navalni. Son otra vez los héroes, lo mejor de Rusia.

No son nazis alemanes ni ucranianos los que amenazan, maltratan, encarcelan y llevan a morir a los rusos; es otra vez un tirano. La historia lo condenará y admirará a los héroes, pero nosotros tenemos que tomar medidas. En este sentido, contamos con la Ley Magnitski de la UE, que se puede aplicar inmediatamente a personas muy concretas.

Tomáš Zdechovský (PPE). – Paní předsedající, Rusko je teroristický stát. A s teroristy se nevyjednává. Teroristé musí být náležitě potrestáni a musí být chyceni. Já obdivuju demokratickou opozici v Rusku, protože v Rusku protestovat znamená automaticky jít do vězení. A proto Vladimir Kara-Murza nebo Alexej Navalný jsou pro mě hrdinové. Lidé, kteří se nebojí a věří tomu, že pravda a láska zvítězí nad lží a nenávistí, a jdou protestovat a říkají tu pravdu v nedemokratickém Rusku.

Velmi často slyším od lidí, že Rusko by mělo být vzorem pro Evropskou unii. Pokud lidé nechtějí v Evropské unii žít, ať jdou do Ruska. Ať si tam zkusí protestovat a zkusí tam říkat svoje názory. Vladimír Putin je pro mě zločinec, je to kriminálník a jako ke kriminálníkovi k němu musíme jako Evropská unie přistupovat.

Thijs Reuten (S&D). – Madam President, colleagues, Commissioner, we could dismiss this as just another manifestation of universal truth. Dictators jail democrats they fear. So Putin, a genocidal dictator, jails Vladimir Kara-Murza, a towering lighthouse of democracy for a quarter of a century. Normal procedure: strongly worded statement and move on. But that would so miss the mark. It would ignore Kara-Murza's humanity, his chilling courage, his fight for truth.

Today, Putin has stolen freedom, not of just one man alone, but of an entire country. Putin's reckoning will come. But until then, Commissioner, here's a list – the list colleague Verhofstadt was talking about. It is easy, because the US and the Canadian administrations did the nitty-gritty work already. We already sent a letter at 6 April by seven of us across the political spectrum. We initiated it. Use the sanctions regime Kara-Murza fought for to establish. Sanction the people responsible for his imprisonment, every single one of them. I give you the list.

Katalin Cseh (Renew). – Madam President, dear colleagues, the Kremlin has sentenced Vladimir Kara-Murza to 25 years in jail. He is a journalist, a filmmaker and an activist, husband of Yevgeniya, father of three. And for us, he is the embodiment of courage. And what was his crime? He dared to speak the truth about the invasion of Ukraine and the unspeakable war crimes committed by Russia and its proxies. This is one more milestone as Russia descends into authoritarianism.

But a quarter century for telling the truth, let that sink in, everybody. But we know that Vladimir Putin's oppressive regime will end much sooner because every regime falls one day, and Putin's will, too. But we have to do our own part.

The European Union has to put its full weight behind Vladimir Kara-Murza, behind every single imprisoned Russian political prisoner. We have to use the Magnitsky Act as soon as possible. Let us join the US, let's join Canada, let's stand up for Alexei Navalny, let's stand up for Vladimir Kara-Murza.

Every time a European diplomat enters the room to meet a Russian counterpart, the discussion has to start like this: freedom for Vladimir Kara-Murza, freedom for Alexei Navalny, unconditionally and immediately.

Joachim Stanisław Brudziński (ECR). – Pani Przewodnicząca! Władimir Kara-Murza został skazany na drakońską karę 25 lat za nazwanie Putina zbrodniarzem odpowiedzialnym za wojnę w samym środku Europy. W swoim wystąpieniu przed putinowskim sądem powiedział: „Byłem pewien po dwóch dekadach spędzonych w rosyjskiej polityce, po tym wszystkim, co widziałem, czego doświadczyłem, że nic już mnie nie może zaskoczyć. Muszę przyznać, że byłem w błędzie”. I dalej mówi, że pogarda dla norm prawnych podczas jego procesu przekroczyła standardy z procesów sowieckich dysydentów z lat sześćdziesiątych i siedemdziesiątych, a nawet stalinowskich czystek z lat trzydziestych.

Dobrze, że dziś w Parlamencie Europejskim debatujemy nad rezolucją potępiającą putinowską Rosję. Ale nie sposób nie zauważyć, że jeszcze niedawno w tej Izbie i w wielu państwach europejskich Putin był postrzegany jako mąż stanu, demokrat, z którym można robić interesy i uzależniać bezpieczeństwo energetyczne Unii Europejskiej od rosyjskich węglowodorów. Gdy śp. prezydent Lech Kaczyński przestrzegał Europę i świat w Tbilisi przed rosyjskim tyranem, jego głos w Europie był dezawuowany. Dzisiaj widzimy, że Putin nie cofa się przed mordowaniem własnych obywateli. A dla wielu z państwa zamach, w którym został zamordowany polski prezydent – wszystko już dzisiaj na to wskazuje – przez Putina, był czymś niewiarygodnym. Bo „Putin to demokrat”. Nie, Putin to zbrodniarz!

Lukas Mandl (PPE). – Frau Präsidentin, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Ich erinnere immer wieder daran, was Kommissionspräsidentin Ursula von der Leyen am 1. März in diesem Parlament gesagt hat. Am 1. März letzten Jahres, kurz nach Beginn des Angriffskriegs von Putins Russland – militärisch auf die Ukraine, hybrid gegen uns alle –, hat sie in dieser Sondersitzung des Europäischen Parlaments aus diesem Anlass gesagt: Wir müssen die Hand ausstrecken und ausgestreckt lassen an das andere Russland.

Wir sehen jetzt – und auch schon in der Vergangenheit immer wieder –: Es gibt das andere Russland, so wie die beiden Männer, über die wir heute diskutieren, die unschuldig inhaftiert worden sind. Und hinter ihnen stehen viele andere, Tausende, vielleicht Zehntausende – sie sind da. Denen, die diese Gräueltaten verüben, die unschuldige Menschen ins Gefängnis stecken, sei gesagt: Wie immer wird das Gute gewinnen. Und wir arbeiten daran, dass die Zeit kurz ist, bis das Gute gewinnt und bis die Verbrecher auch ihrer gerechten Strafe zugeführt werden. Denen, die um Freiheit kämpfen, sei gesagt: Wir strecken die Hand wirklich aus. Die freie Welt, besonders die Europäische Union, steht hinter Ihnen.

Petras Auštrevičius (Renew). – Madam President, Commissioner, dear colleagues, opponents of Putin's regime are stopped in three main ways: by being killed, forced to emigrate or imprisoned.

Vladimir Kara-Murza was sentenced to 25 years in prison for criticising Putin's war against Ukraine. Such so-called crimes are normally awarded with distinguished prizes, including the Nobel Peace Prize. But Russia is an outlier of the civilised world, systematically trampling on common human norms and must therefore face our sanctions and embargo.

I'm strongly convinced that the future of Russia will be determined by Vladimir Kara-Murza, Alexei Navalny and the other many politicians who are currently being brutally persecuted. We must do everything we can to preserve this hope and their lives.

Catch-the-eye procedure

Seán Kelly (PPE). – A Uachtaráin, go raibh maith agat as ucht an seans a thabhairt dom mo ghuth a chur le guthanna na Parlaiminte ag cáineadh cad atá ag tarlú sa Rúis, go háirithe mar a bhaineann le cásanna Kara-Murza agus Navalny. Is léir nach bhfuil meas dá laghad ag Putin ar aon duine a cháineann é. Is cuma an Rúisigh iad nó nach Rúisigh iad. Caitheann sé daoine i bpríosún ar feadh cúig bliana is fiche a cháineann an cogadh, cuid dá mhéid táirgí. *Vanity Project* chun *USSR Stalin* a athbhunú. Is cuma leis go bhfuil 180,000 saighdiúir Rúiseach tar éis bás a fháil sa chogadh cheana féin agus an-seans go bhfaighidh níos mó ná sin bás amach anseo chomh maith. Caithfidimid seasamh le muintir na hÚcráine agus na Rúise, chun saoirse a thabhairt don dá thaobh agus deireadh a chur leis an mbaoth-thogra amaideach uafásach seo atá ag Putin *USSR Stalin* a athbhunú. Níl féidir glacaint leis sin.

Domènec Ruiz Devesa (S&D). – Señora presidenta, yo quiero trasladar todo mi apoyo y el del Partido Socialista Obrero Español a esta Resolución. Por supuesto, volvemos a reclamar la puesta en libertad tanto de Navalny como de Kara-Murza y del resto de opositores. Pero tengo que decirlos, colegas, señorías, que no tengo realmente esperanza de que esto vaya a suceder.

Por eso creo que lo más importante es que sancionemos, como varios colegas han ya solicitado, a todos los que están involucrados en el juicio tanto de Navalny como de Kara-Murza y de los otros opositores. Eso quiere decir que sancionamos, como ya han hecho los Estados Unidos y Canadá, a los jueces que han dictado estas sentencias, a los fiscales y a los mandos policiales que han ordenado las detenciones, como digo, de Navalny, de Kara-Murza y de todos los opositores políticos en Rusia.

Ilhan Kyuchyuk (Renew). – Madam President, dear colleagues, on Monday this week, Vladimir Kara-Murza was sentenced for 25 years in prison for alleged treason. His crime for this absurd sentence: speaking out and speaking for millions who disagree with Putin's war in Ukraine and the escalating repression in the country he loved.

Let me remind you what Vladimir had told us already back in 2017: 'however strong the dictatorship and the repression, if enough dedicated people are prepared to stand their ground and stand up for their liberty and their rights and their dignity, they will prevail'. After hearing the verdict, he simply said 'Russia will be free'.

One day it will be. Russian citizens deserve it. Stay strong, Vladimir, we are with you. But it's time for us, time for the European Union to act and act now. Tomorrow will be late.

Mick Wallace (The Left). – Madam President, prison does not work. Nobody should be in prison unless they're a danger to society when they're out free. Navalny and Kara-Murza should be released.

The prosecution and attempted extradition of Julian Assange by the US government – who is in prison solely because he exposed US/NATO war crimes – is also horrific. It also provides Russia with illegitimate rhetorical justifications for its own repression of journalists.

We call on Russia to release Navalny and Kara-Murza, and we call on the US and the UK to release Julian Assange. We call on the Commission to appeal also for the release of Julian Assange. No one should be imprisoned for telling the truth.

Clare Daly (The Left). – Madam President, it's really impressive that the Parliament has swung into action so quickly in relation to the case of anti-Putin, anti-Ukrainian war journalist Vladimir Kara-Murza, who was given a 25-year prison sentence this week for his journalism, a sentence rightly slammed by the EU as outrageously harsh.

It is, but it's still 150 years less than Julian Assange will get if he's convicted and prosecuted in the US for his anti-war journalism, exposing US war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan. He's been in prison for over four years, denied of his freedom for many more. Yet we've never had one of these discussions in here calling for his release. We've never had one discussion about the case of Pablo González, imprisoned in Poland for the last year for his anti-war journalism.

Unless we're consistent in these motions then they are nothing more than meaningless geopolitical shams, the instrumentalisation of human rights for political ends. And that is not good enough.

(End of catch-the-eye procedure)

Stella Kyriakides, Member of the Commission. – Madam President, Members, the European Union strongly condemns the sentencing of the opposition politician and democracy activist Vladimir Kara-Murza to 25 years in prison for simply speaking out against Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine.

This outrageous court decision clearly demonstrates yet again the political misuse of the judiciary in Russia and shows that there is no rule of law in the courtrooms of the country. The so-called trial did not meet the international standards of a fair and public hearing by a competent, impartial and independent tribunal.

It is clear that the internal repression in Russia is linked to its escalating external aggression. The Kremlin is further accelerating the crackdown on the civic space, intensifying pressure on activists, human rights defenders and any voices opposing Russia's illegal war against Ukraine.

We reaffirm our solidarity with Vladimir Kara-Murza, Alexei Navalny, Ilya Yashin and all those many Russians who are prosecuted, imprisoned or intimidated for continuing to fight for human rights and for speaking the truth about the regime's illegal actions. Russia must immediately and unconditionally release Vladimir Kara-Murza and all those imprisoned for politically motivated charges.

Russia should also ensure access to appropriate health care for Mr Kara-Murza and all others in prison. This includes Mr Navalny, whose health has been reported deteriorating after he had been in the so-called punishment cell. Russian authorities are responsible for the safety and for the health of these persons.

We have strongly condemned the sanctioning of the opposition politician and democracy activist Vladimir Kara-Murza, and we stand ready to take further action. Decisions regarding sanctions are for the Council to decide upon.

Russia must respect its international obligations on human rights. Russia must repeal its oppressive legislation, the law censoring truthful information about Russia's war against Ukraine and the laws on the so-called foreign agents and undesirable organisations.

I join Vladimir Kara-Murza who, in his recent statement at the court, voiced hope that the day will come when the darkness over Russia will dissipate.

President. – The debate is closed. The vote will be held tomorrow.

23.2. The risk of death penalty and execution of singer Yahaya Sharif Aminu for blasphemy in Nigeria

President. – The next item is the debate on six motions for resolutions on the risk of death penalty and execution of singer Yahaya Sharif Aminu for blasphemy in Nigeria (2023/2650(RSP))*.

*See minutes.

Carlos Zorrinho, Autor. – Senhora Presidente, Senhora Comissária, estamos hoje nesta Câmara a debater a condenação à morte por blasfémia de Yahaya Sharif Aminu, um jovem cantor da Nigéria, por ter escrito, composto e difundido uma música nas redes sociais atentatória, segundo o Tribunal Islâmico, contra o profeta Maomé. No julgamento a que foi sujeito foram várias as irregularidades processuais que invocou, o que permitiu a suspensão da sentença em 2022.

Esta é uma situação em que os tribunais islâmicos operam em paralelo com o sistema judicial estatal, proferindo sentenças de morte que não se encontram tipificadas na lei sem que seja posta em causa a sua legitimidade para o fazer. A pena de morte nesta circunstância constitui uma violação flagrante da Constituição da Nigéria, do direito internacional em matéria de direitos humanos ou mesmo do Pacto sobre os Direitos Civis e Políticos, de que a Nigéria é subscritora.

Apelo, assim, para que as autoridades nigerianas libertem Yahaya Sharif Aminu, retirem as acusações de blasfémia que impendem sobre ele e lhe garantam, no imediato, todos os direitos inerentes à sua condição enquanto não for libertado.

A Lei da Blasfémia, aplicada por tribunais religiosos na Nigéria e em algumas das regiões, vai contra as leis estatais, contra a Constituição da Nigéria, contra o direito internacional e contra todos os direitos, liberdades e garantias que devem ser reconhecidos e assegurados pelo Estado a todas e a todos os nigerianos.

Apelo aqui hoje às autoridades nigerianas para que defendam e assegurem, de forma efetiva, estes direitos, liberdades e garantias dos seus cidadãos e o estrito respeito da Constituição nacional e das convenções e acordos de que é parte signatária.

Caros Responsáveis Políticos e Judiciários da Nigéria, em nome da dignidade, da justiça e do respeito pelos direitos mais básicos da condição humana, reitero o pedido de libertação imediata do músico Yahaya Sharif Aminu, que se encontra, literalmente, no corredor da morte.

Katalin Cseh, author. – Madam President, dear colleagues. Yahaya Sharif-Aminu is a young artist from Nigeria. He composed a song and circulated it on WhatsApp. Some found it blasphemous and an angry mob burned his house down. Instead of protecting him, authorities put him in jail and a Sharia court sentenced him to death in a matter of months.

It is so unconscionable it's very, very hard to find words for it. The very fact that a person can be sentenced to death just for expressing themselves is a travesty of justice. His sentence was overturned by an appeals court but, instead of letting him free, a retrial has been ordered.

With our resolution today, the European Parliament will send a very clear message. Blasphemy laws are in clear breach of international human rights, in breach of Nigeria's international treaty obligations and also in breach of the country's very own constitution.

This injustice simply cannot stand. The EU should not shy away from using our diplomatic and economic leverage to advocate for this young man, because he did not hurt anyone and he must be free.

Pierrette Herzberger-Fofana, *auteure*. – Madame la Présidente, le jeune Yahaya Aminu Sharif est un chanteur qui, dans une chanson, aurait critiqué le prophète de l’islam et qui en aurait publié le résultat sur les réseaux sociaux en août 2020, ce qui lui a valu d’être condamné à mort par pendaison pour blasphème.

Les lois sur le blasphème sont des lois qui, dans les faits, vont à l’encontre des droits de l’homme. Car, depuis sa condamnation, ce jeune homme de 24 ans vit dans le suspense – la sentence va-t-elle être exécutée? Ses avocats ont également contesté le jugement du tribunal de Kano. Ils ont qualifié la loi de 2000 du code pénal de la charia de l’État de Kano de contraire à la Constitution nigériane, laquelle garantit la liberté de religion et de conviction.

Nous constatons que ces dernières années, dans plusieurs pays d’obédiences religieuses diverses, le blasphème est considéré comme un crime. Le blasphème est donc incriminé. En condamnant ce jeune homme, on peut se poser la question: est-ce qu’il ne s’agit pas là plutôt d’une répression susceptible d’intimider la jeunesse qui aspire à plus de liberté et qui met l’expression artistique au-dessus de la religion – et cela, dans un pays qui se veut, au moins dans le Nord, d’obédience musulmane?

Nous demandons donc aux autorités nigérianes de faire preuve de clémence, en ce mois béni du Ramadan, et même d’envisager l’abolition de la peine de mort sur tout son territoire. Dans toutes les religions, le pardon est une valeur centrale, incompatible avec la peine de mort.

Charlie Weimers, *författare*. – Fru talman! Yahaya Sharif-Aminu har dömts till döden för att ha delat ett ljudmeddelande som ansågs kränka muslimernas profet Mohammed. Europaparlamentet har tidigare fördömt dödsdomar för blasfemi, exempelvis när ett kristet par anklagades för att ha skickat hädiska sms.

Synen på blasfemi har bred tillämpning inom sharia. Blasfemianklagelser väcks exempelvis för att man vägrar att delta i jihad eller fördömer stening i Sudan, startar flickskolor i Bangladesh, kritiserar mullorna i Iran, uppmanar till kontextuell tolkning av Koranen i Indonesien eller kräver förbud mot barnäktenskap i Jemen.

EU måste markera mot Nigeria. Men EU måste också markera när islamister vill få oss att anpassa oss till deras syn på blasfemi, att vi ska offra vår yttrandefrihet. Om vi gör det är bara början. Då kommer inte bara EU:s röst att tystna för Yahaya Sharif-Aminu och andra som drabbas av islamisk extremism – vi kommer också att få fler offer för dessa blasfemianklagelser i Europa. Minns Lars Vilks!

Miguel Urbán Crespo, *autor*. – Señora presidenta, Nigeria tiene una constitución laica que, teóricamente, protege la libertad de religión, pero también tiene una ley contra la blasfemia impuesta en la época colonial y que no ha sido abolida.

Además, en doce Estados del norte del país se aplica la *sharí*, lo que significa que manifestar tus creencias religiosas te puede costar la vida. Este es el caso del músico Sharif Aminu, acusado de componer y difundir una canción supuestamente blasfema. Por ello se enfrenta a la pena de muerte y su familia está siendo perseguida y acosada.

En más de setenta países del mundo se aplican leyes penales o se intentan introducir nuevas normativas para castigar la blasfemia, la apostasía, la difamación religiosa y la conversión. Y la verdad, señorías, es que no hay que irse muy lejos para encontrar estos países: España, Italia o Alemania son algunos ejemplos de Estados miembros de la Unión Europea que mantienen leyes penales contra la blasfemia o el insulto religioso. En mi país, ciudadanos como Willy Toledo se han enfrentado a procesos judiciales por cagar en Dios y en la Virgen. Inquisición en pleno siglo XXI.

Exijo la libertad inmediata de Sharif Aminu y de todas aquellas personas acusadas de delitos relacionados con la religión y la blasfemia. Pero también pido, una vez más, que dejemos a un lado la hipocresía y prediquemos con el ejemplo aboliendo este tipo de normativas en Europa, porque la religión nunca podrá estar por encima de nuestros derechos, incluso al cagarnos en Dios.

Lukas Mandl, *im Namen der PPE-Fraktion*. – Frau Präsidentin, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Ja, Nigeria ist das größte Land Afrikas. Nigeria ist das siebtbevölkerungsreichste Land der Welt. Nigeria ist ein wichtiger Wirtschaftspartner für uns und ein großes Ziel unserer Entwicklungszusammenarbeit. Aber jene in Nigeria, die ein solches Unrechtssystem betreiben wie jenes, das diesen jungen Mann in die Todeszelle schickt, die sollen wissen, dass die Europäische Union in Zukunft nicht mehr achselzuckend zur Kenntnis nehmen wird, dass es solche Zustände gibt. Das ist die Lehre aus den geopolitischen Entwicklungen unserer Zeit.

Deshalb ist es so wichtig, dass wir klar adressieren an Nigeria: Es ist überhaupt kein Straftatbestand, einen religiösen Glauben zu haben und diesen religiösen Glauben auch zum Ausdruck zu bringen. Das ist nämlich Teil der Religionsfreiheit. Dann ohne Gerichtsverfahren, ohne ein öffentliches Verfahren, ohne Rechtsbeistand und dergleichen mehr jemanden nicht nur zu bestrafen, sondern gar mit dem Tod zu bestrafen, ihm das Leben nehmen zu wollen, eine Todesstrafe zu verhängen, das ist völlig jenseitig und inakzeptabel. Dagegen steht dieses Europäische Parlament auf.

Georgios Kyrtzos, *on behalf of the Renew Group*. – Madam President, Nigeria deserves a better future. It has a population of 215 million. Half of its population are less than 18 years old. It also has immense mineral wealth, like oil, and human and economic potential.

Nevertheless, three major problems hinder Nigeria's development: widespread corruption, a ruling party that has extensive control over public life and manipulated the recent presidential elections. Finally, part of the country suffers from radical Islamism and its most extreme expressions.

The death sentence on Yahaya Sharif-Aminu, that was passed by a Sharia court on the grounds of alleged blasphemy, symbolises the backsliding of the most populous country in Africa that has a leading role in the continent. We have to send a strong message to the Nigerian leadership: such practices are unacceptable and hinder the further development of our relations.

Bert-Jan Ruissen, *namens de ECR-Fractie*. – Voorzitter, mevrouw de commissaris, beste collega's, er staat veel op het spel in Nigeria in de zaak-Sharif Aminu. Ik hoop met u van harte dat het Hooggerichtshof de blasfemiewetten ongrondwettelijk verklaart en in strijd met de internationale verdragen.

De uitspraak kan namelijk verstrekkende gevolgen hebben, ook voor de vele christenen die bedreigd worden door de shariawetgeving in Nigeria. In 2022 werden naar schatting dertien christenen per dag omgebracht. Alleen al het bestaan van blasfemiewetten stimuleert massaal geweld tegen mensen die beschuldigd worden van godslastering, vaak al voordat politie en justitie kunnen ingrijpen. Een schokkend voorbeeld hiervan is de moord op Deborah Yakubu vorig jaar.

Ik roep de Commissie op onze zorgen over de blasfemiewetten over te brengen aan de Nigeriaanse autoriteiten. Wellicht kan de speciale EU-gezant voor de godsdienstvrijheid hier ook een rol van betekenis in vervullen.

Jiří Pospíšil (PPE). – Paní předsedající, dámy a pánové, dovoluji mi, abych se také vyjádřil ke kauze Sharifa Aminua a také zde vyjádřil solidaritu tomuto mladému umělci, který byl odsouzen k trestu smrti na základě zákona o rouhání. Zákona, který svým principem popírá základní lidské právo, a to je právo na svobodu projevu. My toto musíme jasně odmítnout, jasně říci, že není možné, aby kdekoliv v zemích, které jsou partnery Evropské unie, byl někdo odsouzen za to, že nějakým způsobem vyjádří svůj názor. Zákon, který toto popírá, je nehumánní a v rozporu s principy lidských práv. Nigérie tím popírá své mezinárodní závazky.

Mimo to je třeba konstatovat, že v dané kauze došlo k porušení veškerých procesních pravidel, nedošlo k žádnému odvolání, nebylo umožněno obžalovanému a odsouzenému, aby spolupracoval se svými advokáty. Toto je v zásadě justiční vražda. Je to něco, co Nigérii nemůže jen tak projít a my proti tomu musíme jednoznačně protestovat.

Ilana Cicurel (Renew). – Madame la Présidente, je voudrais rappeler la mémoire de Deborah Yakubu, étudiante chrétienne nigériane de 21 ans battue à mort l'an dernier après avoir partagé sur les réseaux un message jugé offensant envers le prophète Mahomet.

À l'heure où je vous parle, le sort de Yahaya Aminu Sharif n'est pas encore scellé. Cet artiste âgé de 25 ans, actuellement détenu dans une prison du Nigeria, a été condamné à mort par une cour islamique pour une chanson jugée blasphématoire.

Nous pouvons agir, nous devons agir. Nous, parlementaires européens, demandons sa libération immédiate ainsi que celle de toutes les personnes détenues pour délit de blasphème.

La Constitution nigériane interdit toute religion d'État. Son autorité doit être réaffirmée dans les douze États qui, depuis 2000, ont instauré la charia. En abolissant le délit de blasphème, le Nigeria, fort de l'influence qu'il a dans la région, pourrait montrer la voie en Afrique et dans le monde musulman.

Le délit de blasphème tue. Partout dans le monde, il faut y mettre fin.

Stella Kyriakides, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, honourable Members of the European Parliament, this debate today is about freedom of religion and belief and the issue of capital punishment.

The European Union has a long-standing and very clear position on freedom of religion and belief, and this is a priority in the EU's external human rights policy. In addition, the EU strongly opposes the death penalty at all times and in all circumstances.

Today, we are looking to Nigeria, where all the eyes are on the case of Mr Yahaya Sharif Aminu, who has been detained since 2020 for blasphemy and was, as a result, sentenced to death. The EU has been closely following this case since the very beginning.

The EU remains strongly committed to the protection of human rights in Nigeria, with ongoing dialogue and support for different programmes. The EU has engaged locally and recommended the decriminalisation of these offences. The EU has advocated against the use of the death penalty, physical punishment or deprivation of liberties as penalties for blasphemy.

The EU continues to call on the Nigerian authorities to respect their international obligations on freedom of religion and belief. It is essential that Nigerian citizens are able to exercise freedom of religion and belief.

In the last human rights dialogue that took place in February 2023, the EU and its Member States engaged with the Nigerian counterparts on the issues at stake in this case. The EU will continue to call on the Government of Nigeria to put in place an official moratorium on the death penalty as a first step towards its abolition. At present, Nigeria has largely respected the de facto moratorium on the death penalty.

Finally, the EU will continue to support Nigerian human rights activists and civil society, as we do worldwide, because this is a fundamental principle of the EU. We hear from those activists that our support is important: important, be it through public statements, attending trials, financial support or meeting with them. These EU actions matter.

We have taken a stand on this issue and we will continue to press our case in the appropriate manner.

President. – The debate is closed. The vote will be held tomorrow.

Written statements (Rule 171)

György Hölvényi (PPE), *írásban*. – Tisztelt Képviselőtársaim! Szomorú aktualitást ad a mai vitának a nagyheti halálos támadássorozat, amely a keresztény közösségeken söpört végig a nigériai Benue államban. A templomok és hívek elleni támadások Húsvétra időzítéséből világos, hogy azok kizárólag vallási háttérűek, és nem földművesek közötti konfliktusok, ahogy azt gyakran beállítják. A dzsihadista milíciák tehát továbbra is szabadon garázdálkodnak az országban.

De nem ez az egyetlen súlyos probléma. Nigériában drámai mértékben sújtják a vallási közösségeket az istenkáromlás miatti állami büntetőeljárások. Mindez legtöbbször diszkriminatív alapon történik, mivel csak a kisebbségi vallási közösségek tagjait vagy a másként gondolkodó polgárokat veszik célba. Mindez különösen aggasztó tendencia 12 észak-nigériai államban, amelyek a 2000-es évek elején saría törvénykezést fogadtak el. Az alkotmány ugyanakkor tiltja, hogy az országban „bármilyen vallást állami vallásként” fogadjanak el.

A közösségi médiában közzétett tartalmakra alapozott eljárásokkal egyre gyakrabban él vissza a hatalom a kiszolgáltatottakkal szemben. 2022 májusában például az északi Sharia Bauchi államban istenkáromlás vádjával letartóztatták Rhoda Jatau keresztény egészségügyi alkalmazottat, öt gyermek édesanyját, és őrizetbe vették őt mindenféle tárgyalás nélkül. Az istenkáromlásra vonatkozó jogszabályok és a saría rendelkezései aláássák az emberi jogokat Nigériában, különösen is a vallásszabadságot és a szólásszabadságot. Folyamatosan napirenden kell tartanunk, hogy Nigériának tartsa be nemzetközi kötelezettségeit, valamennyi vallási felekezet irányába!

24. Explanations of vote

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

24.1. Deforestation Regulation (A9-0219/2022 - Christophe Hansen)

Oral explanations of vote

Charlie Weimers (ECR). – Fru talman! EU:s avskogningsförordning ska främja hållbar skogsförvaltning och minska klimatutsläppen, men kommer att medföra många oavsiktligt negativa konsekvenser.

Detta är en dyr och ineffektiv metod att minska utsläppen. Företag som inte uppfyller kraven kommer i stället att sälja till andra regioner. Förordningen ökar regleringsbördan för företag som ska säkra leveranskedjorna, vilket också kräver ännu fler statliga tjänstemän. Småskaliga jordbrukare utesluts från marknaden med negativa ekonomiska och sociala konsekvenser i utvecklingsländer som följd.

Många länder anser att det här är inget mindre än en protektionistisk åtgärd och ett försök att diktera deras inrikespolitik. Förordningen kan också utlösa handelstvister med resursrika länder som EU-länderna är beroende av för exempelvis metaller till elbilar. Om jag vore en vänsterman hade jag kallat detta en kolonial förordning, och jag skulle inte ha fel, för det är sanningen.

Mick Wallace (The Left). – Madam President, this law on deforestation is long overdue, but it is, of course, very welcome. Fair play to the rapporteur, Christophe, he did a good job defending the Parliament's position, which is a lot more ambitious than the Council's. The scope of the initial Commission proposal had been widened to include rubber, charcoal printed paper products and certain palm oil derivatives. The definition of forest degradation has also been widened. The exclusion of scrubland and savannahs, however, is disappointing.

Now, the biggest problem with the final text, however, is the failure to require companies to ensure that goods are produced in accordance with international human rights laws and respect for indigenous people's rights. European imperialism is responsible for the dispossession of indigenous peoples. Post-Colonial legal systems have never fully recognised the land rights of these people. It is crucial that this regulation protects those rights by adhering to international standards.

Clare Daly (The Left). – Madam President, one of the tricks used to greenwash European capitalism is that so much of our environmental damage is outsourced to the rest of the world. We talk big about being sustainable within our borders, but we have to examine our supply chains and our global footprint.

Consumption here depends on extraction far away, and many of the products produced outside the EU are harmful, they drive deforestation, biodiversity loss, exploitative work practices and human rights abuses.

Now, this proposal aims to cut consumption of products from supply chains associated with deforestation. The regulation is a big deal and it will make an important contribution. Despite the fact that Member State governments went to every length to try and weaken this proposal in negotiations, we've still managed to hang on to strong commitments with the possibility of extending the scope.

It's not perfect, but it's better than nothing. It's late, but it's better than never and I was very happy to vote for us.

24.2. Guidelines for the 2024 budget – Section III (A9-0124/2023 - Janusz Lewandowski)

Oral explanations of vote

Charlie Weimers (ECR). – Fru talman! Socialdemokraterna påstår att de stramat till migrationspolitiken – men i dag när vi röstade om hur EU-kommissionen ska spendera budgeten nästa år röstade Socialdemokraterna mot våra krav på finansiering av fysiska gränsbarriärer, mot att villkora bistånd med effektivt genomförande av återvändandeaftal och mot kritik av Clowners utan gränsers miljonbidrag för att integrera ensamkommande afghaner i Sverige genom pajas- och cirkusaktiviteter.

När stärkt gränsskydd, övervakning och fördömanden av hybridoperationer med migranter som vapen och nekad finansiering av fysiska gränsbarriärer för all framtid ersatte kraven valde Socialdemokraterna att rösta nej.

Vanligtvis röstas resolutioner med krav på ökade utgifter igenom med nordkoreansk majoritet och endast några budgethökar som Sverigedemokraterna finns i minnesprotokollet. Inte idag. Socialdemokraterna har nämligen en princip de aldrig tummar på, oavsett vad de påstår: Öppna gränser.

Chris MacManus (The Left). – A Uachtaráin, cé go gcuirim fáilte roimh go leor atá sa tuairisc seo, ní raibh mé in ann tacú léi. Tá dúshlán ollmhór os ár gcomhair agus ní théann an tuairisc seo i ngleic leis na dúshláin sin. Is éard atá ag teastáil ná buiséad a thugann tús áite do shaoránaigh, agus ní fheicim é sin sa tuairisc seo. Chomh maith leis sin, tá an iomarca béime sa tuarascáil seo ar chúrsaí míleata. Is tír neodrach í Éire agus táimid bródúil as sin.

Clare Daly (The Left). – Madam President, I voted against this file, it has a foreign policy section that is totally inappropriate. Many days in here the discussion is marked by a delusional sense of self-importance which is disconnected from any reality. But I have to say that yesterday's discussion on EU-China relations really beat all.

People talked about unity while exposing division. They lectured China about peace while the EU is pumping arms into Ukraine. They bemoaned Chinese 'provocation' in Taiwan, but said nothing about US interference in what is the internationally recognised part of China. How would Spain react if the president of Catalonia was a guest of the Chinese Government and the Chinese navy sailed up the Mediterranean? That's the equivalent.

Can we please have some consistency? The issue is quite simple: the days of colonial domination by Western powers are over. There's a new non-white, non-Western global order emerging based on international law, multilateralism rather than the dollar. And, of course, the US is panicking over the loss of its domination.

But the question for Europe is: do we want to be a vassal of our Atlantic friends or do we want to have good independent relations with China, our biggest trading partner, who haven't dropped a bomb on anyone in 40 years? It's very obvious which is in the best interests of Europe ... *(the President cut off the speaker)*

24.3. Combating discrimination in the EU – the long-awaited horizontal anti-discrimination directive (B9-0201/2023, B9-0202/2023)

Oral explanations of vote

Charlie Weimers (ECR). – Fru taman! Den resolution som vi antog i dag om antidiskrimineringsdirektivet, författad bland annat av miljöpartisten Alice Bah Kuhnke, är så bristfällig att man häpnar. Förslagets författare hävdar att diskrimineringen ökar i unionen. Fram med bevisen!

De vill stressa igenom ett beslut innan årets slut, vilket är helt orealistiskt. De har uppslukats av sitt engagemang och föreslår åtgärder som strider mot subsidiaritets- och proportionalitetsprinciperna. Viktigast av allt: De vill kringgå den normala fördragsproceduren som kräver enhällighet genom att använda övergångsklausul, *passerelle*. Då kan man runda parlamentet. Det har aldrig använts, och skulle det användas nu vore det ett prejudikat för ännu fler maktöverföringar. Därutöver vill de otillbörligen även utvidga andra direktiv som aldrig avsågs att användas i det här sammanhanget.

Osaklig diskriminering förekommer absolut, men borde inte användas som ursäkt för att ge EU mer makt. Det borde Moderaterna veta. Tyvärr väljer de att godhetssignalera med Miljöpartiet. Det gör inte vi.

24.4. Challenges facing the Republic of Moldova (B9-0197/2023, RC-B9-0198/2023, B9-0198/2023, B9-0199/2023, B9-0200/2023, B9-0203/2023, B9-0204/2023)

Oral explanations of vote

Mick Wallace (The Left). – Madam President, we are totally opposed to this resolution. The EU is playing a destructive role by pushing third countries into camps of ‘us’ and ‘them’. This simplistic interpretation of the world never maps neatly onto entire populations, especially where there are religious and ethnic tensions.

The resolution is condescending to Moldovans, full of praise for the current pro-EU government, but painting those who oppose it and its policies as dupes of foreign disinformation not intelligent enough to come to an understanding of the dynamics of their own country. Could it be that Moldovans recognise that their neutrality is essential to the balance of powers that maintain peace; that President Sandu’s economic reforms are deeply unpopular? Could it be that Moldovans can see that the gas crisis partly orchestrated by the government is exasperating the cost of living and threatens to inflame tensions between the central government and the breakaway state of Transnistria? Maybe the EU itself is one of the great challenges for Moldova.

24.5. EU Rapid Deployment Capacity, EU Battlegroups and Article 44 TEU: the way forward (A9-0077/2023 - Javi López)

Oral explanations of vote

Chris MacManus (The Left). – Madam President, successive opinion polls in Ireland have confirmed that the majority of the Irish people are opposed to any dilution of Irish neutrality. The very idea that we set up EU battlegroups is a clear violation of that neutrality. I am astonished that this House would be asked to promote qualified majority voting instead of unanimity when it comes to military matters, effectively asking Irish MEPs to vote against an Irish veto and vote against Irish neutrality. We in Ireland have a strong tradition of promoting human rights, international law and disarmament. Maintaining a policy of military neutrality is consistent with these values and promotes peace and stability around the globe. That is why I voted against this report, and I urge members from across this House to respect Irish neutrality.

Mick Wallace (The Left). – Madam President, I voted against this terrible report.

We have EU missions where we misunderstand the local dynamics so badly, we end up exasperating the situation, while the local populations come to see the EU as the enemy. We have a habit of applying one-size-fits-all to entire regions because the aims are, above all, European ones: protecting Europe from terrorism, combating illegalised migration and facilitating or protecting European investments. The 2013 Sahel strategy, for example, made no reference to the fact that NATO had just dismantled a state that, historically, had done most to promote and maintain stability in the region: Libya. Is anyone surprised that the mission is an unmitigated disaster? Now we want to send 5 000 troops off at the drop of a hat. Commissioner Borrell has been candid that this force will possibly be used in boots-on -the-ground combat operations. Brussels should not have a foreign policy, let alone command an EU army.

Clare Daly (The Left). – Madam President, I voted against this report.

In Ireland we voted down the Nice and Lisbon treaties because we didn’t want an EU army. We were promised that there were no plans for one. Those promises were lies. And if you want proof, you only have to read this so-called Rapid Deployment Capacity, which of course isn’t an EU army, it’s just a permanently available, standing, multinational, modular EU force, including land, air, maritime components funded out of an EU budget under the full command and control of a permanently active EU headquarters, synchronised and aligned in the framework of NATO. It’s going to be there for collective defence capable of rapidly deploying into future battlefields outside the Union to protect the Union’s values and interests, including non-permissive environments, which, as Josep Borrell made clear, means boots on the ground combat operations in countries where we are not welcome. Then have the procurement, the logistics and all the rest of it. Now I ask you, if that isn’t an EU army, what in God’s name is?

President. – That concludes the item.

25. Agenda of the next sitting

President. – The next sitting is tomorrow, Thursday, 20 April 2023 at 9.00. The agenda has been published and is available on the European Parliament website.

26. Approval of the minutes of the sitting

President. – The minutes of this sitting will be submitted to Parliament for its approval tomorrow at the beginning of the afternoon.

27. Closure of the sitting

(The sitting closed at 20.51)

Key to symbols used

*	Consultation procedure
***	Consent procedure
***I	Ordinary legislative procedure: first reading
***II	Ordinary legislative procedure: second reading
***III	Ordinary legislative procedure: third reading

(The type of procedure is determined by the legal basis proposed in the draft act.)

Abbreviations used for Parliamentary Committees

AFET	Committee on Foreign Affairs
DEVE	Committee on Development
INTA	Committee on International Trade
BUDG	Committee on Budgets
CONT	Committee on Budgetary Control
ECON	Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs
EMPL	Committee on Employment and Social Affairs
ENVI	Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety
ITRE	Committee on Industry, Research and Energy
IMCO	Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection
TRAN	Committee on Transport and Tourism
REGI	Committee on Regional Development
AGRI	Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development
PECH	Committee on Fisheries
CULT	Committee on Culture and Education
JURI	Committee on Legal Affairs
LIBE	Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs
AFCO	Committee on Constitutional Affairs
FEMM	Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality
PETI	Committee on Petitions
DROI	Subcommittee on Human Rights
SEDE	Subcommittee on Security and Defence
FISC	Subcommittee on Tax Matters
SANT	Subcommittee on Public Health

Abbreviations used for Political Groups

PPE	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)
S&D	Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament
Renew	Renew Europe Group
Verts/ALE	Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance
ID	Identity and Democracy Group
ECR	European Conservatives and Reformists Group
The Left	The Left Group in the European Parliament – GUE/NGL
NI	Non-attached Members