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RAPPORTI VERBATIM TAD-DIBATTITI TAL-14 TA' MARZU 2023

(C/2023/1466)

IL-PARLAMENT EWROPEW

SESSJONI 2023-2024

Dati tas-seduti: 14-16 ta' Marzu 2023

STRASBURGU

Werrej	Paġna
1. Ftuħ tas-sessjoni annwali	4
2. Ftuħ tas-seduta	4
3. L-Att dwar id-Data (dibattitu)	4
4. Tkomplija tas-sessjoni	20
5. Din hija l-Ewropa – Dibattitu mal-President tal-Litwanja, Gitanas Nausėda (dibattitu)	20
6. Tkomplija tas-sessjoni	36
7. Hin tal-votazzjonijiet	36
7.1. Talba għat-tnehhija tal-immunità ta' Ioannis Lagos (A9-0053/2023 - Andrzej Halicki) (votazzjoni)	36
7.2. Talba għat-tnehhija tal-immunità ta' Nicolaus Fest (A9-0055/2023 - Ilana Cicurel) (votazzjoni)	36
7.3. Mobilizzazzjoni tal-Fond Ewropew ta' Agġustament għall-Globalizzazzjoni – applikazzjoni EGF/2022/002 BE/TNT – Belgju (A9-0043/2023 - Olivier Chastel) (votazzjoni)	36
7.4. Ogġezzjoni skont l-Artikolu 112(2) u (3) tar-Regoli ta' Proċedura: Żrieragh żejtnija ġenetikament modifikat MON 94100 (MON-941ØØ-2) (B9-0162/2023) (votazzjoni)	36
7.5. Bastimenti tal-passiġġieri ro-ro: rekwiżiti tal-istabbiltà (A9-0255/2022 - Roberts Zīle) (votazzjoni)	36

Werrej	Paġna
7.6. It-tnaqqis annwali vinkolanti tal-emissjonijiet ta' gassijiet serra mill-Istati Membri (Regolament dwar il-Kondiviżjoni tal-Isforzi) (A9-0163/2022 - Jessica Polfjård) (votazzjoni)	37
7.7. L-użu tal-art, it-tibdil fl-użu tal-art u l-forestrija (LULUCF) (A9-0161/2022 - Ville Niinistö) (votazzjoni)	37
7.8. Revizjoni tar-Riżerva tal-Istabbiltà tas-Suq għas-Sistema tal-UE għall-Iskambju ta' Kwoti tal-Emissjonijiet (A9-0045/2022 - Cyrus Engerer) (votazzjoni)	37
7.9. Ir-rendiment tal-bini fl-użu tal-enerġija (riformulazzjoni) (A9-0033/2023 - Ciarán Cuffe) (votazzjoni)	37
7.10. L-Att dwar id-Data (A9-0031/2023 - Pilar del Castillo Vera) (votazzjoni)	37
7.11. L-attivitajiet tal-Ombudsman Ewropew – rapport annwali 2021 (A9-0054/2023 - Anne-Sophie Pelletier) (votazzjoni)	37
7.12. Koerenza tal-Politiki għall-Iżvilupp (A9-0019/2023 - Janina Ochojska) (votazzjoni)	37
8. Tkomplija tas-seduta	38
9. Is-Semestru Ewropew għall-koordinazzjoni tal-politika ekonomika 2023 — Is-Semestru Ewropew għall-koordinazzjoni tal-politika ekonomika: prijoritajiet soċjali u tal-impjieg għall-2023 (dibattitu)	38
10. Introjtu minimu adegwat li jiżgura inkluzjoni attiva (dibattitu)	53
11. Tkomplija tas-seduta	65
12. Approvazzjoni tal-Minuti tas-seduta ta' qabel	65
13. Hin għall-mistoqsijiet (Kummissjoni) - Kif niżguraw is-sigurtà tal-enerġija fl-UE fl-2023	65
14. Hin għall-mistoqsijiet (VPK/RGħ) - It-tishih tar-relazzjonijiet trans-Atlantiċi f'dinja multilaterali dejjem tinbidel	79
15. Id-deterjorament tad-demokrazija f'Israël u l-konsegwenzi għat-territorji okkupati (dibattitu)	91
16. Atti delegati (Artikolu 111(6) tar-Regoli ta' Proċedura)(azzjonijiet mehuda)	104
17. Is-sitwazzjoni fil-Georgia (dibattitu)	105
18. L-isfidi li r-Repubblika tal-Moldova trid tiffaċċja (dibattitu)	113
19. Rapport ta' implimentazzjoni dwar il-Ftehim dwar il-ħruġ tar-Renju Unit mill-UE – Il-Qafas ta' Windsor (dibattitu)	122
20. Ir-relazzjonijiet UE-Armenja (dibattitu)	134
21. Ir-relazzjonijiet UE-Ażerbajġan (dibattitu)	141

Werrej	Paġna
22. Spjegazzjonijiet tal-vot	146
22.1. It-tnaqqis annwali vinkolanti tal-emissjonijiet ta' gassijiet serra mill-Istati Membri (Regolament dwar il-Kondiviżjoni tal-Isforzi) (A9-0163/2022 - Jessica Polfjärd)	146
22.2. L-użu tal-art, it-tibdil fl-użu tal-art u l-forestrija (LULUCF) (A9-0161/2022 - Ville Niinistö)	146
22.3. Ir-rendiment tal-bini fl-użu tal-enerġija (riformulazzjoni) (A9-0033/2023 - Ciarán Cuffe)	147
22.4. L-Att dwar id-Data (A9-0031/2023 - Pilar del Castillo Vera)	149
22.5. L-attivitajiet tal-Ombudsman Ewropew – rapport annwali 2021 (A9-0054/2023 - Anne-Sophie Pelletier)	149
22.6. Koerenza tal-Politiki għall-Iżvilupp (A9-0019/2023 - Janina Ochojska)	149
23. L-aġenda tas-seduta li jmiss	150
24. Approvazzjoni tal-minuti tas-seduta li għaddejjja	150
25. Għeluq tas-seduta	150

RAPPORTI VERBATIM TAD-DIBATTITI TAL-14 TA' MARZU 2023

PRESIDENZA DELL'ON. PINA PICIERNO

Vicepresidente

1. Ftuh tas-sessjoni annwali

Presidente. – Dichiaro aperta la sessione 2023-2024 del Parlamento europeo.

2. Ftuh tas-seduta

(La seduta è aperta alle 9.01)

3. L-Att dwar id-Data (dibattitu)

Presidente. – L'ordine del giorno reca la relazione di Pilar del Castillo Vera, a nome della commissione per l'industria, la ricerca e l'energia, sulla proposta regolamento del Parlamento europeo e del Consiglio riguardante norme armonizzate sull'accesso equo ai dati e sul loro utilizzo (normativa sui dati) (COM(2022)0068 - C9-0051/2022 - 2022/0047(COD)) (A9-0031/2023).

Pilar del Castillo Vera, rapporteur. – Madam President, Commissioner, we are here to debate the Data Act. Data is the primary resource of digital technologies. The development of the cloud, big data, AI and quantum are inextricably linked to the availability of data. And with the development of the IoT, the increase in data will be exponential. By 2030, the global value of IT services could reach up to EUR 11 trillion. And we know from the Commission that 80% of industrial data is underused. Clearly, Europe is not reaping the full value of data. In this context, the Data Act that we will vote on today has the potential to be an absolute game changer if it can create a data-agile ecosystem that enables easy access to an almost infinite amount of high quality industrial data.

In economic terms, this regulation is expected to create EUR 270 billion of additional GDP in the EU by 2028. This is of paramount importance for the EU's competitiveness at a time when data will mainly come from connected things. And we must not forget that anything that can be connected will be, in fact, connected.

In other words, data – and especially industrial data – is a growing competitive asset for Europe, an asset that we cannot afford not to optimise. Let's not lose sight that what our international competitors are doing – in the US, for example – not only exhibits for more dynamic industrial investment, but it is developing policies such as the Inflation Reduction Act that will further increase disadvantage.

Dear colleagues, although the EU's share in global manufacturing exports has declined by nearly 7% since 2004, we still have an outstanding global competitive position in manufacturing. This is why we have urgently to provide the best tools to reinforce our industry, and precisely the Data Act can be instrumental for our competitiveness in the global markets.

The new rules will empower consumers and companies by giving them a say in what can be done with the data generated by their connected products. And here is where the biggest potential of the Data Act lies for the EU: this regulation will contribute to optimising existing business models and processes, boost the development of new ones and, by doing so, create new values and jobs.

We are determined. We are reinforcing this idea constantly. We are determined with our strategic sovereignty. In that sense, during this term, we are adopting a very comprehensive package of digital files: the Data Governance Act, the Digital Service Act, the Digital Market Act, the new review of the NIS Directive, the Artificial Intelligence, the Electronic Identification Regulation and the CHIPS Act are very clear examples of this. This has been a great achievement for all the institutions. We have the Commissioner here. We have also to congratulate the Commission and congratulate especially our Commissioner.

Sovereignty is, in any case, very much about our capacity to compete and innovate. And the Data Act is precisely that. What it is about is competition and innovation. If we have to define with two single words what the Data Act is about, we can clearly say 'competitiveness and innovation'.

At noon we will be voting on Parliament's position on the Data Act – a report that was adopted without one single vote against in the ITRE committee due to the excellent cooperation with the shadow rapporteurs and with the opinion-giving committees, as you know, LIBE, JURI and IMCO. But also it was such a success because of the clear awareness in this Parliament of the importance of this dossier for Europe's future.

Ibán García Del Blanco, *ponente de opinión de la Comisión de Asuntos Jurídicos*. – Señora presidenta, la digitalización de nuestras economías y de nuestras sociedades plantea muchos retos para Europa.

El primero es, por supuesto, el tener una población que sea consciente de lo que supone ese cambio, que tenga además sus derechos protegidos. Y también, por supuesto, que seamos capaces de estar al nivel que necesitamos para tener una verdadera competitividad a escala internacional.

Además, por último y por resumir estos retos, que seamos capaces también de alguna forma de distribuir equitativamente los beneficios de esa digitalización, ese salto en la productividad, para que los beneficios no sean solo para unos pocos, sino para muchos.

En la Comisión de Asuntos Jurídicos hemos tratado de ayudar, en el marco de la Ley de Datos, a ese gran objetivo de crear un mercado único de datos, al mismo tiempo que creamos confianza suficiente en la protección de los mismos para que exista realmente esa transferencia entre el sector público y el sector privado, y creemos valor añadido dentro de la Unión.

Hemos introducido la figura del coordinador de datos para tratar de darle coherencia a toda la Ley y darle soporte también a los usuarios y a las pymes. Y, en cualquier caso, también hemos intentado introducir cuestiones relacionadas con la ilustración en materia de datos, con la ilustración digital, que nos parecen de extrema necesidad para que la sociedad sea capaz de entender el cambio que se está produciendo y también el valor de sus propios datos.

Por último, quiero darles las gracias a todos los ponentes alternativos de la Comisión de Asuntos Jurídicos y, por supuesto, quiero agradecer la buena negociación y el diálogo que hemos mantenido con la ponente principal.

Sergey Lagodinsky, *Verfasser der Stellungnahme des mitberatenden Ausschusses für bürgerliche Freiheiten, Justiz und Inneres*. – Frau Präsidentin, sehr geehrter Herr Kommissar, liebe Freundinnen und Freunde hier im Saal! Es gibt keine Datenökonomie ohne Datenschutz. Für uns muss klar sein, dass nichts am Internet der Dinge und nichts an dieser konkreten Regelung an den schon vorhandenen Standards der DSGVO etwas ändert oder verringert. Die persönlichen Daten bleiben persönliche Daten, und die Regeln für den Umgang mit diesen bleiben weiterhin bestehen.

Das Grundrecht auf den Schutz personenbezogener Daten verlangt hohe Standards und setzt hohe Standards, und die haben wir als LIBE-Ausschuss hier auch erfolgreich und entschlossen verteidigt. Unser Datenschutzgrundrecht ist dabei nicht nur zur Abwehr da, sondern gibt auch Befähigung für unsere Bürgerinnen und Bürger, damit wir auf unsere eigenen Daten zugreifen und damit machen, was wir, Bürgerinnen und Bürger, damit wollen.

Mit dem Datengesetz gehen wir damit sogar ein Stück weiter als mit der Datenschutzverordnung, indem wir auch ein Zugriffsrecht auf die Daten direkt auf dem Internet der Dinge Geräten geben, die wir nutzen. Das ist kein Hindern der Regulierung. Das ist die Grundlage für Innovation und Wirtschaftswachstum, weil es das Vertrauen der Verbraucherinnen und Verbraucher fördert.

Hier geht es um etwas. Der Wert der Datenökonomie ist immens. Das hat die Kommission auch dargestellt. Wichtig für mich ist, hier geht es nicht nur um Wirtschafts- und Innovationsförderung, hier geht es um die Fähigkeit der EU, sich als globale Akteurin und Standardsetzerin auf dem globalen Markt der Technologien zu positionieren. Das ist ein geostrategischer Imperativ. Das Vertrauen der Bürgerinnen und Bürger ist das auch.

Adam Bielan, *rapporteur for the opinion of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection*. – Madam President, dear Commissioner, cloud services have become essential for the use of available data and for strengthening the competitiveness of the European services sector and industry, which relies heavily on accelerated uptake of cloud services.

I believe we should always consider the digitisation of our economies as a holistic challenge, meaning that when introducing new legislation, we should always focus on both users' and providers' needs and create a predictable environment that allows the planning of long-term business decisions.

This is why, as rapporteur for the IMCO opinion, with exclusive competences on the cloud services chapter, I welcome that our committee introduced efficient solutions to unlock the potential for cloud computing providers, data processing and portability services, and delivered strongly agile tools that enable customers to take fully informed business decisions.

Lastly, I would like to thank all the shadow rapporteurs in the IMCO committee for their work. I believe the Data Act is a step in the right direction towards unlocking the full potential of data, and I look forward to defending our text during negotiations with the Council.

Thierry Breton, *membre de la Commission*. – Madame la Présidente, Mesdames et Messieurs les députés, tout d'abord, je voudrais, si vous m'y autorisez, féliciter le Parlement européen pour le travail qui a été fait en vue d'arriver à une position sur la proposition d'une loi sur les données. Je tiens à remercier et féliciter d'abord M^{me} la rapporteure, M^{me} Pilar del Castillo, et aussi, bien sûr, tous les membres de la commission ITRE ainsi que les différentes commissions compétentes pour avis, LIBE, JURI et IMCO.

Nous sommes à un moment clé pour l'économie de la donnée. Cela a été dit et je le redis à mon tour. Nous sommes tous conscients que nous avons devant nous une vague, une nouvelle vague de données, industrielles cette fois-ci, beaucoup plus importante du reste que la vague de données personnelles que nous avons connue, que nous connaissons encore, et qui a permis de construire les soubassements de l'économie de la donnée. Et au fond, on a l'opportunité, par cette nouvelle vague de données industrielles, d'augmenter considérablement la valeur ajoutée, la valeur générée par ces données pour notre économie, pour notre compétitivité, mais aussi pour notre société.

Pour saisir cette opportunité, cela a été dit, l'Europe doit agir avec vitesse, mais aussi avec détermination. Elle le fait, on le sait, depuis 2020. Au début du mandat, la Commission a présenté une stratégie complète, cohérente, globale et ambitieuse pour les données. En mai 2022, les colégislateurs ont adopté un premier règlement absolument majeur qui était le DGA, qui visait à établir la confiance entre les acteurs s'engageant dans un échange de données de façon volontaire. Et aujourd'hui, nous discutons de la dernière proposition législative majeure de cette stratégie: la loi sur les données proposée par la Commission il y a maintenant un an, et je me félicite à nouveau de l'engagement très fort du Parlement européen et des États membres autour de cette initiative.

Il s'agit, je tiens à le rappeler ici, d'un texte essentiel pour tous les secteurs industriels. Il a pour ambition de déverrouiller les données industrielles et d'accroître aussi, ce qui est très important, l'équité à leur accès dans une économie de la donnée, de clarifier aussi les droits d'utilisation des données entre, évidemment, les entreprises, le «B2B», entre les entreprises et les consommateurs, le «B2C», ainsi qu'entre les entreprises et le secteur public, le «B2G».

Avec la loi sur les données, à laquelle il a été fait référence tout à l'heure, nous avons structuré et nous structurerons une économie de données innovante, ouverte. Mais évidemment ouverte à nos conditions et conformément à nos valeurs. Cela veut dire que nous portons une attention toute particulière aux droits, aux droits des consommateurs, aux PME qui sont au cœur de notre industrie, à l'intérêt public également, à la protection de nos données européennes, en un mot. Et ceci est crucial pour notre souveraineté numérique.

Dans ce contexte, je suis très heureux de constater que le Parlement a préservé une approche équilibrée de la proposition, pour faire en sorte que plus d'acteurs puissent bénéficier des données, tout en conservant un cadre incitatif d'investissement dans la production de ces données.

Je voudrais ici souligner également que la loi sur les données servira d'instrument d'appui pour les PME, axé sur leurs besoins, et notamment dans un accès plus large aux données, dans le rapport de force des négociations contractuelles, notamment dans les situations de désaccord. Les PME n'ont souvent pas, on le sait, les moyens pour gérer un contentieux légal.

Notre proposition comprend aussi des règles relatives à l'accès du secteur public aux données des entreprises. Il est important de pouvoir élaborer les meilleures politiques publiques sur la base de ces données et surtout en cas de crise. Je suis conscient que le Parlement propose de limiter ce chapitre aux données non personnelles et je note que cela rendrait l'accès aux données de la part des autorités publiques considérablement plus difficile, dans des cas de crise évidemment, où les données, même pseudonymisées, pourraient aider à trouver des solutions efficaces et rapides face aux urgences de certaines situations.

Par ailleurs, et pour conclure, je suis heureux de constater la volonté de stimuler la concurrence sur le marché européen du *cloud* en supprimant les obstacles au changement de fournisseur de *cloud*. J'espère donc que nous pourrions maintenir cette ambition de créer un marché du *cloud* fluide et compétitif.

Pour conclure, permettez-moi à nouveau de remercier le Parlement européen pour le travail accompli sur une proposition législative très importante et, je crois pouvoir le dire, susceptible de révolutionner le champ des données.

Christian Ehler, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – Madam President, dear colleagues, today we are discussing legislation that can enhance the European data-driven economy and enable new business models for industry. Enabling secure, efficient data sharing among businesses can have a profound impact on the economy, leading to more innovation, growth and job creation. It will provide businesses with the right incentives and support to innovate, develop new products and services based on data and, by doing so, it can create new opportunities for business across Europe, driving growth and creating jobs.

And I would like to congratulate – because we don't do that often in this House – the Commission, and specifically Commissioner Breton, but also our rapporteur, Pilar del Castillo, and also the other colleagues. Because we do something, we salute much more – and we should do that in the presence of many more colleagues. We do something for the competitiveness of Europe. And that's the bigger issue.

We should be aware that, in the presence of this House, it is much more vivid. If we strangle the European industry, if we regulate, if we create ambitions which are not fostering European competitiveness – and it's a relatively lonely business or it seems to be – then we are saluting the fact that now we are really substantially contributing to European competitiveness.

But we should be aware: it is starting. We are starting to deindustrialise Europe. And what had been promised for the Green Deal has to become a Green Deal, whereas the second leg – the digital leg – is the one we are saluting today. And it's a good signal and a good day for the European industry.

Dan Nica, în numele grupului S&D. – Doamna președintă, domnule comisar, dragi colegi, este un act extrem de important pentru noi toți, pentru că de modul în care noi am reușit să adoptăm acest act va depinde ceea ce vor face cei din industria relevantă în perioada următoare.

Și vreau să-i spun ceva domnului comisar Breton. Am avut o discuție înainte să fie numit comisar. Și atunci am vorbit câteva lucruri și vreau să spun aici că s-a ținut de cuvânt, ne-a spus și am convenit atunci că Uniunea Europeană are nevoie de servicii de *cloud* care să fie în Uniunea Europeană pentru Uniunea Europeană și pentru întreprinderi și cetățeni europeni, lucru pentru care s-a ținut de cuvânt.

Astăzi vorbim din nou despre un lucru care tot așa l-a menționat la investirea domniei sale ca și comisar, faptul că Uniunea Europeană, știți cum spun, este un nou șerif în oraș. Deci nu mai există ca aici să fie un fel de supermarket în care fiecare venea, lua datele din Uniunea Europeană, le foloseau cum credeau, fără să fie întrebat cineva nici dacă există vreun accept și nici fără să existe vreo aprobare sau vreun control din partea cuiva.

Astăzi, cu Data Act, punem capăt și acestui regim, să spunem, de naivitate de care dădeam dovadă.

Și mai este un lucru foarte important. Noi trebuie cu toții să fim conștienți că dacă noi nu știm să ne apărăm interesele noastre ca Uniune Europeană, dacă noi nu știm să ne protejăm interesele noastre, nu o va face nimeni, iar Uniunea Europeană este unul dintre actorii cei mai importanți, iar colaborarea și cooperarea noastră cu toți cei care sunt *like-minded*, cei care respectă regulile, regulile noastre, ale Uniunii Europene, trebuie să se alinieze acestor reguli și să poată să-și facă, să-și desfășoare activitățile în conformitate cu standardele noastre, cu obligațiile noastre.

Nu negociem respectarea niciunei reguli europene, nu negociem nici nerespectarea vreunui drept sau obligații de care beneficiază vreo întreprindere europeană sau vreun cetățean european.

Și felicitări celor care au lucrat la acest raport și felicitări încă o dată Comisiei. Când face lucruri bune, trebuie să recunoaștem și aceste lucruri.

Alin Mituța, în numele grupului Renew. – Doamna președintă, în primul rând, sigur, mulțumesc colegilor din echipa de raportori cu care am lucrat foarte bine pentru a avea astăzi pe masă acest text.

O mare parte din dispozitivele pe care le folosim astăzi produc date, de la obiectele simple, precum becurile inteligente, bineînțeles, până la cele mai complexe, precum automobilele sau avioanele.

În acest moment folosim doar 20% din toate aceste date. Dacă utilizatorii și companiile ar avea, ar putea folosi întregul potențial al datelor, am putea genera în Europa peste 2 milioane de locuri de muncă și am genera aproape 300 de miliarde de euro în plus la PIB-ul Uniunii.

Acesta este și rostul legii datelor. În primul rând, revoluționăm modul în care folosim tehnologiile și internetul în favoarea consumatorilor, redând controlul asupra datelor celor care le co-generază. Tot utilizatorii vor decide cu cine le partajează, cui le vând și cum le folosesc. În al doilea rând, vom putea folosi mai bine potențialul datelor pentru a avea acces la servicii publice mai bune, iar în al treilea rând, creăm o economie a datelor care să ajute Europa să inoveze și să profite de acest uriaș potențial al datelor industriale.

Cred că ceea ce avem pe masă este un compromis foarte bun și cred că trebuie să îl adoptăm și să avem o poziție puternică în negocierile cu Consiliul.

Damian Boeselager, on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group. – Madam President, dear Commissioner Breton, dear Pilar, dear colleagues, more and more devices – windmills, ships, aeroplanes, paper-cutting machines – are connected to the internet. It's the internet of things, after all. But who can have access to the non-personal data that these devices produce and who is allowed to share it with others? That is what the Data Act is about: deciding who should have access to what kind of data coming out of connected devices.

That's why I think this law is actually right up there with GDPR and the Digital Services Act when it comes to the importance for the European digital economy. I think overall we have risen to the occasion, and here I want to explicitly thank Pilar and all the other colleagues for the very good cooperation that actually helped us improve the Commission's proposal.

Let me give you two examples of where I think we definitely improved the proposal. First, we put the user, the owner of the connected device, back into the centre. They can decide who they want to engage in contracts with and who they want to share the data with.

Second, we created incentives for both the user and the data holder to share data on data markets. And that's really the core. We need liquid data markets so that new cool startups can come use this data, connect it and build new ideas and applications.

However, there's one point where I don't think we got the balance correct, and that is what kind of data can be shared. Here, we gave a million excuses to the data holder to not share data. Trade secret protection, security settings, non-compete provisions, complex algorithms; we made the list so long that the Data Act is in the risk of becoming a data suppression act, allowing data holders to basically not share data. That's short-sighted protectionist policy. We need to make sure that in the next step, when we negotiate with the Council, we have the maximum amount of data to be shared with the user who is actually producing the data with its use. So let's fight for that.

Margarita de la Pisa Carrión, *en nombre del Grupo ECR*. – Señora presidenta, señorías, seamos sinceros. La Unión Europea llega tarde a la batalla de los datos, hoy liderada por los Estados Unidos y China, y la Comisión lo ha hecho con una propuesta que tiene como objeto acaparar más poder y cumplir con una agenda, sin medir cómo afecta a nuestro tejido empresarial o nuestra vida como ciudadanos.

Por otro lado, el Parlamento Europeo, con una buena colaboración entre los grupos y con la ponente, ha conseguido reducir en gran medida este impacto negativo, poniendo en el centro del Reglamento al consumidor y su seguridad — especialmente su protección frente a abusos—, reclamando transparencia y la compensación, programando una implementación escalonada para la industria, mejorando técnicamente el texto y liberando de exigencias a las pequeñas y medianas empresas.

Pero, sin duda, existen puntos controvertidos, porque conceptualmente tenemos visiones diferentes de la Unión Europea. La soberanía de las naciones, en este caso sobre los datos, debe ser nacional y las decisiones pertenecen a ese nivel. Por esta razón, hemos presentado peticiones de cambio para limitar las competencias que las instituciones europeas se atribuyen. Es una oportunidad para hacer que esta norma respete el principio de subsidiariedad en todo su contenido. Hagámoslo, trabajemos juntos, sigamos trabajando juntos. Pedimos, por tanto, apoyo a las enmiendas presentadas por nuestro grupo.

Marie Dauchy, *au nom du groupe ID*. – Madame la Présidente, chers collègues, quel dommage! Voilà ce que m'inspire une telle proposition législative. Car, une fois n'étant pas coutume, le constat de base prévalant à la législation sur les données partait d'une bonne intuition: libérer l'accès et l'utilisation des données pour permettre de créer de nouveaux biens et services. Mais passé ce constat, l'on se rend compte que le Data Act reprend les éternelles errances de l'Union européenne: absence de vision stratégique, foi aveugle dans le marché et naïveté dans ses rapports avec le reste du monde.

Après être complètement passée à côté des révolutions numériques, de l'économie de la donnée et de l'intelligence artificielle, la Commission européenne veut nous faire croire que la réponse au retard abyssal qui sépare l'Europe des États-Unis et de la Chine naît dans le numérique. Dans le numérique serait la libéralisation. Car ce texte, qui ne varie pas de celui déposé par la Commission, n'est rien d'autre qu'une pure et simple libéralisation du marché de la donnée sur le modèle de l'ouverture des monopoles d'État dans les années 1990 et 2000. Il impose au détenteur d'une ressource essentielle d'en délivrer l'accès à des conditions contractuelles équitables, en espérant que le marché s'occupe du reste.

Cette logique est complètement erronée. Pire, c'est un raisonnement à l'envers. La question prioritaire n'est pas tant celle de savoir si les données circulent suffisamment ou pas assez. La question essentielle est celle de savoir pourquoi ce ne sont pas des géants européens qui les contrôlent au sein d'un écosystème d'innovation européen. La Commission est comme un enfant trop naïf à qui l'on fait croire que Google, Facebook, Apple et consorts sont simplement le fruit d'esprits géniaux enfermés dans le garage de leurs parents. Ce faisant, elle est incapable de comprendre que c'est la vision stratégique de l'interventionnisme d'État qui a contribué à créer les champions du numérique. C'est le développement de compétences essentielles allié à un investissement massif dans des technologies de pointe et à la mise en place de réseaux de dernière génération. Mais encore une fois, l'Union est fondamentalement incapable de ce type de raisonnement.

Ce texte soulève d'ailleurs tant d'autres problèmes que le temps m'empêche d'aborder. Rien sur la protection effective des données de nos entreprises face aux concurrents internationaux. Rien sur la cybersécurité, rien sur l'abus d'autorité des entités publiques que ce texte semble complètement ignorer. Rien encore sur le coût de l'accès à certaines données. Alors certes, le Data Act pourra effectivement participer à créer quelques opportunités économiques à la marge. Mais dans le fond, l'Europe est et restera vouée à demeurer soumise au reste du monde sur le numérique.

Έλενα Κουντουρά, εξ ονόματος της ομάδας *The Left*. – Κυρία Πρόεδρε, κύριοι συνάδελφοι, ο όγκος των δεδομένων που παράγονται από ανθρώπους και μηχανές αυξάνεται εκθετικά κάθε χρόνο. Τα βιομηχανικά δεδομένα μπορούν να αποτελέσουν καθοριστικό παράγοντα για την ανάπτυξη, την καινοτομία και τον μετασχηματισμό όλων των τομέων της ευρωπαϊκής οικονομίας. Δυστυχώς, σήμερα η πλήρης αξία τους παραμένει ανεκμετάλλευτη ή συγκεντρώνεται στα χέρια λίγων μεγάλων εταιρειών. Για να αλλάξει αυτό, θα πρέπει να δοθούν επαρκείς απαντήσεις στα μακροχρόνια ζητήματα της πρόσβασης στα δεδομένα, στη δικαιοσύνη, στη διαλειτουργικότητα και την επαναχρησιμοποίηση των δεδομένων.

Δεν υπάρχει αμφιβολία ότι η θέση της επιτροπής ITRE αποσαφηνίζει και βελτιώνει αρκετά σημεία της αρχικής πρότασης της Επιτροπής. Διασφαλίζεται η προστασία των προσωπικών δεδομένων, ότι η πρόσβαση στα δεδομένα και η κοινοχρησία δεδομένων θα είναι δωρεάν για τους καταναλωτές, η χρήση των μη προσωπικών δεδομένων του ιδιωτικού τομέα από δημόσιους φορείς των κρατών μελών B2G σε περίπτωση δημόσιας έκτακτης ανάγκης ή για την εκπλήρωση συγκεκριμένου καθήκοντος προς το δημόσιο συμφέρον, η προώθηση της ικανότητας των καταναλωτών να κατανοούν καλύτερα τις τεχνικές λεπτομέρειες και τα δικαιώματά τους αναφορικά με τα δεδομένα που παράγουν, το δικαίωμα δικαστικής προσφυγής κ.α...

Παράλληλα, όμως, εξακολουθούν να υπάρχουν ορισμένα στοιχεία που μπορούν να υπονομεύσουν τους στόχους του κανονισμού και θα πρέπει να βελτιωθούν στους προσεχείς τριλόγους. Ενώ, για παράδειγμα, η ανάγκη προστασίας του εμπορικού απορρήτου είναι αδιαμφισβήτητη, θα πρέπει να αντιμετωπιστεί ο κίνδυνος αδικαιολόγητης χρήσης του για την υπονόμηση των δικαιωμάτων πρόσβασης των χρηστών.

Francesca Donato (NI). – Signora Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, da anni si parla di regolamentare l'accesso e la condivisione dei dati personali e non, in questo Parlamento. All'inizio l'intenzione dichiarata era quella di introdurre il concetto di proprietà dell'individuo sui propri dati con i connessi diritti. Poi si è andati nella direzione opposta.

Oggi discutiamo di una proposta che, in nome della concorrenza e giocando sull'ambiguità dei dati misti, di fatto spoglia le persone del legittimo controllo sui propri dati personali, calpestando l'essenza stessa del diritto alla *privacy*.

L'importante è che le imprese possano liberamente disporre per il loro *business* e profitto. E sappiamo che con i nostri dati potranno orientare le nostre vite, anche le nostre intenzioni di voto.

Perché quest'Aula si preoccupa, ormai, più degli interessi delle multinazionali o comunque di soggetti terzi, a scapito dei diritti dei cittadini europei? Molti pensano che la risposta si possa evincere dalle dinamiche del Qatar-gate.

Se continuiamo così, sarà molto difficile convincerli del contrario.

Maria da Graça Carvalho (PPE). – Senhora Presidente, Caro Comissário, Caros Colegas, o Regulamento dos Dados, numa palavra, é sobre dar acesso – dar acesso às pessoas e às empresas.

Até agora, as regras não têm sido claras, em especial sobre quem pode aceder aos dados gerados nos produtos conectados. Com este diploma devolvemos o controlo a quem produz os dados e, ao mesmo tempo, abrimos caminho a uma maior utilização desta informação. Um passo fundamental para fazer crescer a economia dos dados e para promover a inovação.

Na qualidade de relatora-sombra na Comissão do Mercado Interno e da Proteção dos Consumidores (IMCO), concentrei-me em especial no tema da computação em nuvem. Este mercado é dominado por operadores não europeus, com três empresas a concentrarem quase toda a oferta.

Para os clientes, a troca de operadores é difícil. Com este regulamento, eliminamos barreiras e taxas injustificadas, tornamos a troca de operadores mais simples e reduzimos custos, ao mesmo tempo que protegemos os segredos comerciais e a propriedade intelectual.

Termino felicitando a relatora, Pilar del Castillo, e os outros relatores, e também o Comissário Breton pelo excelente trabalho e pela excelente cooperação. Foi um trabalho árduo e que exigiu muita conciliação, mas podemos ficar orgulhosos do resultado.

Marina Kaljurand (S&D). – Madam President, Commissioner, colleagues, I would like to thank the rapporteur and everybody who worked on this act. I believe that it will be landmark legislation for this mandate if it succeeds in harnessing the potential of data in all the ways we are hoping and foreseeing.

I would like to underline some very important points of the European Parliament's position. In the event of conflict between two legislative instruments, GDPR will prevail. We do not create any additional legal basis for the processing of personal data nor removing any of those that exist. It will help to enforce our citizens' right to data portability, which is already provided in GDPR, and we ensure the right foreseen for a person who is not the user asking for transfer of data but whose personal data is still being transferred.

On a personal note, I would like to mention my own remaining concern. The scope of what business will have to share with governments is much wider in Parliament's position than I personally would have liked. It remains to be seen how this will be done in practice and it remains to be seen if we need to go to court to see how some personal data applications work.

Karen Melchior (Renew). – Madam President, dear Commissioner, dear colleagues, firstly, I'd like to thank the rapporteur and shadows for their diligent work on this complex and multifaceted file.

The role of data in our lives is growing, from industrial processes to wearable devices. Data provides us with valuable insights needed to fight climate change, diagnose diseases, as well as to produce food and goods more sustainably.

The Data Act is essential in unlocking the potential of data and bringing down the many barriers that we face today. We have succeeded in achieving clearer boundaries between personal and non-personal data; a balanced deal on trade secrets that would enable more data sharing whilst protecting intellectual property rights.

I am particularly satisfied that we've provided the following solutions to current problems. Today, when we buy and use connected devices, the data generated is often stored in the cloud, and we can only access our data if we're willing to give away personal information or to pay extra.

The Data Act puts citizens and businesses in control of their data, with free and unhindered access for consumers and a guaranteed fair price for companies no matter their size.

Today, innovative services are never developed due to barriers in accessing data from other manufacturers. The Data Act ends hoarding of data, enabling developers to build the services that citizens and consumers want.

The COVID pandemic revealed that governments struggle to obtain data they need in emergencies. We have ensured that governments can respond quickly without overstepping and putting citizens' privacy at risk.

Also, because manufacturers regularly shut down related services prematurely, rendering smart devices useless before their physical end of life, I do miss one thing from our JURI opinion: where we require transparency on how long a smart device will remain smart or even usable, how long related services and software updates will be provided, and if a connected device can work offline. This information is vital to empower citizens to make sustainable choices when they buy connected devices, and I hope to see it in the final legislation.

I wish the rapporteur and her team all the best in the upcoming trilogue negotiations.

Alexandra Geese (Verts/ALE). – Frau Präsidentin, sehr verehrter Herr Kommissar! Daten sind glücklicherweise nicht das neue Öl; Daten sind der neue Boden, aus dem Innovation wachsen kann, und diese Innovation gilt es zu fördern. Indem wir jetzt mit klaren Regeln darstellen, wer welche nicht personenbezogenen Daten nutzen darf und wie diese Daten auch zusammenwirken können.

Aber dabei muss ein Prinzip klar sein: Wer die Daten erzeugt, entscheidet über ihre Nutzung. Es kann nicht sein, dass die Daten aus der Nutzung eines smarten Kühlschranks automatisch nur dem Hersteller gehören. Denn für innovative Anwendungen und Geschäftsmodelle brauchen wir ja gerade auch die Zugänge für Startups und für die Forschung.

Im Cloudbereich bedaure ich sehr, dass der Binnenmarktausschuss den ambitionierten Vorstoß der Kommission zunichtegemacht hat, den heute von zwei dominanten Digitalkonzernen beherrschten Markt aufzubrechen, um gerade auch europäischen Anbietern eine echte Chance zu geben und unseren kleinen und mittelständischen Unternehmen mehr Auswahl zu bieten. Hier zementieren wir eine Abhängigkeit, aus der wir uns in Europa doch eigentlich befreien wollen.

Schwach ist der Vorschlag – leider – wie die gesamte Digitalpolitik auch in Sachen Klimaschutz. Die steigenden Datenvolumen werden große Mengen Strom und Ressourcen brauchen. Deswegen ist es so wichtig, dass wir Grünen Deal und Digitalgesetzgebung zusammen denken, dass sie Hand in Hand gehen. Denn wir brauchen eine kluge Digitalisierung, um den Planeten zu retten. Ich hoffe, dass wir die Chancen noch ausnutzen können, die sich jetzt im Bereich Ökodesign und künstliche Intelligenz dafür ergeben.

Geert Bourgeois (ECR). – Voorzitter, commissaris, collega's, ik steun volmondig de doelstellingen van de dataverordening en ik feliciteer de rapporteur die – samen met velen – gevoelige verbeteringen heeft aangebracht aan het voorstel.

De EU heeft absoluut een competitieve datamarkt nodig. Onze achterstand ten opzichte van de Verenigde Staten en China is dramatisch. Delen van data is cruciaal voor innovatie en groei, voor onze concurrentiekracht, voor onze welvaart.

Maar, collega's, sta mij toe te zeggen dat er nog een aantal werkpunten, een aantal zorgpunten, zijn aan wat voorligt op het vlak van rechtszekerheid voor onze bedrijven, het beschermen van hun bedrijfsgeheimen en intellectuele eigendom. De mogelijkheid voor overheden om private data op te eisen moet zeer, zeer strikt gelimiteerd worden, afgelijnd worden, beperkt worden.

De deur voor oneigenlijk gebruik moet absoluut dicht.

Emmanuel Maurel (The Left). – Madame la Présidente, la régulation du numérique avance en Europe. Nous le devons à la vigilance de ce Parlement. Nous le devons aussi à l'action du commissaire Breton. Et ce règlement marque une étape importante dans la construction d'une législation efficace en matière d'accès, de transfert, de partage de données non personnelles, au premier rang desquelles les données industrielles.

Qualifier de «nouvel or noir» les données, c'est un peu un lieu commun, mais il est vrai que, comme tout or noir, il fait l'objet de convoitises et nous sommes dans l'obligation de protéger ces données, et cela y compris vis-à-vis de nos partenaires commerciaux qui, en l'espèce, sont aussi de redoutables concurrents – je pense aux États-Unis et évidemment à la Chine.

Parmi les points clés du texte, j'en retiens trois. D'abord, l'intérêt général sort renforcé du texte, dans la mesure où les organismes publics pourront avoir accès aux données des entreprises en cas de situation de crise – c'est un point important. Deuxième chose, cela a été dit, c'est une avancée pour les consommateurs qui bénéficient d'une portabilité des données d'un cloud à l'autre et qui auront accès gratuitement, c'est important, aux données générées par les objets connectés qu'ils possèdent.

Dernière chose enfin, l'encadrement étendu des transferts de données vers les pays tiers: le texte renforce la protection de nos industries et de leurs savoir-faire. Il faudra être vigilant en trilogue parce que cela n'est pas encore totalement réglé. Mais je pense qu'on va dans la bonne direction et il faut que ça continue.

Edina Tóth (NI). – Tisztelt Elnök Asszony! Biztos Úr! Az adatok gyors és biztonságos felhasználása az uniós gazdasági fejlődés egyik kulcsa. Ez a javaslat fontos lépés a hatékonyabb és átláthatóbb adatmegosztás, valamint a digitális átállás irányába, amelynek elsődleges célja az európai polgárok érdekvédelme. Ezért elengedhetetlen egy világos és stabil jogszabályi környezet kialakítása, amely az állampolgárok kezébe adja a döntést a saját adataikról. Örömmel látom, hogy a javaslat számos ponton védi a digitális átmenet szempontjából is kiemelten fontos kis- és középvállalkozásokat, ezzel segítve a kiegyensúlyozottabb piaci versenyt.

Bízom abban, hogy a szabályozással hozzá tudunk járulni egy olyan hatékonyan működő adatgazdaság megteremtéséhez, amely méltányos és egyenrangú feltételeket teremt minden érintett számára.

Angelika Niebler (PPE). – Frau Präsidentin, Herr Kommissar, liebe Kolleginnen, liebe Kollegen! Wir leben in einer Zeit, in der Daten die neue Währung sind. Aber ein großer Teil unseres Datenschatzes bleibt bisher unangetastet. 80 % der Industriedaten werden, Stand heute, nie genutzt. Ich glaube, es ist wirklich an der Zeit, dass wir die Datensilos, die wir in der Europäischen Union noch haben, aufbrechen.

Das Datengesetz ist dafür ein wichtiger Meilenstein. Es regelt endlich den Zugriff auf Daten von vernetzten Geräten, Maschinen, ich sage mal, vom Kühlschrank bis zu den Flugzeugturbinen. Durch dieses Datengesetz werden künftig Daten einfacher zugänglich, nutzbar und wertvoll für die Bürgerinnen und Bürger in der Europäischen Union, für Verwaltungen, für Unternehmen, für die Gesellschaft als solches.

Die große Herausforderung beim Datengesetz war, die richtige Balance zwischen den verschiedenen Interessen zu finden. Ich finde, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen, das ist uns eigentlich ganz gut gelungen, zumal wir ja auch für einzelne Datenräume wie z. B. den Gesundheitsdatenraum ja noch einen eigenen Rechtsrahmen bekommen werden.

Bürgerinnen und Bürger nutzen smarte Geräte. Für mich war es wichtig, dass der Datenschutz eben da auch in dem Bereich genauso gilt, dass der Bürger, die Bürgerin entscheidet, wer was mit seinen Daten unternimmt. Zweitens war es natürlich wichtig, gerade kleinen, mittelständischen Unternehmen und Start-ups künftig einfacheren Zugriff auf Industrie- und Maschinendaten zu geben. Auch das ist uns gelungen. Andererseits haben wir aber auch sichergestellt, dass weiterhin Geschäftsgeheimnisse gewahrt bleiben. Wichtig in der Datenwelt ist, dass wir vertrauensvolle Umgebungen schaffen. Ich glaube, dass uns das mit diesem legislativen Akt, mit dem Datengesetz, gelungen ist.

Ich möchte auch ein herzliches Dankeschön an unsere Berichterstatterin Pilar del Castillo und alle Kolleginnen und Kollegen aus den Fraktionen, die an diesem Dossier sehr engagiert gearbeitet haben, sagen. Ich glaube, wir haben damit wirklich einen guten Schritt in Richtung Aufbau einer Datenwirtschaft und einer Datengesellschaft geschaffen.

Miapetra Kumpula-Natri (S&D). – Madam President, I'm sorry to be only now here. Physical travel from Finland took a bit longer in France. But this winter, the competitiveness of the European industry and economy have been a great cause of political discussion due to high energy prices, the war on the continent and the upheaval of the global supply chains. We need to enact more robust European industrial policy fit for this challenge in the world to create more decent jobs and welfare.

The Data Act is a key element on the regulatory side to give a push for European data innovations and data markets to be created. We need a clear framework to enable fair and open utilisation of data by private businesses, consumers and the public sector. The single market is Europe's greatest power and the source of the 'Brussels effect'. So by shaping the emerging data market now, we are showing that the global data market can reflect the European objectives of competition, consumer protection and democratic rules.

Dear colleagues, it is a historic day. We will create a new right by legislation. When buying or renting a product that produces data, an enterprise or consumer will not only be a source and object for data collection, but will have a right to the data the use of the product provides. Doesn't it sound reasonable? Yes, it does. Is it a fact today? No, it is not. So let's do this and there will be a right for the user to know what data the use of the machine is collecting and providing and have a say how it can be used. This will unleash a lot of data for the new services and hopefully also disruptive innovations. Some estimates say that 80% of this so-called industrial data is unused in silos.

I am very happy already to see companies in health and hospitals working for better ways to use data for our good. I was very delighted to talk to farmers who are waiting for this to happen and thinking of the ways they can utilise the data produced in their own farms. Repair services are there to employ more people as we will reduce waste and material use by better repair possibilities. The efficient use of, and fair access to, data will provide a new competitive edge for many SMEs in Europe.

I am confident also that this legislation will be useful if something serious like the pandemic happens. There will be well framed rules in place to use data to help society through public sector action to work for the best of citizens.

I want to thank the rapporteur, the Commissioner and many colleagues and so many others around Europe who believed in this fair data economy already when we wrote together the brave vision for the European Data Strategy, including these business-to-business data sharing rules. So, colleagues, I urge you all to vote in favour so we can start trilogues as soon as possible.

Christophe Grudler (Renew). – Madame la Présidente, Monsieur le Commissaire, chers rapporteurs fictifs, chers collègues, en parallèle du travail de réindustrialisation que nous menons en Europe, nous devons également mener un travail sur la numérisation de nos industries, en particulier par une meilleure exploitation de nos données industrielles.

Aujourd'hui, de plus en plus d'objets et de produits sont connectés, évidemment, y compris des produits industriels lourds, comme une locomotive de train. Tout cela produit des données qui ne sont pas toujours exploitées à leur maximum. Ce texte que nous votons aujourd'hui permettra de faciliter ce partage des données. Une compagnie ferroviaire, pour reprendre l'exemple du train, pourra par exemple accéder plus facilement aux données des trains qu'elle achète et ainsi réduire le nombre des pannes grâce aux informations récoltées. Et moins de pannes, cela veut dire aussi moins de retards pour les voyageurs. Voilà un exemple, j'allais dire, parmi des milliers d'autres.

Accéder plus facilement aux données, cela veut aussi dire un meilleur accès pour les consommateurs. Quand un produit est connecté, il est important que le consommateur puisse utiliser librement ses propres données.

Enfin, le Data Act permettra de lever les barrières pour le passage d'un service informatique en nuage à un autre – les fameux *clouds*. Il n'est pas acceptable qu'un client de *cloud* soit bloqué chez un prestataire à cause de frais de transfert excessivement élevés. Ce sont des pratiques anticoncurrentielles et il faut pouvoir y mettre fin. Il faut supprimer ces frais et cela, quelle que soit la situation.

Chers collègues, nos données, notamment industrielles, ont de la valeur, il faut le rappeler. Il est donc aussi important que les données produites en Europe soient également traitées plus facilement en Europe. Le Data Act va dans ce sens et je m'en réjouis.

Kim Van Sparrentak (Verts/ALE). – Voorzitter, als je je tanden poetst met een slimme tandenborstel, dan zijn die data niet van jou, maar van de tandenborstelfabrikant. Als je je elektrische auto wilt laten repareren, moet je naar de garage van je merk, want ze kunnen niet in de computer van jouw auto. En je robotstofzuiger verzamelt de hele dag data over jouw huis, waar jij niet bij mag. Het is pure datahonger onder het mom van innovatie. Dit is natuurlijk de wereld op zijn kop. De data die jij produceert, moeten van jou zijn.

Nou, deze wet is daarvoor gelukkig een eerste stap en ik ben blij dat er geen sluiproutes voor bedrijven in zitten om nóg meer persoonsgegevens te verzamelen. Persoonlijke data horen niet thuis op een datamarkt. Laten we kijken naar de data van bedrijven, zoals in energiegebruik of productieprocessen. Hier kunnen we collectief van leren om processen duurzamer te maken en sneller oplossingen in de klimaatcrisis te vinden. Laten we die data vrij beschikbaar maken.

Data kunnen ons veel brengen, maar individuen moeten zelf kunnen bepalen wat ze willen delen, ongeacht welk apparaat ze aanschaffen.

Cristian Terheş (ECR). – Madam President, the European Data Act Regulation, contrary to the declared numerous benefits it brings for citizens, is yet another brick in the construction of the digital tyranny in the EU under the leadership of Ursula von der Leyen, where people are stripped of their fundamental rights like privacy, anonymity, intimacy and transformed into serialised objects that are surveilled by the government every step of the way.

When this draft legislation was published, the European Commission claimed that it is benefiting the people. What benefits can people have from being mass tracked or profiled by the government or the EU institutions? The so-called benefits of this proposal, like providing personalised medicine, new mobility solutions and contributions to the European Green Deal, are just honey traps to implement mass monitoring and, later, control with this regulation. While this regulation is very keen to protect the interests of businesses like trade secrets, it is granting prerogative not only to governmental institutions but to EU institutions to request and receive data from any company that is generated by the users, which is unacceptable.

The EU was established as an area of freedom and democracy, not an open air prison camp, which is why we need to reject the European Data Act Regulation.

(The speaker agreed to respond to a blue-card speech)

Karen Melchior (Renew), blue-card speech. – Thank you very much, colleague, for accepting the blue-card. It was quite a speech you made, with quite some claims, saying that the Data Act will allow for mass surveillance of citizens.

The Data Act will actually allow citizens and businesses to have control over their own data. So how is increased control for citizens of their data, for their use that they choose, a sign of more surveillance, and for allowing your claim of Europe being an open air prison camp?

Cristian Terheş (ECR), blue-card reply. – Thank you so much for this question, and thank you so much for offering me the opportunity to clarify the fact.

I worked – before I was elected here – as a programmer, so I know exactly how this data is stored, so when you are claiming right now that you are providing access or control of the citizens over the data, that is false – because that data is not stored on their device and they do not have physical control over the data. The data is stored on a server or on a cloud. What this regulation does is allowing or granting access to any governmental agency or even EU institutions to access that data directly. That's what the report says.

Sandra Pereira (The Left). – Senhora Presidente, esta proposta de regulamento sobre o acesso e utilização de dados constitui mais uma peça para o aprofundamento do mercado único digital.

Este mercado de dados visa a apropriação de dados de índole diversa, favorecendo os gigantes digitais e utilizando-os para potenciar os seus lucros. Também não está desligado do acordo celebrado com os Estados Unidos, há um ano, para o fluxo de dados transatlânticos, que representa potencialmente 7,1 biliões de dólares em relações económicas.

Consideramos que a necessária garantia do consentimento em qualquer comunicação de dados pessoais deve ser devidamente acautelada e que é a preservação do interesse do indivíduo, e não das grandes multinacionais, que deve nortear estas iniciativas. Opomo-nos a uma lógica mercantilista dos dados pessoais, contrária ao princípio de olhar para os dados pessoais como um prolongamento da personalidade humana.

A gestão e utilização de dados deviam ser integrados numa visão de desenvolvimento soberano, visando a preservação e salvaguarda de dados no plano nacional e que comporte, simultaneamente, uma dimensão pública e de interesse nacional.

Λευτέρης Νικολάου-Αλαβάνος (NI). – Κυρία Πρόεδρε, με την πράξη για τα δεδομένα τα μονοπώλια του κλάδου δεν θα έχουν πλέον μόνο τη δυνατότητα να καταγράφουν, να αποθηκεύουν, να αναλύουν και να αξιοποιούν τα δεδομένα των χρηστών, προσωπικά ή μη, όπως μέχρι σήμερα κάνουν, για παράδειγμα στην Ελλάδα, χάρη και στη σχετική οδηγία που ψηφίσαμε από κοινού Νέα Δημοκρατία, ΣΥΡΙΖΑ, ΠΑΣΟΚ και ΜΕΡΑ25. Στα πλαίσια της ευρωπαϊκής αγοράς δεδομένων, τα ευρωπαϊκά μονοπώλια θα μπορούν να τα μεταπωλούν σε τρίτους, σαν τμήμα του εμπορικού προϊόντος ή των υπηρεσιών τους, έχοντας στήριγμα το Ταμείο Ανάκαμψης, δηλαδή τα χρήματα του λαού.

Στο πλαίσιο των ανταγωνισμών με τις Ηνωμένες Πολιτείες Αμερικής και την Κίνα και των ανακατατάξεων που συμβαίνουν στον κλάδο, πολλαπλασιάζονται οι απολύσεις στους επιχειρηματικούς κολοσσούς, όπως οι Google, Facebook, Amazon, Twitter. Συντελούνται πτωχεύσεις τραπεζών που συνδέονται και με τον κλάδο, και τα βάρη τους βεβαίως θα μετακυλήσουν και πάλι στους λαούς.

Το συμπέρασμα: η Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση και η καπιταλιστική αγορά είναι ασύμβατες με κάθε προστασία των δεδομένων. Η πάλη για ψηφιακές τεχνολογίες στην υπηρεσία των σύγχρονων λαϊκών αναγκών ενάντια και στο σκοτεινό πλαίσιο φακελώματος, επομένως, συνδέεται με τον αγώνα για την ανατροπή της εξουσίας των μονοπωλίων.

Ivan Štefanec (PPE). – Vážená pani predsedajúca. Digitalizácia mení a bude meniť naše životy. Preto, aby sme zlepšili celú situáciu v digitálnej oblasti v Európskej únii, potrebujeme predovšetkým zlepšiť infraštruktúru, digitálne zručnosti a správny digitálny rámec v práci s dátami. A o tom je práve tento dôležitý Data Act, keďže dát budeme spracovávať viac a viac. Prístup k dátam bude kľúčový pre nové nápady a ich realizáciu najmä malými firmami tvoriacimi najviac pracovných miest. Ak chceme udržať našu konkurencieschopnosť vo svete a reflektovať vývoj reality v oblasti digitalizácie, musíme sa naučiť efektívne využívať dostupné priemyselné dáta, osobitne v oblasti ich zdieľania. Data Act predstavuje ucelený komplex, ktorý ponúka možnosti, ako pracovať s dátami tak, aby sme z nich využili naozaj maximum pri zachovaní európskych štandardov pre ich ochranu. Dnes využívame len 20 % priemyselných informácií a očakávame, že nové pravidlá umožnia využitie priemyselných dát a ich zlepšenie tak, aby prispeli k európskemu HDP o ďalších 270 miliárd. Za dôležité považujem: po prvé, odstraňovanie prekážok pri zdieľaní dát, po druhé, zlepšenie transparentnosti a po tretie, jasné podmienky pri zdieľaní súkromných dát verejným sektorom. Práca s dátami bude determinovať náš ekonomický rozvoj a správny právny rámec k tomu môže výrazne prispieť.

Tsvetelina Penkova (S&D). – Madam President, dear Commissioner Breton, dear colleagues, data has become one of the most valuable resources in today's world. In an environment where the technology is all around us, data is the key asset that can drive innovation and growth in the economy and that can upscale businesses and enhance customer driven solutions.

The EU has proven once again that it can lead and pave the way when it comes to providing the right legislative framework. The Data Act sets clear goals to achieve the digital transition. It will foster the EU data market where the allocation of IoT data is fair and just for the benefit of the consumers and the businesses. It will allow for more opportunities for growth, even for the smallest players in our economy, for the SMEs and for the startups. And, last but not least, it will incentivise innovation.

This is the first time when we can actually have data as a measurable asset in our economy and we should be proud of that.

Kosma Złotowski (ECR). – Pani Przewodnicząca! Panie Komisarzu! Szanowni Państwo! Dane to paliwo gospodarki cyfrowej, które zasila innowacje i pozwala tworzyć nowe modele biznesowe. Unia Europejska generuje ogromne zasoby informacji, których przechowywanie, wymiana i wykorzystanie do celów gospodarczych powinno być łatwe i tanie. Tylko dobrze działający rynek konkurencyjnych usług chmurowych może to zapewnić. Potrzebna jest jednak większa równowaga między dostawcami chmury a jej użytkownikami, szczególnie małymi i średnimi przedsiębiorstwami, które najbardziej narażone są na nieuczciwe praktyki czy niekorzystne umowy.

Ogromne zasoby danych o nas gromadzonych i przetwarzanych przez urządzenia podłączone do sieci muszą być lepiej chronione. Zapewnienie dostępu do produktów z obszaru internetu rzeczy niezależnym punktom serwisowym pozwoli obniżyć koszty naprawy i wydłuży koszt życia sprzętu. Z punktu widzenia rozwoju europejskich technologii, takich jak sztuczna inteligencja, te przepisy są kluczowe. Europa musi lepiej wykorzystywać potencjał generowanych przez nas danych, zapewniając maksymalny poziom ochrony.

Pablo Arias Echeverría (PPE). – Señora presidenta, señor comisario, todo lo que se puede conectar será conectado. Estamos ante una ley que tiene el potencial de cambiar el panorama digital e industrial europeo. La Unión Europea no ha sido parte de la carrera global, en la que los datos se han convertido en un activo esencial. Sabemos que países como China y los Estados Unidos ya están implementando sus estrategias en el ámbito industrial potenciando las posibilidades que ofrecen los datos. En Europa no podemos quedarnos atrás ni vamos a hacerlo.

Hoy podemos presumir de una Europa a la vanguardia de la regulación mundial con la Ley de Servicios Digitales y la Ley de Mercados Digitales. Dos Reglamentos que sientan las bases de cómo debe ser el mundo en línea y que, por primera vez, ponen coto a los gigantes de internet que, durante mucho tiempo, se han aprovechado de nuestro mercado sin unas reglas claras.

Ahora, con el internet de las cosas, tenemos que encontrar nuestro propio un modo de sacar ventaja del potencial de los datos industriales: de los que ya tenemos y que actualmente están infrautilizados y de los que podemos llegar a generar, siempre respetando —por supuesto— nuestros valores y estilo de vida europeo.

Es necesario mejorar la autonomía estratégica de la Unión Europea a través del sector digital para impulsar la competitividad a través de la innovación de la industria europea, a la par que protegemos a nuestras empresas y, por supuesto, también a nuestros ciudadanos.

No puedo terminar hoy sin felicitar a la ponente, Pilar del Castillo, y al resto de ponentes de esta Cámara, así como al comisario Breton, por el extraordinario resultado de este trabajo, que espero sea masivamente refrendado en la votación de hoy.

Patrizia Toia (S&D). – Signora Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, con molto orgoglio possiamo dire che l'Europa sta costruendo – caso unico al mondo e veramente per prima nel mondo – un'architettura di norme che cercano di dare allo sviluppo digitale così impetuoso, inarrestabile e anche molto utile, indicazioni, obblighi, opportunità e soprattutto responsabilità per gli operatori e per gli utenti, anche ai cittadini consumatori, responsabilità perché dobbiamo operare tutti alla luce di un principio che è fondamentale per noi: la libertà e i diritti dei cittadini, così come quelli dei consumatori, devono essere salvaguardati e potenziati anche nello sviluppo dell'innovazione e del mercato digitale.

Con il *Data Governance Act* prima e adesso con il *Data Act*, noi stabiliamo chi può utilizzare i dati e come può farlo, con quali regole e a quali condizioni; chi può dare valore economico nella futura e anche già presente economia dei dati allo sfruttamento dei dati e chi e come può condividerli, con quali regole e con quali finalità, sempre salvaguardando l'interesse generale e il benessere dei cittadini.

Un'ultima cosa voglio dire al Commissario: tutto questo impianto è importantissimo ma starà in piedi se noi svilupperemo la cosiddetta *data literacy* cioè tutta l'alfabetizzazione digitale perché nessun cittadino di nessuna condizione, età e formazione rimanga indietro rispetto a questo sviluppo.

Henna Virkkunen (PPE). – Madam President, Commissioner, I want to thank the rapporteur and everybody who has been participating in these negotiations. This Data Act is an important piece of legislation, especially in promoting European rights and values in our digital world. Once successful, it will be boosting both innovation and also our data economy in Europe.

We know that there is much unused potential with data: despite data being collected in vast quantities, the Commission has predicted that 80% of all industrial data produced is never used, so there is huge potential.

I think it's especially important that with this regulation we can also rebalance the SMEs' negotiation power and make better access to data for our small, micro- and medium-sized enterprises. It's particularly important for innovation and also in order to ensure their competitiveness.

At the same time, it's clear that trade secrets of corporations should be protected. And I think we have found a good balance in this regulation with these different sizes of companies. And from the consumer perspective, it's essential that, as a generator of data, they have also better access to their own data. There must be a possibility for such data to be also transferred to another service provider.

The negotiators of the Data Act have found a good, balanced compromise, and I think this is a solid foundation for continuing to the trilogue negotiations.

Carlos Zorrinho (S&D). – Senhora Presidente, Senhor Comissário, tal como definimos e estamos a aplicar um «*Green Deal*», ou seja, um pacto para que a União Europeia seja uma referência global na transição energética e na descarbonização, também temos que aplicar um «*Data Deal*» para a cidadania e para a competitividade.

Um «*Data Deal*» em que sejam respeitados os valores europeus e em que o acesso aos dados com respeito pela privacidade possa ser transformado em inovação, competitividade, autonomia estratégica e melhores serviços para os cidadãos.

As regras estabelecidas na regulamentação em análise visam a partilha justa dos dados, com ganhos para a economia, para a eficácia da governação e dos serviços públicos e para os consumidores. São um pilar da transição digital inclusiva com que a União Europeia tem que fazer a diferença na economia dos dados e na nova sociedade a *gigabytes*. Uma transição digital que não deixe ninguém para trás, que combata as desigualdades e promova a dignidade.

Este regulamento constitui um alicerce forte para uma década digital capaz de atingir os seus objetivos e ser inspiradora, nos princípios e valores que a sustentam, para as dinâmicas globais de regulação no domínio do acesso e do uso dos dados.

Sobre ele se construirão espaços de dados que serão pilares de maior integração das políticas em concreto, como é exemplo o espaço europeu de dados de saúde. Temos que ter sucesso neste «*Data Deal*».

Procedura catch-the-eye

Sunčana Glavak (PPE). – Poštovana predsjedavajuća, Akt o podacima vodeći je zakon kojim se regulira način prijenosa pristupa i dijeljenja industrijskih podataka.

Zahvaljujem izjaviteljici na ovom izvješću i svima koji su na njemu radili. Njime zapravo otključavamo neiskorišteni potencijal dijeljenja podataka „business to business” i „business to government”. Vjerujem da će predložene izmjene donijeti i brojne pogodnosti za građane. Neke od njih uključuju poboljšanu personaliziranu medicinu, nova rješenja mobilnosti i doprinose, svakako, europskom zelenom planu.

Izvješće koje je odobrio odbor ITRE pojašnjava i vrste podataka koji spadaju u područje primjene Uredbe kako bi se nova pravila primjenjivala na različite igrače i jaču zaštitu poslovne tajne za vlasnike podataka. Osim toga, pojašnjavaju scenarij javnog izvanrednog stanja koji zapravo omogućuje javnim tijelima da zadrže pristup podacima u privatnom posjedu i specificira da vlasnici podataka trebaju imati pravo na poštenu naknadu za odobravanje tog pristupa. Smatram, zaključno, velikim uspjehom i to što će predložene izmjene potaknuti konkurenciju na tržištu usluge oblaka olakšavanjem uvjeta za prelazak s jedne usluge oblaka u drugu.

Ovim izmjenama stavljamo korisnike u središte i to je smjer kojim trebamo se voditi u budućnosti, ne samo kada je u pitanju zakonodavstvo o podacima.

Seán Kelly (PPE). – Madam President, in my first mandate, I had the privilege of being a rapporteur for the GDPR, which was all about protecting people's data.

Now things have moved on, and it's really about utilising data for people's advantage. Speakers mentioned that 80% of our industrial data is not utilised. So, there is a challenge there to make us competitive and I'm sure Commissioner Breton will be addressing that in every way he can.

Also, later on today, we will be voting on the EPBD about refurbishing buildings. Data is going to play a huge part there in reducing emissions so that consumers can use data to use their appliances at the optimum time and thus reduce their electricity bills and also, of course, reduce emissions.

Also, data on the household stock in general will be very important in encouraging financial institutions to make green mortgages available. So, hopefully we can utilise the data to the best advantage of our citizens.

(Fine della procedura catch-the-eye)

Thierry Breton, *membre de la Commission*. – Madame la présidente, mesdames et messieurs les députés, tout d'abord, je voudrais me féliciter de l'engagement très fort de ce Parlement sur cette initiative qui, beaucoup, beaucoup d'entre vous l'ont rappelé, est absolument essentielle pour garantir notre place européenne dans l'économie de la donnée.

Il est crucial que tous les acteurs, les grandes entreprises, les PME, les consommateurs et les autorités publiques puissent bénéficier de la valeur des données. Et le débat qui vient de s'achever l'a clairement démontré. Je prends note du soutien, de votre soutien pour l'approche équilibrée qui est la vôtre, visant à déverrouiller les données tout en conservant les incitations à investir dans les produits connectés. Et dans ce but, nous nous félicitons des clarifications qui ont été apportées aux définitions qui sont tout à fait pertinentes pour garantir la sécurité juridique dans la pratique.

Bien sûr, je suis conscient des discussions sur la protection du secret des affaires, qui est un thème très important. Mais la loi sur les données vise exactement à bâtir, à mettre sur pied un réel équilibre qui respecte pleinement la protection des données commercialement sensibles, tout en évitant des barrières lourdes, lourdes, artificielles, qui empêcheraient l'accès et l'utilisation des données, surtout dans les PME, dont on sait qu'elles seront génératrices d'innovations et de services. Et le Parlement, me semble-t-il, préserve bien cet équilibre essentiel dans ce rapport.

Dans ce contexte, je voudrais noter également les interventions sur l'importance du cadre propice aux PME qui simplifie l'accès aux données. Nous tenons compte évidemment des intérêts des PME qui sont au cœur de notre industrie dans l'ensemble des dispositions. Je le redis, la loi sur les données met en place également des conditions pour recréer de la concurrence dans le marché du *cloud* et également réduire nos dépendances.

Un dernier point, si vous le permettez, la loi sur les données constitue un cadre horizontal, tout comme le DSA, vous vous en souvenez, ce qui permet évidemment de pouvoir greffer des évolutions éventuelles à venir, législatives et sectorielles si nécessaire. Nous attendons donc désormais la position du Conseil pour commencer les trilogues. La Commission sera en soutien pour parvenir à adopter la loi sur les données dans les délais les plus brefs.

Je vous remercie et merci encore à madame la rapporteure.

Pilar del Castillo Vera, *ponente*. – Señora presidenta, señor comisario, voy a ser muy breve ya en esta intervención. Quiero agradecer sus contribuciones a todos los diputados que han intervenido y asegurarles que yo tomo buena nota de todo lo que han dicho.

Creo firmemente que el acuerdo alcanzado por la inmensa mayoría de los grupos de la Cámara merece ser suscrito dentro de unos minutos, cuando votemos, por todos nosotros. Las negociaciones con el Consejo empezarán pronto, y desde aquí pido a todos los miembros un mandato negociador fuerte para este Parlamento y para esta propuesta legislativa.

Estamos ante una propuesta legislativa crítica para nuestro futuro. Se trata de una propuesta realmente disruptiva, una propuesta visionaria que nos podría poner en una situación de alta capacidad competitiva e innovadora en un contexto global. Y todo ello porque los beneficiarios son todos los usuarios, las pequeñas y medianas empresas, las empresas emergentes, las grandes empresas también, en suma, nuestra economía y nuestra sociedad europea.

Quiero, finalmente, de nuevo, dar las gracias a todos los ponentes alternativos, también de los comités, de las comisiones que han intervenido, más allá de la Comisión ITRE, las comisiones competentes para emitir opinión. Y quiero, también, agradecer profundamente el trabajo fabuloso, extraordinario, que los equipos de todos los diputados que han intervenido, ponentes alternativos y los de otras comisiones han realizado. Realmente habría sido muy difícil sin ellos, sin su trabajo, llegar al buen puerto al que hemos llegado. Muchas gracias, señor comisario.

Para finalizar, nos queda todavía un tramo por recorrer, que yo espero que recorramos juntos, de la mano, y que finalmente obtengamos ese texto y esas oportunidades que tanto deseamos. Eso es todo. Hasta dentro de un rato en la votación.

Presidente. – La discussione è chiusa.

La votazione si svolgerà oggi.

(La seduta è sospesa alle 10.23)

Dichiarazioni scritte (articolo 171)

Romana Jerković (S&D), napsan. – Gospođo predsjednice, dame i gospodo, količina podataka koje generiraju ljudi i strojevi eksponencijalno raste svake godine. Industrijski podaci mogu biti odlučujući čimbenik u razvoju, inovacijama i transformaciji svih sektora europskog gospodarstva. Nažalost, danas njihova puna vrijednost ostaje neiskorištena ili koncentrirana u rukama nekoliko velikih tvrtki.

Da bi se to promijenilo, dugotrajna pitanja pristupa podacima, pravednosti, interoperabilnosti i ponovne upotrebe podataka morat će se adekvatno riješiti. Nema sumnje da stajalište odbora ITRE pojašnjava i poboljšava nekoliko točaka prvotnog prijedloga Komisije.

Osigurana je zaštita osobnih podataka, da će pristup podacima i dijeljenje podataka biti besplatni za potrošače, korištenje neosobnih podataka privatnog sektora od strane javnih tijela država članica u slučaju izvanrednog stanja ili za ispunjenje specifičnih zadataka u javnom interesu, promicanje sposobnosti potrošača da bolje razumiju tehničke detalje i njihova prava u vezi s podacima koje generiraju, pravo na pravni lijek i sl.

U isto vrijeme, međutim, još uvijek postoje neki elementi koji mogu potkopati ciljeve uredbe i trebalo bi ih poboljšati u nadolazećim trijalozima. Dok je, na primjer, potreba za zaštitom poslovnih tajni neosporna, treba se pozabaviti rizikom njihove neopravdane upotrebe za potkopavanje prava pristupa korisnika.

PRESIDENZA: ROBERTA METSOLA

President

4. Tkomplija tas-sessjoni

(The sitting resumed at 10.41)

5. Din hija l-Ewropa – Dibattitu mal-President tal-Litwanja, Gitanas Nausėda (dibattitu)

President. – We have with us today the President of Lithuania, Gitanas Nausėda. Mr President, dear Gitanas, thank you for accepting our invitation to address the European Parliament as part of our ‘This is Europe’ series of debates.

It has been over a year since Russia launched its full-scale military invasion of independent and sovereign Ukraine. In this time, Lithuania has never held back from sending aid to Ukraine and has been one of the strongest supporters of Ukraine’s European perspective. The Lithuanian people have welcomed more than 74 000 Ukrainians into their homes and their hearts in what is the largest inflow of refugees in the history of the country. Lithuania’s solidarity towards Ukraine has never let up. Thank you also for your commitment to a democratic Belarus.

Dear colleagues, we have already witnessed our Union becoming stronger and more resilient. Facing these challenges together has made us more united.

In this time of global instability, we need to speed up investment in Europe to put our economy back on a stable path of growth. Mr President, your push for a long-term competitiveness strategy, an ambitious trade policy, and boosting conditions for investment has been central to this vision of a better, more prosperous Europe.

Dear President, the floor is yours.

Gitanas Nausėda, Lietuvos Respublikos Prezidentas. – Gerbiama Parlamento Pirmininke, gerbiami Europos Parlamento nariai, mieli Europos žmonės, džiaugiuosi turėdamas galimybę prisidėti prie šios įkvepiančios diskusijos Europos Parlamente – svarbiausiame politiniame forume, kur keliami pamatiniai klausimai apie vieningos Europos praeitį, dabartį ir ateitį.

Savo šiandieninę kalbą norėčiau skirti Europos idėjai, kuri mus vienija ir kuri mums teikia stiprybės daugelio krizių akivaizdoje. Šiandien kalbėsiu apie būtinybę drąsiai siekti užsibrėžtų tikslų – ir ginti tai, kas mums, europiečiams, svarbiausia ir brangiausia. Kalbėsiu apie pagalbą Ukrainai ir šios šalies vietą Europoje, taip pat istorinės atminties reikšmę ir didžiuosius iššūkius, su kuriais šiandien susiduria Europa.

Atvykau pas Jus vos kelios dienos po Lietuvos nepriklausomybės atkūrimo minėjimo. Tai, ką netrukus pasakysiu, bent iš dalies bus nulemta konkrečios lietuviškos perspektyvos, susiformavusios ilgoje istorijos tėkmėje rytinėje Baltijos jūros pakrantėje, ten, kur per amžius konkuravo, sąveikavo ir viena kitą praturtino skirtingos kultūros. Nors didžiųjų istorijos jėgų susidūrimai ne kartą atnešė skaudžių tragedijų, mūsų atmintyje jie išryškino ir neįkainojamą laisvės bei žmogiškojo orumo vertę.

Simboliška, kad būtent prieš 700 metų Lietuvos valdovas Gediminas raštu kreipėsi į to meto Europos visuomenę, kviedamas svetimšalius riterius, pirklius, amatininkus, žemdirbius, kunigus ir vienuolius atvykti į Lietuvą, kur jie galės laisvai išpažinti krikščionių tikėjimą ir siekti geresnio gyvenimo.

Nuo šios datos, 1323 metų sausio 25 dienos, mes skaičiuojame Lietuvos sostinės Vilniaus istoriją. Tačiau ne mažiau svarbu, kad Gedimino laiškuose mūsų istorinėje atmintyje įtvirtino Lietuvos kaip atviros, tolerantiškos, pažangios Europos šalies idealą, kurio mes norime siekti.

Iš tiesų Lietuva per amžius buvo neatsiejama Europos dalis ir net sunkiausių išbandymų, okupacijų ir teroro akivaizdoje išlaikė šį pamatinį ryšį. Tikėjimas, kad anksčiau ar vėliau sugrįšime į nepriklausomą, ant laisvės, atsakomybės ir pasitikėjimo pamatų pastatytą Europos valstybių bendriją, palaikė mūsų viltį nelaisvės metais.

Šis tikėjimas 1989 metų rugpjūčio 23 dieną mane, kaip ir dar maždaug 2 milijonus Lietuvos, Latvijos ir Estijos žmonių, įkvėpė protestui prieš neteisėtą sovietinę okupaciją bei Stalino ir Hitlerio suokalbį. Sustoję į 650 km ilgio gyvą grandinę – Baltijos kelią – mes drauge pradėjome savo išsivadavimo, kartu ir sugrįžimo į Europą bei atsivėrimo pasauliui, žygį.

Šiandien man atrodo, kad Baltijos kelio dvasia nepaprastai ryškiai šviečia ir Ukrainos kovoje už laisvę, nepriklausomybę bei demokratinę ateitį Europoje.

As I stand here, I recall the warning voiced by Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the President of Ukraine and my dear friend, at the European Parliament a month ago: that Russia is seeking to destroy not only Ukraine, but the European way of life, to destroy by violence and lies all of us who cherish freedom, honour and dignity, who respect the rule of law and human rights.

We cannot allow this to happen if we really care about the future of Europe. We must take a stand and show by our actions what is truly precious and valuable to us. This is a moment of historical breakthrough similar to the one Lithuania experienced in January 1991, when the defenders of our freedom stood barehanded against Soviet tanks, armed only by boundless courage.

Today, Ukraine is going through an even more painful experience as it defends itself against the bloody murders of Bucha, Irpin and Izyum.

I am happy that Europe and other freedom-loving nations did not succumb to the lies, disinformation and intimidation spread by Russia. They stood united and extended a helping hand to Ukrainians when they needed it the most. After overcoming some doubts, we are now moving forward with more determination, strength and resilience than ever before.

A united European response would not have been possible without the strong support and determination of European civil society. It is no coincidence that a month ago President Zelenskyy addressed, first of all, Europeans: all European citizens. I believe that today most European citizens understand that Ukraine's fight is their fight too. In this fight, victory can only be achieved through the joint efforts of us all.

Didžiuojuosi galėdamas pasakyti, kad ne tik Lietuvos valdžios institucijos, bet ir mūsų šalies pilietinė visuomenė nuo pat karo pradžios atsiliėpė į Ukrainos pagalbos šauksmą. Bendra Lietuvos, įskaitant nevyriausybinę organizacijų, verslo ir fizinių asmenų parama Ukrainai artėja prie 1,5 proc. BVP. Vos per tris praėjusių metų gegužės dienas Lietuvos žmonės surinko 6 mln. eurų koviniam dronui įsigyti, o per šiuos metus vasarį – 14 mln. eurų taktiniams radarams.

Lietuva ir toliau pasirengusi remti Ukrainą. Su didelėmis viltimis žvelgiame į Jus, Europos Parlamento narius, atmindami, kad ir anksčiau ne kartą esate pademonstravę lyderystę, kai reikia visos Europos Sąjungos vardu kalbėti drąsiai, tiesiai bei aiškiai.

Noriu priminti, kad prieš 40 metų, 1983 metų sausio 13 dieną, Europos Parlamentas, priėmęs sovietinę okupaciją smerkiančią rezoliuciją „Dėl padėties Estijoje, Latvijoje ir Lietuvoje“, tapo vienintele tarptautine institucija, kuri atsiliėpė į 45 disidentų iš Lietuvos, Latvijos ir Estijos pagalbos prašymą.

Praėjus dar 8 metams, netrukus po Kremliaus tyliai palaimintų kruvinių žudynių Baltijos šalyse, Europos Parlamentas tiesiai įvardino sovietų kariuomenės veiksmus karine agresija ir intervencija.

Noriu atskirai padėkoti Europos Parlamento nariams už tvirtą paramą Lietuvos prokurorams ir teisėjams, kurie tyrė 1991 metų Kruviną sausio bylą ir joje vykdė teisingumą, ir dėl to patiria Rusijos spaudimą bei persekiojimą.

Tai yra nepaprastai svarbu, nes pirmoji Rusijos agresijos auka visuomet būna tiesa. Melo ir istorijos iškraipymų kampanija praruošė placdarmą ir Ukrainos puolimui. Su melu turime kovoti pirmiausia.

Gerbiamieji, visi mes šiandien skaudžiai mokame už neišmuktas Antrojo pasaulinio karo pamokas. Po skambios pergalės prieš vieną – nacistinį – totalitarinį režimą liko aiškiai neįvardyti ir nepasmerkti kito – sovietinio – režimo nusikaltimai. Būtent tokie nutylėjimai sudarė sąlygas Sovietų Sąjungoje, o vėliau ir Rusijoje, šlovinti karo nusikaltimų, etninių valymų ir kitų nusikaltimų žmoniškumui organizatorius. Iškreiptas Antrojo pasaulinio karo atminimas ilgainiui ne tik Rusijoje, bet ir už jos ribų tapo politiniu instrumentu dabarties nusikaltimams pateisinti.

Siekiant nekartoti senų klaidų, būtina jas atminti. Todėl šiandienos kontekste nepaprastai svarbi Europos Parlamento 2009 metų rezoliucija dėl Europos sąžinės ir totalitarizmo, taip pat sprendimas rugpjūčio 23-iąją dieną – nusikalstamo Stalino ir Hitlerio suokalbio dieną – paskelbti Europos totalitarinių ir autoritarinių režimų aukų atminimo diena.

Reaguodami į agresijos prieš Ukrainą kontekste suaktyvėjusius Rusijos veiksmus, praėjusių metų liepos mėnesį kartu su Estijos, Latvijos, Lenkijos ir Rumunijos vadovais paraginome sustiprinti Europos Sąjungos dėmesį Europos istorinės atminties politikai, parengiant švietimo programas moksleiviams, skiriant Europos Sąjungos finansavimą tyrimams ir komunistinių režimų nusikaltimų tarptautiniam įvertinimui, taip pat totalitarizmo aukų įamžinimui Briuselyje. Tikiu, kad šios priemonės skaudžią praeitį Europos piliečių sąmonėje tvirtiau susies su dabartimi, taip palikdamos mažiau vietos Rusijos propagandai.

Ignoruoti praeitį niekada nėra išeitis. Tiek, kiek mes Lietuvoje minime abiejų totalitarinių režimų ir jų kolaborantų nusikaltimus, tiek tampame stipresni ir atsapesni. Galime ryžtingiau ir tiksliau reaguoti į šiandienos iššūkius.

Atvirai pasakysiu: pirmieji pranešimai apie žudynes Buchoje ir kitose Ukrainos vietovėse buvo ypač skaudūs Lietuvos žmonėms, nes priminė mums daugelį tokių bučių, ištikusių mūsų šali, kai sovietų okupantai smurtu įtvirtino savo neteisėtą valdžią, niekino nukankintų laisvės kovotojų palaikus ir suiminėjo motinas, išdrįsusias apverkti savo nužudytus vaikus.

Išties labai skaudu, kad pasibaisėtinas teroras vėl sugrižo į Europą. Tuo svarbiau užtikrinti, kad šie naujausi Rusijos nusikaltimai neliktų be atsako.

Nepaviešintas, metai iš metų nutylimas blogis ne tik kelia grėsmę pamatinėms europinėms vertybėms, bet ir neleidžia Rusijos žmonėms stoti į akistatą su savo praeitimi. Todėl privalome sulaužyti melo, nusikaltėlių šlovinimo ir nuogos agresijos ratą, kol jis mūsų visų nesutraisė. Nuo to priklausys ne tik Ukrainos ir jos žmonių likimas, bet ir ilgalaikės bei tvarios taikos Europoje perspektyva.

Turime stiprinti sankcijas Rusijai tol, kol ši nenutrauks agresijos prieš Ukrainą, ir siekti, kad atsakingi už agresijos nusikaltimus asmenys sulauktų atpildo. Todėl tvirtai pasisakau už specialaus tarptautinio tribunolo agresijos nusikaltimui tirti įkūrimą, taip pat už išaldyto Rusijos turto panaudojimą Ukrainos atstatymui.

Tikiu, kad rezoliucija dėl specialaus tribunolo įsteigimo, kurią sausio mėnesį priėmė Europos Parlamento nariai, padės pasiekti tai, kas dar visai neseniai atrodė vargiai įmanoma.

Gerbiamieji, Europos bendrija, sukurta kaip taikos projektas, šiandien patiria beprecedentinį spaudimą. Vis aiškiau jaučiame, kad taikus gyvenimas, laisvė, demokratija ir materialinė gerovė nebėra savaime suprantami dalykai.

Istorinė patirtis rodo, kad efektyviausias būdas plėsti taikos, stabilumo ir klestėjimo erdvę Europoje buvo ir bus Europos Sąjungos plėtra.

Tai įrodo sėkminga Europos Sąjungos plėtra 2004, 2007, 2013 metais. Tuometinės Europos Sąjungos naujokės, trokšdamos stipresnės Europos, karštai rėmė reformas. Todėl ir šiandien, jei norime dar labiau sustiprinti Europos Sąjungą, – priimkime naujas nares.

Turėdamas tai galvoje, nuoširdžiai džiaugiuosi pastaraisiais visuotiniais sprendimais dėl Ukrainos, Moldovos ir Vakarų Balkanų šalių. Mūsų pagalba kaip niekada reikalinga Moldovai, patiriančiai milžinišką prorusiškų jėgų politinį bei energetinį spaudimą. Turime suteikti vilties ir Sakartvelo jaunajai kartai bei pilietinei visuomenei, aktyviai siekiančiai permainų ir europinės ateities.

Neabejotina, kad neįprastų sprendimų iš mūsų pareikalau Ukrainos derybos dėl narystės Europos Sąjungoje. Tačiau ši šalis jau įrodė, kad geba įveikti iškylančias kliūtis ir tvirtai žengti reformų keliu. Dar visai neseniai niekas nebūtų patikėjęs, kad jai pačiame karo įkarštyje pavyks pasiekti kandidatės statusą.

Prasidėjęs nuo Euromaidano, Ukrainos atgimimas turi baigtis vieningoje Europoje. Ne tik Ukrainai reikia Europos, bet ir Europai reikia Ukrainos, su visa jos gyvybine energija ir ryžtu siekti užsibrėžtų tikslų.

Todėl aš svajoju apie dieną, kai šiuose rūmuose posėdžiaus Ukrainoje išrinkti Europos parlamentarai ir valstybės narės teisėmis plevėsuos Ukrainos vėliava. Ta pati vėliava, kuri šiandien yra tapusi šlovingos kovos už ukrainiečių orumą ir laisvę simboliu.

Lietuva išgirdo Europos Parlamento raginimą sutelkti pastangas derybų su Ukraina pradžiai dar šiais metais. Todėl ypač svarbu užtikrinti tęstinę Europos Sąjungos finansinę ir techninę paramą Ukrainos europinių reformų įgyvendinimui.

Gerbiamieji, Lietuva iki šiol jaučia pareigą Europoje liudyti Baltijos kelio dvasią. Nuoširdžiai trokštame prisidėti prie Europos lyderystės pasaulyje. Norime kurti pasaulį, kuris būtų sąžiningas ir teisingas visiems ir kurį galėtume ramia sąžine perduoti ateities kartoms.

Ne paslaptis, kad vieni didžiausių iššūkių prasideda, kai Europai tenka išlaikyti orią ir nepriklausomą laikyseną santykiuose su autoritariniais režimais – tais, kurie ją siekia susilpninti, pakirsti jos demokratijos ar vieningos rinkos pamatus.

Tačiau man atrodo svarbu atminti, kad kartu su savo artimiausiais partneriais mes buvome, esame ir būsime nepaprastai stiprūs. Todėl, jei rimtai galvojame išlaikyti taisyklėmis grindžiamą tarptautinę tvarką, turime ne tik patys prisiimti atsakomybę, bet ir toliau plėtoti ir stiprinti transatlantinius ryšius. Turime visapusiškai bendradarbiauti su vienmintėmis šalimis stiprinant demokratiją, plėtojant taisyklėmis pagrįstus ekonominius ryšius pasaulyje, pasisakyti už teisingą konkurenciją ir prieš ekonominę prievartą.

Bendro mūsų dėmesio neabejotinai nusipelno ir neteisėtos migracijos tema. Po to, kai Lietuva ir kitos kaimyninės Europos Sąjungos valstybės 2021 metais tapo Baltarusijos ir Rusijos režimų hibridinės atakos taikiniu, dar labiau išryškėjo poreikis sutarti dėl teisinių priemonių kovai su neteisėta migracija ir jos politiniu instrumentalizavimu. Nacionalinės ir vietos valdžios institucijoms susiduriant su vis didesniu spaudimu, reikalingi sprendimai visos Europos Sąjungos lygmeniu.

Lietuva puikiai supranta poreikį tinkamai apsaugoti Europos Sąjungos išorines sienas. Todėl pasisakome už tikslingą Europos Sąjungos skiriamų lėšų panaudojimą, sklandaus nelegalių migrantų grąžinimo užtikrinimą, padidintą dėmesį kovai su dezinformacija trečiojoje šalyse ir neteisėtu žmonių gabenimu, pagrindinių neteisėtos migracijos priežasčių šalinimui jos kilmės šalyse.

Meine Damen und Herren, bereits in der nächsten Woche werden wir im Europäischen Rat über eine der langfristig besonders wichtigen Fragen beraten, die Frage der geeignetsten Vorbereitung auf die grüne Transformation Europas und die Sicherung der Wettbewerbsfähigkeit unserer Wirtschaft. Eine Gruppe von zehn Staats- und Regierungschefs, zu der ich auch gehöre, hat sich in einem gemeinsamen Brief für eine langfristige Strategie zur Wettbewerbsfähigkeit Europas ausgesprochen. Dazu gehören nach unserer Vorstellung die Stärkung des Binnenmarktes, der technologischen und industriellen Basis, die Beseitigung bestehender überflüssiger Barrieren für den Verkehr von Waren, Dienstleistungen und privatem Kapital sowie die Förderung internationaler Partnerschaften und auf Regeln basierender Handelsbeziehungen.

Unser besonderes Augenmerk sollte den Ländern Afrikas, Lateinamerikas, Indiens und der Pazifikregion gelten. Bei dieser Gelegenheit möchte ich auch die Rechtsakte zu den kritischen Rohstoffen und zur Industrie begrüßen, die in dieser Woche der Europäischen Kommission vorgelegt werden. Diese Rechtsakte werden dazu beitragen, die grüne und digitale Transformation der Europäischen Union noch stärker voranzubringen und die Widerstandsfähigkeit der europäischen Wirtschaft zu stärken.

Die Erpressungsmaßnahmen Russlands im Energiebereich haben uns gezeigt, dass die Europäische Union in der Lage ist, Widerstand zu leisten und Entscheidungen recht schnell zu treffen. Der Winter ist gekommen und gegangen, und niemand in Europa ist erfroren. Allerdings sind die Energiepreise sprunghaft gestiegen, was sich empfindlich auf die Allgemeinheit, die Wirtschaft und auch die Politik ausgewirkt hat. Wir müssen daraus Schlussfolgerungen ziehen und noch mehr in die grüne Energiewirtschaft investieren, um tatsächlich unabhängig zu werden und – was noch wichtiger ist – uns um das Klima unseres Planeten zu kümmern.

(Beifall)

Nach meiner Überzeugung ist die Entscheidung Litauens zum Verzicht auf den Import russischer Energie – Gas, Öl und Strom – ein Vorbild zur Nachahmung durch andere Staaten der Europäischen Union. Wir sind sehr beunruhigt, dass Russland immer häufiger auf die atomare Energiewirtschaft als Mittel zur Erpressung zurückgreift. Das militärische Roboterreaktorwerk in Saporischschja wird ständig zur Drohung mit einem Kernstörfall eingesetzt. In der vergangenen Woche wurde dieses Kraftwerk, das größte Atomkraftwerk Europas, aufgrund russischer Raketenangriffe schon wieder von der Stromversorgung abgetrennt. Ich danke dem Europäischen Parlament für seine grundlegende Unterstützung hinsichtlich einer weiteren Geisel von Russland, nämlich des Kernkraftwerks von Astrawez in Weißrussland, und ich hoffe, dass die Aufmerksamkeit für dieses Problem auch in Zukunft nicht nachlässt. Die Gefahr ist keineswegs gebannt. Im Gegenteil, sie spitzt sich noch zu – jetzt, da Belarus plant, mit einem zweiten Block dieses fehlerhaften Kernkraftwerks ans Netz zu gehen. Ein zweites Tschernobyl in Europa dürfen wir nicht zulassen!

Distinguished Members of the European Parliament, to conclude and set the tone for today's debate I would like to remind you that united Europe was born on the ruins of World War Two.

We have seen time and again serious crises give impetus to European renewal. There is something remarkable about the ability of all of us Europeans to adjust and move forward with unflinching optimism whatever happens.

Our recent trials have once again led to reasonably fast, precise and accurate decisions. Each time we confronted a migration crisis, a pandemic or a Russian aggression. We made the right choices and most of the time we chose more Europe, which means quicker decisions, more decisive action, and more resilience.

I can assure you that Lithuania will always work to be at the forefront of European decisions. This is our commitment, not only to Europe but also to ourselves. We know better than anyone else that the risk of losing Europe means we are making every effort to keep Europe strong and resilient.

We feel it is our duty to extend symbolically the Baltic way so that the whole of Europe can share the spirit of responsibility that 33 years ago united people between Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn. It is a task of many generations of Europeans, not just a single one, to contribute to shaping the future of Europe.

We all can and must work for more freedom, security and progress. We all have the responsibility to ensure that freedom-loving nations in our neighbourhood are not neglected, wronged or forgotten. This is the Europe I believe in and I am proud of. Let us be the co-creators of such a Europe.

Andrius Kubilius, on behalf of the PPE Group. – Madam President, Your Excellency Mr President, dear colleagues, I would like to welcome the President of my country in this House, which in the European Union has the strongest institutional adherence to European values of democracy, human rights, liberty, solidarity and respect to dignity of each human being, despite what is his or her colour of the skin, and what is his or her sexual or political orientation.

The European Union will be strong if it will be based on those values without compromises, if it will be based on those values not only here in the European Parliament or in some other EU institutions, but also on a national, regional and local level. This is the only way how those values can be established also on the whole European continent.

Why is it so important to talk about those basic principles and values? Because this is the only way how sustainable peace can be established on the European continent, since there is a very well-known law of geopolitics: only democracies are not fighting with each other. That is why defence of those values everywhere in our Union and the spread of democracy and basic human values into the eastern side of European continent is the most important strategic geopolitical goal for all of us, and especially during this war.

We need to recognise, all of us in the European Union: we are not perfect back home in this area. There are things which we need to improve and to strengthen, also in Lithuania.

But today I want to elaborate on what our President was speaking about. What should our common strategic agenda be in order to assist the nations in the eastern part of the European continent to enjoy the same European values of democracy and human rights? I want to repeat: sustainable peace on European continent will be established only when Belarusian and Russian people will have a possibility to enjoy those values and to live in normal European conditions. Such a strategic agenda will be implemented only if we shall proceed with a very clear strategic action plan.

First, Ukraine needs to decisively defeat Putin's Russia during this year, and that will create possibilities for big political changes in Russia and Belarus. Our most important obligation: weapons, weapons, weapons... and sanctions.

Second, the absolute geopolitical priority for you during this year: to start membership negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova. That would be the most powerful European geopolitical answer to Kremlin hybrid offensive activities in the region, especially in Moldova and perhaps also in Georgia.

Third, the integration of Ukraine, Moldova and possibly Georgia towards the EU should be concluded till the end of this decade, since that is the only way how successful and prosperous democracies can be created in those countries. The success of those countries would be an inspiration for Belarusian and Russian societies to follow.

Fourth, Ukraine needs to get membership in NATO, if not during the Vilnius summit this year, then during the Washington summit next year. It would help Russian people to abandon their dream to restore empire because Ukraine will be gone.

Fifth, the EU needs to show clear perspective. Democratic Belarus will have possibility to integrate into the EU. Democratic Russia will have a special and very practical relationship with the EU.

We Lithuanians want to be part of a European Union which is able to implement such a democracy action plan because this is an action plan for sustainable peace on the European continent.

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, *S&D frakcijos vardu*. – Gerbiamas Lietuvos Prezidentė, ponai Pirmininke, gerbiami kolegos, mūsų diskusiją stebintys Europos piliečiai, Lietuva, kaip ir kitos to paties likimo šalys, kurioms buvo lemta patirti Sovietinės totalitarinės Rusijos priespaudą ir agresiją geriau nei bet kas žino krauju iškovotos laisvės kainą.

Šiandien šioje vietoje yra Ukraina, kuri herojiškai kovoja už savo ir mūsų laisvę. Kaunasi su tuo pačiu, tik pavadinimą pakeitusių, agresoriumi. Todėl nenuostabu, jog nuo pirmos Rusijos invazijos į Ukrainą dienos ir iki pat šiol Lietuvos ir kitų Baltijos šalių balsas buvo garsiausias, raginantis ne tik teikti skubią visokeriopą pagalbą Ukrainai, bet ir reikalaujantis bendro ir vieningo Europos Sąjungos atsako į Rusijos agresijos sustabdymą. Čia ir dabar.

Leiskite priminti, jog ilgus metus Lietuva ir kitos Baltijos šalys nuolatos kalbėdavo ir įspėdavo apie tikrąjį Rusijos veidą ir jos autoritarinio Putino režimo tikslus. Deja, šiuos įspėjimus norėjo girdėti ne visi Europos bendruomenės nariai. Tačiau šie įspėjimai virto kruvina realybe Ukrainos žmonėms.

Šiandien jau visi pripažino, kad Lietuvos ir Baltijos šalių kalbėjimas apie kruvinus Kremliaus režimo tikslus nebuvo vien istorinės nuoskaudos liejimas. Mes tai darėme, nes žinojome, kokia yra trapi laisvė ir kokia yra didžiulė jos kaina, ir siekėme, kad tai Europoje daugiau nepasikartotų ir kad nei viena tauta nepatirtų brutalaus priespaudos ir pasikėsinimo į teritorinį vientisumą ir laisvę. Niekada.

Visiškai pritariu mūsų Prezidentui. Istorinė atmintis neturi nugulti archyvuose. Užmiršti istorijos nevalia ir Putino pradėtas karas tai dar kartą liudija. Todėl raginu būti atsakingiems, vieningiems ir drąsiems bei įsteigti tribunolą Rusijos vykdomiems karo nusikaltimams, imtis visų įmanomų veiksmų ir sankcijų silpninat Kremliaus režimo galią bei padėti Ukrainai laimėti šį brutalų karą, nes tai kartu yra ir Europos ilgalaikio saugumo garantas. Turime būti vieningi atkuriant ir išplečiant savo gynybinius pajėgumus – mūsų, europiečių, saugumas priklausys nuo to, kaip kartu, bendrai ir sutelktai to sieksime.

Gerbiami kolegos, stipri ir atspari Europa gali būti tik tuomet, kai ji yra vieninga, socialiai atsakinga, teisinga ir pažangi. Mūsų, socialistų ir demokratų tikslas, yra stiprinti socialinį Europos pagrindą ir siekti, kad Porte vykusiame aukščiausio lygio susitikime patvirtinti tikslai būtų pilnai įgyvendinti visose valstybėse narėse.

Socialinė Europa turi užtikrinti, kad net ir minimalias pajams gaunantys žmonės galėtų oriai pragyventi ir išlaikyti savo šeimas, o ne atsidurti skurde, kad neliktų skurstančių vaikų, kurių šiai dienai dar turime per 18 milijonų Europoje, kad vyrai ir moterys gautų vienodą atlyginimą už tą patį darbą, kad mūsų pensininkai turėtų orią senatvę, kad būtų ginamos visų žmonių teisės ir laisvės.

Tik socialiai stipri, atspari ir atsakinga Europa sugebės susidoroti su iššūkiais, tokiais kaip žalioji pertvarka, skaitmenizacija, kas neišvengiamai įtakos Europos socialinį-ekonominį modelį bei darbo rinką. Tačiau visų reformų priešakyje privalo būti mūsų žmonės.

Taiigi, drąsiai ir vieningai už Europą!

Jordi Cañas, *en nombre del Grupo Renew*. – Señora presidenta, señor Nausėda, desgraciadamente, en Europa, en muchas ocasiones —yo diría que en demasiadas—, se divide a los países en función de la geografía —si están en el norte, en el sur o en el este—; en función de su población —si tienen muchos millones de habitantes o pocos—; o en función de su PIB —si es muy alto o es pequeño—.

Pero en muchas ocasiones llega la realidad, y la realidad actúa como un reactivo, como una prueba del verdadero tamaño de los países y de su importancia. Y cuando hablamos de la importancia de un país, miramos a Lituania y vemos que ha demostrado ser un gran país en los momentos de dificultad que la guerra de Ucrania ha desvelado.

Es un gran país porque ha dado un ejemplo de generosidad, de compromiso y de solidaridad. Y lo ha hecho no solo con las palabras, que siempre son importantes: las palabras mueven el mundo. Pero lo que mueve el mundo de verdad es aquello que uno pone encima de la mesa cuando la verdad nos obliga: dinero, recursos, personas que uno admite como inmigrantes. Y ahí, nuevamente, Lituania ha demostrado ser un gran país, porque mientras su pequeño país destinaba más del 1 % de su PIB, los grandes países europeos no alcanzaban el 0,2 %.

Entonces, cuando hablamos de los valores europeos y hablamos de qué es Europa, ¿sabe lo que es Europa?: compromiso, generosidad y solidaridad. ¿Y sabe lo que es Europa?: su país, Lituania. Porque es en los momentos de dificultad cuando los países, sus gobernantes y sus ciudadanos demuestran cuáles son los verdaderos valores europeos y demuestran qué es Europa.

Europa es un refugio. Es un refugio de la democracia, pero también es un escudo y debe ser un escudo de la democracia. Y la democracia se defiende con compromiso, sí; con generosidad, sí; con serenidad, sí; pero, también, con armas. Porque la democracia se defiende también en las trincheras y, por eso, es muy importante que todos los que estamos aquí sigamos su ejemplo, sigamos el ejemplo de Lituania a la hora de defender la democracia, los derechos y las libertades que están en cuestión en Ucrania. Porque Rusia es una amenaza cierta, Rusia es una amenaza militar, es una amenaza geopolítica. Ustedes, los países bálticos, llevaban años advirtiendo de las dependencias energéticas, de las amenazas que suponía Rusia, y todos miraron hacia otro lado. Nuevamente los pequeños países lideraron los valores europeos.

En definitiva, presidente Nausėda, gracias por estar aquí con nosotros. Transmita a sus ciudadanos el agradecimiento de este Parlamento y del conjunto de los ciudadanos europeos y de sus representantes, porque los valores europeos, además del compromiso, la generosidad y la solidaridad, ahora tienen un nuevo nombre: Lituania.

Terry Reintke, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – Madam President, first of all I wish to welcome the President to the European Parliament and, most importantly – even if we are a bit late – to say ‘Happy Independence Restoration Day’ to Lithuania, of course.

More than anything, colleagues, the full-scale invasion of Ukraine has confirmed the need for European unity. And it is true that only together, as Europeans, can we stand up against the brutal imperialism of the Russian regime. We have shown here in the European Parliament that we stand for unwavering solidarity with Ukraine, be it financial, humanitarian, or military support, paving the way for Ukraine to become a member of the European Union.

But of course, and you have mentioned it, Mr President, we need full energy independence of the brutal Russian regime. For too long politicians also, and especially from my home country, Germany, have ignored the alert for from our eastern neighbours, like, for example, Lithuania, and now we are paying a high price for this.

But colleagues, one thing has to be understood. Simply switching from one energy dependency on one dictatorship to another will not solve any of our problems. Nor does the shift from one fossil fuel dependency to another non-renewable energy source. The only sustainable answer that will prevent us from having the exact same problem that we have been facing in the last year again, in two, five or ten years is to make our energy consumption 100% renewable. That is possible and we have no time to lose. No country in the European Union will manage this alone. Only a strong European Green Deal can make that possible.

You are absolutely right. The Green Deal for long already has not only been a measure that we need to protect our climate or to stimulate our economy, it has become the most crucial measure also for strong security in the European continent. But, Mr President, the fight against authoritarianism does not only happen, unfortunately, outside of the European Union. We also have to stay vigilant inside because we can see attempts of undermining our democracy, of undermining separation of powers, rule of law and fundamental rights in the European Union, brutal attacks on press freedom and journalists.

We cannot stay silent in the European Union on these developments because the EU is not only a community of trade – we share fundamental values. If we want the EU to be strong and true to its own values, we have to protect all our citizens from these attacks, no matter whether they are from Lithuania or Portugal, no matter their gender, their skin colour or their sexual orientation. Because safeguarding freedom and human dignity means safeguarding freedom and human dignity for all.

Waldemar Tomaszewski, *w imieniu grupy ECR*. – Pani Przewodnicząca! Szanowny Panie Prezydencie! Dzisiejsza wojna na Ukrainie stwarza zagrożenie dla bezpieczeństwa międzynarodowego i jest przyczyną kryzysu gospodarczego. Trwały pokój jest wartością nadrzędną. Trwały pokój też jest niezbędny i też niezbędna jest solidarność, która pozwoliłaby na przetrwanie tego trudnego czasu. Z tym, że z solidarnością europejską jest dzisiaj duży problem, bo niektóre wielkie kraje prowadzą własną, egoistyczną politykę.

Unia przeżywa też kryzys wartości, tych wartości, które budowały niegdyś Wspólnotę, a od których niestety odchodzimy. Mówię to przede wszystkim do instytucji unijnych, gdzie nie ma rozwoju demokracji i wolnej myśli politycznej. Niestety sztuczny układ sił blokuje rozwój wolności, blokuje wbrew demokracji, gdyż odrzuca się wolę dużej części wyborców, nawet do 50%.

Dzisiejszy układ łączy cel – władza za wszelką cenę i podział „stołków”. To jest swoiste zawłaszczenie demokracji. Dwie główne siły w tym Parlamencie – PPE i socjaliści, choć mają teoretycznie różne programy, to od lat zaraz po wyborach łączą się, aby nie dopuścić trzeciej siły i w ten sposób nie muszą wywiązywać się ze swoich programów. Socjaliści obiecują programy społeczne, ale ich nie realizują. Obiecują dbanie o najuboższych, ale popierają handel emisjami CO₂, co powoduje wzrost cen oraz ubożenie ludzi.

PPE deklaruje, że dba o wartości chrześcijańskie, ale nie broni życia od poczęcia do naturalnej śmierci, nie chroni małżeństwa rozumianego jako związek kobiety i mężczyzny oraz często popiera ideologię gender, co nie ma nic wspólnego z prawdziwą chadecją.

Dodatkowo obie siły narzucają powstanie federacji unijnej, co niszczy Europę ojczyzn, którą miała być w zamyśle jej twórców, Schumana i innych. Niestety ten sztuczny układ polityczny blokuje wolną myśl i ideę. Układ PPE z socjalistami nie dopuszcza jakiegokolwiek alternatywy, tzw. trzeciej siły. Taki system sprzyja korupcji politycznej, której świadkami jesteśmy w Parlamencie.

Ten szkodliwy i niedemokratyczny proceder jest też przenoszony na poziom państw członkowskich. Nawet nasz prezydent Gitanas Nausėda jest atakowany, a jego wybór podważany, chociaż otrzymał 67% głosów. To nie sprzyja demokracji.

Europa staje się za sprawą układu PPE i socjalistów ideową pustką. Jest w rozsypce. Dlatego w imię prawdziwego solidaryzmu europejskiego potrzebna jest trzecia czy czwarta siła, które będzie w stanie uzdrowić Europę, by przywrócić jej prawdziwą twarz opartą na jej korzeniach.

To właśnie EKR jest siłą, która to dostrzega i chce to zmienić, o czym rozmawialiśmy ostatnio na szczytach w Warszawie i Madrycie. Mówiliśmy też o potrzebie wzmocnienia niezależności energetycznej Europy i rozwoju własnego przemysłu, w tym ciężkiego i obronnego. Zgodnie z tą myślą dzisiaj nie mielibyśmy problemów z kondycją obronną w dobie agresji w Europie.

Szanowni Państwo! Europa i Unia potrzebuje więcej demokracji i wolności opartej na wartościach chrześcijańskich, tradycyjnej rodzinie i wolnej myśli, bo taka jest prawdziwa dusza Europy.

Jaak Madison, *on behalf of the ID Group*. – Madam President, President Nausėda of Lithuania, first of all I am more than happy to be here as from one from the Baltic States, from Estonia. And I really appreciate your several statements that Latvia and Lithuania have been together in history and the good and also in the bad times

If we just remind the history, it was pretty easy for Russia — they called it the Soviet Union at the time but it was Russia, the same thing — to break down each country one by one because all those three countries, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, had their own some kind of policy. And for Moscow, it wasn't very hard to have some kind of deals each by each. And the result we know pretty well and it's just experience for the history. If you try to make some kind of deals with Satan, you are the loser from the beginning, there is no chance.

To remind some of the necessity of the support to Ukraine. We all agree, most of us agree here. And there is different kind of ways to help Ukraine. But the most necessary definitely is military aid. As we can see in the news, the next weeks and the next months will be very crucial in Ukraine because both sides haven't won. And if somebody's saying that there is no winner in the war, there is.

The winner can be only Ukraine, because if they lose we will be the next ones. And there is no question about that. As I looked just on the statistics, the resources, those three Baltic states have given the biggest military and financial aid to Ukraine. Estonia with 1%, Latvia with 0.98%, Lithuania with 0.65% of the GDP. And the fourth one is Poland with 0.63%.

At the same time, there has been very huge help from the US and from the UK. But they can do more. And the problem for us now is that we really don't have a lot yet to really give to Ukraine. But there are much more to give from the US, from the UK, also from Germany and France. Germany has given 0.17% of the GDP, France 0.07% of the GDP.

Those are just cold facts and numbers. And now the question is: are they really brave enough to make this change in the war or not? Because if we will lose this momentum now, in the next month, we will face the new war in the next two or three years.

So just a moment to think which kind of chances we have if somebody is talking about the peace negotiations. The peace can be only if the conditions are good for us. And the only conditions that are good for us can be that there is no ambitions for Russia to start any kind of aggression in next decades.

I will not say 'forever'. We shouldn't be very naive. Russia will not disappear. But the only thing what we can do is just to weaken them as much as possible and to show that they cannot win their neighbours.

And finally, I would like to really thank you that Lithuania was one of the countries two years ago who showed how to deal with illegal migration. There is no question that if you are the war refugee, you need help. There is no doubt. But what we saw in Belarus, it was just illegal migration, what was used by Belarus for the hybrid attacks. And Lithuania, together with Poland, just shut down the border and said 'there is no way to enter to the European countries through those countries illegally', because if you open the border, there would be no ending, no ending at all.

And you did absolutely well. So labai ačiū, thank you so much. And good luck for the Baltic cooperation.

Δημήτριος Παπαδημούλης, *εξ ονόματος της ομάδας The Left*. – Κυρία Πρόεδρε, Πρόεδρε Nausėda, Πρόεδρε της Λιθουανίας, σας καλωσορίζω στο Ευρωπαϊκό Κοινοβούλιο. Όλες οι πολιτικές ομάδες, από την πρώτη στιγμή, εκφράσαμε την ξεκάθαρη, απόλυτη καταδίκη μας απέναντι στη ρωσική εισβολή στην Ουκρανία και η παρουσία σας εδώ είναι μια ευκαιρία να συζητήσουμε το μέλλον της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης: Τι πρέπει να κάνουμε για να σταματήσει η Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση να γερνάει, να αδυνατίζει ο γεωπολιτικός και ο οικονομικός της ρόλος στον πλανήτη και να κινηθεί αποτελεσματικότερα για να αντιμετωπίσει τις απαιτήσεις και τις αγωνίες των πολιτών.

Για να τα πετύχουμε αυτά, χρειαζόμαστε μια Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση που να μην είναι απλώς μια κοινή αγορά και «λίγο από πολιτική ένωση». Χρειαζόμαστε έναν πιο ισχυρό κοινοτικό προϋπολογισμό, μεγαλύτερο από το 1% του ευρωπαϊκού ΑΕΠ, με περισσότερους ίδιους πόρους, με πιο πολλά χρήματα για τη μείωση των κοινωνικών ανισοτήτων, που έχουν αυξηθεί, για να στηρίξουμε τις πιο φτωχές χώρες και τις πιο φτωχές κοινωνικές κατηγορίες, για να υλοποιήσουμε το Green Deal: μια Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση που πρέπει να παραμείνει ένα πρότζεκτ ειρήνης και δημοκρατίας. Γιατί η δημοκρατία υποφέρει και μέσα στην Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση: και στην Πολωνία και στην Ουγγαρία, δυστυχώς και στην πατρίδα μου την Ελλάδα, και δεν νομίζω, κύριε Πρόεδρε, να είστε και εσείς ικανοποιημένοι ότι η δημοκρατία είναι στα καλύτερά της και στη Λιθουανία. Πρέπει λοιπόν να σεβόμαστε το κράτος δικαίου και να αποφύγουμε τον κίνδυνο της παράλυσης στο Συμβούλιο, όπου συχνά η ομοφωνία γίνεται όπλο στα χέρια εκβιαστών, κυβερνήσεων που μπλοκάρουν τη λειτουργία της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης, για να εκβιάσουν, να πετύχουν κάτι για τα συμφέροντά τους.

Για τη διεύρυνση να είμαστε ειλικρινείς. Να μην υποσχόμαστε στους λαούς της Μολδαβίας, της Γεωργίας και της Ουκρανίας πράγματα που θέλουν χρόνια και αλλαγές και προϋποθέσεις. Προσέξτε! Η διεύρυνση προς τα Δυτικά Βαλκάνια αποφασίστηκε στη Σύνοδο της Θεσσαλονίκης, στην πατρίδα μου, το 2003 και 20 χρόνια μετά, οι χώρες των Δυτικών Βαλκανίων περιμένουν από την Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση να υλοποιήσει τις δεσμεύσεις της και φυσικά και αυτές πρέπει να κάνουν τις μεταρρυθμίσεις που απαιτούνται. Να μην επαναλάβουμε το ίδιο λάθος, υποσχόμενοι λαϊκίστικα πράγματα που δεν μπορούμε να πραγματοποιήσουμε αύριο.

Nicolas Bay (NI). – Madame la Présidente, Monsieur le Président, chers collègues, vendredi dernier, à Washington, Ursula von der Leyen s'est soumise à Joe Biden. Sans mandat du Conseil, la présidente de la Commission européenne y a annoncé notre alignement total sur les intérêts américains. Elle a sacrifié notre industrie automobile et promis un accord sur les minerais de terres rares. Elle s'inscrit ainsi, sans aucun contrôle, dans une stratégie américaine dangereuse de tensions avec la Chine.

Bien sûr, nous sommes attachés à l'amitié historique qui nous lie aux États-Unis et, évidemment, à l'OTAN en tant qu'alliance défensive. Mais les intérêts vitaux, commerciaux, géopolitiques de l'Europe ne se confondent évidemment pas avec ceux de Washington. La guerre à nos frontières en Ukraine, la sécurité alimentaire et énergétique de nos pays, notre compétitivité économique doivent rester nos seules préoccupations.

M^{me} von der Leyen semble poursuivre en réalité un agenda personnel. Elle donne des gages dans l'espoir sans doute de devenir secrétaire générale de l'OTAN en 2024. Mais dans un monde plus incertain que jamais, l'Europe et ses nations doivent agir de conserve pour retrouver la voie de la puissance qui seule peut garantir l'indépendance. Le Conseil européen doit donc urgemment reprendre la main, remettre Ursula von der Leyen à sa place et défendre d'abord les intérêts de notre continent.

Paulo Rangel (PPE). – Madam President, President Nausėda, Commissioner, I remember that, in the late 1970s, my father, with a map in his hand, taught me, my brother and my sister, that Baltic states were not Soviet Union. They were occupied and they remained independent.

I remember that, in 1987, our Prime Minister, from our party, Cavaco Silva – who was Prime Minister ten years and President of the Republic ten years – had a huge conflict with the Parliament because he didn't agree with a visit to the Soviet Union, where the territories of Baltic states were included. And the government fell down because he was defending this principle.

So, I have to tell you that, for decades, we were in the European Union defending the sovereignty and the future of democracy and freedom to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

And today, Mr President, we are very proud because your country became a world front runner of defence, of democracy, of freedom, of human rights. This was clear when you sent all the support to the Ukrainian people, but also when you are claiming for democracy in Belarus and when you are saying that you don't accept the blackmail of China.

The example of the Ukrainian solidarity shows that you want for other countries in Europe, and I dare say in world, the same fate that Lithuania had, which was in a very, very oppressive regime and managed to become independent and to give freedom, prosperity and human rights' respect to all the citizens.

I would like to thank you, to say ačiū, Mr President, to all the Lithuanian people and also to you and to your government. Let me try to invite you to have here your say on the prospects for Belarus and how we should shape our relation with China. Because the Lithuanian experience is a very important one and can set the example to all of us.

Domènec Ruiz Devesa (S&D). – Señora presidenta, señor Nausėda, presidente de la República de Lituania, yo he compartido absolutamente su discurso en los elementos de firmeza respecto de Rusia, de apoyo total a Ucrania, en la defensa de su integridad y su soberanía. También, en la apertura a la ampliación, por supuesto, para Ucrania, para Moldavia, para Georgia y también, como se ha recordado, para los Balcanes Occidentales. Tiene todo mi apoyo en esa agenda que ha planteado.

Al mismo tiempo, sí me gustaría decirle que esa agenda requiere, si somos honestos y si somos creíbles, también una mención, que no he encontrado en su discurso, a la necesaria profundización del proyecto político. Para mí debe quedar claro, y hablo también en esta ocasión como portavoz de mi grupo en la materia de asuntos constitucionales, que no puede haber ampliación sin profundización. No es sostenible ir a un Consejo de Asuntos Exteriores con 30, 32 o 33 Estados con derecho de veto en política exterior, por ejemplo. O que necesitemos también una unanimidad para aprobar el marco financiero plurianual con 33 Estados miembros y, no olvidemos, 33 ratificaciones nacionales.

Por tanto, señor presidente Nauséda, le animo a que también contribuya en el debate en el Consejo Europeo para abrir el camino para la adopción de un nuevo Tratado más democrático, más eficiente y, por tanto, más federal.

Marie-Pierre Vedrenne (Renew). – Madame la Présidente, Monsieur le Président, Messieurs les Commissaires, il faut du courage pour soutenir inconditionnellement le peuple ukrainien, comme la Lituanie l'a toujours fait. Il faut du courage pour ouvrir ses frontières en accueillant et protégeant les opposants au régime dictatorial de Loukachenko. Il faut du courage pour s'affirmer face à un voisin russe belliqueux aux menaces expansionnistes. Il faut du courage pour tenir tête à l'autoritarisme chinois. Il faut du courage pour ne jamais tourner le dos à ses alliés.

Ce courage, votre pays l'a eu, votre peuple l'incarne. Votre pays nous a montré ce que certains ne voulaient et ne veulent toujours pas voir: que la souveraineté nationale est renforcée par la solidarité européenne. Votre pays démontre ce que certains rejettent: qu'une plus grande unité européenne est synonyme de protection de nos valeurs et de nos concitoyens. Oui, l'Union européenne doit rester toujours unie. C'est pourquoi, et vous l'avez évoqué, un instrument anti-coercition fort, réactif, effectif, ne pouvant être bloqué par un État membre, est un impératif. Oui, c'est une nécessité que de pouvoir réagir, que de pouvoir nous protéger quand des États tiers cherchent à limiter notre liberté.

Monsieur le Président, votre pays et les Lituanais montrent qu'agir en Européens est la seule voie qui permette de défendre la démocratie, de répondre aux enjeux d'aujourd'hui, de bâtir notre autonomie stratégique. Face à la pandémie, nous avons agi en Européens: l'achat groupé de vaccins, le transfert de patients entre États membres, l'adoption du plan de relance. Face à l'agression illégale et injustifiée de l'Ukraine, nous agissons en Européens: sanctions, aides macrofinancière, fourniture d'armes. Face à la crise énergétique, nous continuons d'agir en Européens: création de nouvelles lignes d'approvisionnement, réinvestissement dans de nouvelles énergies vertes, création d'un fonds social pour le climat.

Face aux sirènes de la division, nous devons continuer d'agir en Européens: renforçons le dialogue entre nos sociétés, renforçons le dialogue entre nos États, renforçons le dialogue avec les États tiers. Continuons à agir en Européens souverains et solidaires. Car pour sortir des dépendances critiques, pour nourrir nos concitoyens, pour relever le défi de la transition climatique, pour ne laisser personne de côté, nous devons dialoguer, progresser, mais surtout agir ensemble.

Au Parlement, nous y sommes prêts. À nous de suivre cette voie. La voie que votre peuple dresse pour que ces actions ne restent pas sans réponse et que nous soyons collectivement à la hauteur des préoccupations et des aspirations de tous les Européens. Et permettez-moi aussi, Monsieur le Président, de dire, alors que mon collègue Nicolas Bay a déjà quitté l'hémicycle et n'a pas dit un mot pour votre pays, que les Français ne se situeront jamais sur les lignes défendues par le Rassemblement national et tous les extrêmes.

Bronis Ropė (Verts/ALE). – Gerbiama Pirmininke, gerbiamas Prezidentė, Komisijos nariai, kolegos. Noriu, gerbiamas Prezidentė, nuoširdžiai padėkoti Jums už savo indėlį ir nuolatinį darbą, kurį darote siekdamas suteikti reikiamą, būtiną ir savalaikę paramą Ukrainai. Jūs šio karo išvakarėse lankėtės ir susitikote su Ukrainos prezidentu, nepasiduodamas įtikinėjate kitų šalių vadovus, kad būtina remti Ukrainą organizuojant finansinę, karinę paramą ir teikiant visą reikalingą paramą. Už tai nuoširdus Jums ačiū. Bet vis dėlto norėjęsi ir aktyvesnės Jūsų politikos sprendžiant, tame tarpe ir Lietuvos, vidaus problemas, tokias kaip milžiniška infliacija, pakilusios maisto bei energetikos kainos, bankų palūkanų šuolis, kai tampa sudėtinga atskiroms šeimoms išgyventi. Neramina šalies ūkininkų gaunamos pajamos, pieno krizės suvaldymas ir šios krizės galimi padariniai Lietuvos žemės ūkio ateičiai. Pergyvenu, kad regioninė šalies politika vis dar nepateisino lūkesčių, nes pajamų atotrūkis tarp gyvenančių šalies regionuose ir sostinėje dar vis dėlto yra pakankamai ryškus. Tai kartu, žinoma, yra ir Europos problemos. Suprantu, kad karas Ukrainoje paaštrino šias problemas. Bet vien tai konstatuoti – nėra išeitis. Būtų neteisinga dvejoti ir nesiimti veiksmų, kurie pagerintų Europos žmonių gyvenimą.

Ryszard Czarnecki (ECR). – Pani Przewodnicząca! Panie Prezydencie! Szanowni Państwo! To było ważne wystąpienie. Bardzo żałuję, że tak mało, około 60 posłów, a więc mniej niż 10% Parlamentu tego słuchało, bo warto słuchać głosu Litwy, krajów nadbałtyckich, z naszego regionu. Żałuję, no ale taka jest rzeczywistość. Cieszę się, że spotykamy się znowu, bo Pan Prezydent przyjechał do Polski na nasze święto narodowe. To była symboliczna wizyta, ważne przesłanie polityczne.

Natomiast myślałem co dzisiaj Pan powie, Panie Prezydencie? I przewidziałem wszystko to, co Pan powiedział. Przewidziałem, ponieważ wiedziałem, że będzie Pan mówił o Ukrainie. Za to dziękuję. Że będzie Pan mówił o historii i będzie chciał Pan pokazać Litwę jako kraj, który jest częścią tego europejskiego mainstreamu. Pamiętam zresztą, jak Seimas, Parlament Litwy, jako jedyny i jako pierwszy zagłosował przez aklamację za przyjęciem konstytucji europejskiej, odrzuconej potem zresztą w referendum przez Holandię i Francję. Myślę jednak, że czasem warto dyskutować i spierać się, gdy chodzi o Europę, bo z takiego sporu wynikają decyzje, które mogą na dłuższą metę być dla Unii Europejskiej dobre. Na koniec wierzę, że będzie Pan Prezydent wspierał mniejszość polską na Litwie, bo pluralizm, bo ochrona mniejszości jest czymś, co w Unii Europejskiej jest absolutnie fundamentem.

João Pimenta Lopes (The Left). – Senhora Presidente, aqui estamos perante mais um discurso que, apontando à guerra, sem apontar soluções para lhe pôr fim, aí procura o bode expiatório de todos os males. E, no entanto, para os problemas concretos com que os povos se confrontam – agravados pelas políticas de sanções, de liberalização de setores, de concentração da produção, da precariedade e baixos salários que a União Europeia promove – continuam a faltar soluções.

Onde estão as medidas para inverter o aumento da pobreza e interromper a indecente concentração da riqueza? Onde estão as medidas para conter a perda de poder de compra e o aumento brutal do custo de vida? Quais as medidas para pôr fim aos aproveitamentos e especulação dos grandes grupos económicos e financeiros e aos seus lucros obscenos? Que iniciativas para investir nos serviços públicos e defender a segurança social universal e solidária? Quais as propostas para pôr fim ao assalto a direitos laborais, ao aumento da exploração, da precariedade e da desregulação do horário de trabalho?

Os povos querem paz, querem o que lhes está a ser negado.

Em Portugal, como um pouco por toda a Europa, intensifica-se a mobilização das populações, dos trabalhadores. Multiplicam-se as ações reivindicativas pelo direito a uma vida digna, a trabalho com direitos, ao aumento de salários. Pelo fim da especulação e dos aproveitamentos, pela intervenção nos mercados, pela fixação de preços máximos. Pelo direito à saúde, à educação, à habitação. Pela paz.

É esta a voz que vos falta escutar.

Sven Simon (PPE). – Frau Präsidentin, Herr Präsident! Sie haben gesagt, ich zitiere: „Durch Gewalt und Lügen soll das zerstört werden, was uns in Europa kostbar und wertvoll ist.“ So ist es. Meine sehr geehrten Damen und Herren, der brutale russische Angriffskrieg gegen die Ukraine hat uns für die europäische Einigung zwei Erkenntnisse gebracht. Erstens: Die Staaten in Europa sind in ihrer Verteidigung aufeinander angewiesen. Die NATO und eine europäische Verteidigungsunion sind so wichtig wie nie zuvor. Zweitens: Auch in der Energieversorgung sind wir voneinander abhängig.

Deutschland – es ist schon angeklungen – wäre in den letzten Jahren gut beraten gewesen, in der Energiepolitik den eindringlichen Appellen aus Estland, Lettland, vor allen Dingen auch Litauen und von den polnischen Kollegen zu folgen. Früher haben wir in Deutschland gesagt: Die Zukunft der baltischen Staaten liegt in Europa.

Heute – das sage ich auch als deutscher Abgeordneter, mit Blick auf Verteidigung, auf Energie, aber vor allen Dingen, Herr Präsident, auch auf die klare Orientierung, die Sie hier vorgetragen haben – kann ich sagen: Die Zukunft Europas liegt im Baltikum. Sie haben gesagt, ich zitiere noch einmal: „Der Geist des baltischen Weges muss Europa leiten.“ Auch dabei möchte ich Ihnen zustimmen. In der Tat. Aber wenn wir manchmal über die Zukunft Europas sprechen, dann werden Sorgen vorgetragen, dass weitere europäische Integrationsschritte die Mitspracherechte von kleinen Staaten beschneiden könnten. Ich denke, der baltische Weg zeigt uns: Das Gegenteil ist der Fall.

Gemeinsame europäische Entscheidungen können uns vor nationalen Alleingängen bewahren. Deshalb muss dieser grausame Angriffskrieg ein Weckruf sein. Sie haben es gesagt: Wir stehen an einem historischen Scheideweg. Wenn wir über die Verteidigungsfähigkeit Europas sprechen, dürfen wir uns nicht länger davon abhängig machen, wer gerade durch Zufall ins Weiße Haus gewählt wird. Wir stehen vor wichtigen Schritten, die wir nur geeint als eine europäische Antwort geben können: Verteidigung, Energie, Sie haben viele andere Beispiele und Themen genannt.

Jean-Claude Juncker hat einmal gesagt: Wir haben in Europa zwei Arten von Staaten, kleine Staaten und solche Staaten, die wissen, dass sie klein sind. Und der Kollege Cañas hat gesagt: Mit der richtigen Politik kann man in Europa als kleines Land ein ganz großes Land werden.

Wir im Europäischen Parlament haben es vorgemacht. Aus einem kleinen Mitgliedstaat kann eine Abgeordnete etwas ganz Großes werden. Ich bin nach einem Jahr immer noch stolz darauf, dass wir Roberta Metsola aus einem kleinen Land als Präsidentin gewählt haben. Daran sehen Sie auch symbolisch: Aus einem kleinen Land kann man etwas ganz Großes werden und machen.

Leszek Miller (S&D). – Pani Przewodnicząca! Panie Prezydencie! Koleżanki i Koledzy! Za miesiąc, 16 kwietnia, minie 20 lat od podpisania przez rządy Polski i Litwy w Atenach traktatu akcesyjnego, będącego prawną podstawą wejścia naszych krajów do Unii Europejskiej. Razem z nami uczyniło to jeszcze osiem państw i było to największe rozszerzenie Unii Europejskiej w całej jej historii. Miałem zaszczyt jako polski premier podpisać traktat i na pewno w Polsce i na Litwie 20-lecie będzie dobrą okazją do różnych ocen i bilansów naszego członkostwa. Jestem przekonany, Panie Prezydencie, że Pan te 20 lat ocenia bardzo dobrze, tak jak i ja, i inni, i wielu Polaków.

Nie tylko historia jest ważna, ale przede wszystkim dyskusja na temat przyszłości Europy, podtrzymywanie idei, która nas jednoczy. Ta idea spełnia się w pomocy dla Ukrainy, która odpiera rosyjską agresję, ale też w przestrzeganiu europejskich wartości, zasad praworządności, społecznej sprawiedliwości, równorzędności praw kobiet i mężczyzn, pomocy dla wszystkich, którzy jej oczekują. Potrafimy się odradzać i budować mosty. Jest to słuszna droga i należy ją kontynuować z myślą o teraźniejszości oraz o przyszłych pokoleniach, pogłębiać integrację europejską i przestrzegać tych wszystkich wartości, które także nas tutaj na tej sali zebrały. Jestem przekonany, że zarówno Litwa, jak i wszystkie inne kraje członkowskie będą konsekwentnie szły tą drogą.

Tineke Strik (Verts/ALE). – Madam President, dear President Nausėda, you are very welcome to our House. You refer to summer 2021, when Lukashenko brutally instrumentalised migrants by sending them to your border. The EU stood behind your country as it was an attack on the EU and also an attack on our values. But the only right response is a value-based one.

The Court of Justice last summer was crystal clear: Lithuania's legislation allowing for pushbacks, automatic detention and denial of the right to asylum is illegal under EU law. Despite this, your government approved a bill further legalising these illegal policies. And we hear your government justify these violations under the misguided arguments of fighting instrumentalisation. But what you are doing is fighting innocent victims in need of protection.

So I urge you to stop these pushbacks and arbitrary detentions, and to adjust the legislation in line with the Court of Justice ruling. Don't turn away refugees at the border, but turn away from unlawful policies. Restore the rule of law at the EU's borders. Defend EU values and we will stand with you!

Karlo Ressler (PPE). – Poštovana predsjedavajuća, hvala puno. Predsjednice, kolegice i kolege, zajedno s baltičkim susjedima Litva, ali isto tako i Ukrajina, i Hrvatska, moja država, kroz svoju povijest borila se protiv represije, borila se za slobodu, čuvajući svoj identitet, čuvajući svoj jezik i čuvajući svoju kulturu.

Sve to dok se naša sloboda nije uzimala zdravo za gotovo i dok su je mnogi osporavali prije svega, snažniji i veći susjedi. I Hrvatska i Ukrajina pretrpjele su agresiju, Hrvatska se obranila, oslobodila, i danas itekako dobro zna kroz što Ukrajina prolazi. Godine pripremane agresije, snažne propagandne udare, ali isto tako i orkestriranje i podupiranje unutarnje pobune. To danas živi Ukrajina, to je preživjela Hrvatska a suštinski se sve to pripremalo, možda u različitim oblicima, i za baltičke države. Baltičke države u proteklom desetljeću osjetile su dezinformacijske udare, kao i udare na svoju digitalnu infrastrukturu. Ukrajina također danas najviše trpi napade na civilnu infrastrukturu. Hrvatska, iako daleko od bilo kakve vojne ugroze, i danas je izložena različitim kulturološkim presezanjima. Iako smo u mnogo toga različiti i u različitim povijesnim trenucima, jedno nam je itekako zajedničko. Znamo tko smo, znamo koje su naše vrijednosti i znamo gdje pripadamo.

I upravo zato je najvažnije da svaki kutak Europe, neovisno o tome koliko nam se nekada čini da smo daleko od jedne ratne ili digitalne bojišnice, da upravo naša sloboda, naša sigurnost i naša budućnost je ono o čemu se odlučuje i u Ukrajini danas.

Isabel Santos (S&D). – Senhora Presidente, senhor Presidente Nausėda, permita que comece por expressar o meu reconhecimento pela forma corajosa e determinada com que a Litu nia tem defendido os valores europeus face aos regimes autocr ticos, n o s o de Putin e Lukashenko, mas tamb m, e   bom que se vinque, de Xi Jinping.  , realmente, um exemplo para muitos outros pa ses da Uni o Europeia.

Contudo, tenho que dizer que estive, h  exatamente um ano, na Litu nia e pude testemunhar as condi es desumanas a que os migrantes e requerentes de asilo provenientes do M dio Oriente, da  sia e da  frica estavam sujeitos, depois de terem sido utilizados por Lukashenko como armas de arremesso.

Um ano volvido, muitas destas pessoas foram libertadas e as condi es melhoraram, sabemos disso. Por m, os M dicos Sem Fronteiras tiveram que encerrar as suas opera es devido  s restri es que lhes eram impostas e alertam para o facto de, em 2022, terem ocorrido mais de 8000 *push-backs* cometidos por guardas de fronteira lituanos, os quais continuam a verificar-se.

Senhor Presidente, as viola es de direitos humanos, as viola es do direito internacional n o podem ser combatidas com mais viola es de direitos humanos e mais viola es do direito internacional. Estou certa de que poder o ter para com os refugiados vindos de outras proveni ncias o mesmo grau de humanidade que tiveram para com os refugiados da Ucr nia.

Juozas Olekas (S&D). – Pirmininke, gerbiamas Prezidente, mieli kolegos, didziuojuosi, kad esu Lietuvos atstovas. Gerbiamas Prezidente, J s paminėjote šlovingą mūsų istoriją. Bet aš pasakysiu – per paskutinius 19 metų, kada mes tapome Europos Sąjungos nariais, iš tikrųjų šuolis buvo didžiulis. Išaugo mūsų vidaus produktas – daugiau kaip tris kartus ir beveik pasiekė 90 procentų Europos Sąjungos vidurkio. Mes esame pilnateisė Europos Sąjungos ir euroatlantinio aljanso nariai. Paskutiniai metai, be abejo, buvo labai tokie su iššūkiais dideliais: COVID-19, toliau Baltarusijos diktatoriaus pavogti rinkimai Baltarusijoje, Rusijos karas prieš Ukrainą. Jūsų Ekscelencija, dėkoju už Jūsų asmenines iniciatyvas ir telkimą, paramą Ukrainai. Taip pat naudodamas proga noriu padėkoti Lietuvos žmonėms, priėmusiems pabėgėlius ir parėmusiems Ukrainą ir jos ginkluotąsias pajėgas. Šiandien vyksta diskusijos, bet visiškai sutinku su Jumis, kad vienintelė taikos garantija yra okupantų karių išvijimas iš Ukrainos, specialusis tribunolas ir nusikaltėlių agresorių nubaudimas bei pilnateisė Ukrainos narystė Europos Sąjungoje ir NATO. Jūs paminėjote ne tik Rusijos diktatorių, bet ir Baltarusijos. Beveik pusantro tūkstančio politinių kalinių Baltarusijoje, kurie yra laikomi nežmoniškomis sąlygomis. Todėl norėčiau paprašyti, kad Vadovų Taryboje, kartu ir su Europos Parlamento paraginimu, mes padarytume viską, kad politiniai kaliniai būtų paleisti, įskaitant Aleksej Beliacki, Maria Kalesnikava, Mikalai Statkevich ir kiti. Nepaisant to, Rusijos agresijos sukeltos krizės ekonomikoje, kituose sektoriuose ir mūsų piliečių atsparumo, kai kas iš tos krizės pasipelno. Mes matėme energetikos sektoriuje, kai kur farmacijos, bankų sektoriuje didžiulius viršpelnius. Manau, kad reikėtų bendrų pastangų, kad tie viršpelniai būtų pažaboti ir lėšos paskirstytos labiausiai reikalingai gynybai ir gerovės valstybės kūrimui. Taip pat matome, kaip svarbu užtikrinti maisto gamybą. Ir čia mano kolega minėjo, kad iš tikrųjų laikas vėlgi bendrom pastangom padaryti, kad Europos ūkininkai gautų vienodą paramą ir tiesioginės išmokos pasiektų Baltijos valstybės ūkininkus, kad galėtume gyventi socialiai teisingoje Europoje.

President. – President Nausėda, the floor is now yours to answer the questions, varying arguments and points that have been made over the past hour.

Gitanas Nausėda, President of Lithuania. – Madam President, first of all, I would like to react to some comments made by the colleagues, your parliamentary Members from Lithuania, for example, Mr Tomaszewski regretted that I am attacked by some political parties in Lithuania even after the elections where I collected 67% of votes.

You know, I am new man in the politics. I went to the politics in 2009. In 2019, as an independent candidate, I was elected President of Lithuania. But one issue I realised being in the politics is that the politics is not just peaceful and coexistence with the political parties. This is a fight. This is a competition, and this is not a competition for my own interests, but it's a competition for the ideas I present.

And one of the main priorities for which I went to the politics and my programme was dedicated to the social welfare state idea. And even in being in this competition, sometimes with the opposition, sometimes with ruling coalition, we were able to implement some very important measures which will make the life of some sensitive and exposed groups of society better. First of all, the pensioners, socially, affected families and so on and so on.

Now some comments on migration. I would like to touch the issue of migration because this is very important. We have two kinds of migration: migration which is caused by just spontaneous movements of the people from countries where there are some social problems, those countries which are in a state of war.

And this second kind of migration, we call it instrumentalised migration. And we faced this phenomenon into 2020. People just became the weapons in the hands of some totalitarian leaders which are near to us, for example, Mr Lukashenka. And he used deliberately this kind of migration, just trying to destabilise the situation in my country and in European Union.

What do we need in this situation? We need a very clear legal framework in order to deal with this kind of challenges. If we will not have it we will just put the instruments into the hands of Lukashenka or Putin to attack us, to destabilise us. And this is not good.

So this is the reason why we ask European Parliament, we ask European Commission to provide this kind of legal framework in order to be more efficient and in order to be more successful in fighting illegal migration.

Of course this is not only one issue, there are many other issues. And we have we have to strengthen our strategic communication. We have to help these people, which returned to their origin countries to be reintegrated into the society. And we have much to be, much more active in the countries of origin of migration and transit of migration.

Now about Ukraine: why is Lithuania is taking the lead in providing the support to Ukraine? I can explain it by telling you some historic facts. There was a time in the 14th, 15th, 16th century when we were in the same commonwealth, the Commonwealth of Lithuanians co-existing with Belarusians and Ukrainians. And it was very peaceful formation of the countries, one common body of countries, and there was full respect of the nations to each other, even the nations which belong to different language groups. They have very different traditions. And, you know, these kind of feelings that we remember lead to empathy towards Ukraine. We treat them like the brothers and sisters, they are our brothers and sisters.

The second reason: Lithuania has no one else — probably maybe Baltic countries and Poland, putting them together — who understands that the fight. In the battle on the battlefields in Ukraine it is a freedom fight. But not only the freedom fight for Ukrainians, this is our freedom fight. Because, as my colleague, I think, from Estonia mentioned, the second target will be the Baltic countries, Poland, maybe Romania, and there will be third target if Putin is not stopped in Ukraine. There will be next targets, we have to be fully aware of it.

China: yes, Lithuania has some interesting, challenging history of relations with China. Several years ago, we decided to leave so-called format of '17 plus one' because we realised that this format is not promising very much to us and implementing very important infrastructure projects and so on and so on. And we decided to leave it. And we still defend the idea that we have to speak with China with one voice.

So '27 countries plus one' would be the most suitable format in communication and relations with China. Some other countries followed our example, and now this format is already 13 or 14 plus one. And I think that sooner or later we will come to the conclusion that the best way to deal with China is just 27 plus one.

Enlargement of European Union: this is very important and we are a keen proponent of enlargement of Europe. We defend the right of our nations to join the European Union sooner or later. So this is the reason why we support the aspirations of Moldova, the aspirations of Ukraine, the aspirations of Georgia, because we remember very well what a powerful trigger from progress our membership in the European Union was.

As we entered European Union, we started from 43% of GDP per capita. Now we already reached 86% of GDP per capita, and we are running forward with excellent speed. So this is a huge opportunity to be European, but this is also a responsibility.

To be European means responsibility, to be sensible, to be united and to help the countries in need. And this country in need is now Ukraine. So we have to understand and remember it very well.

President. – Thank you, Mr President.

The sitting will resume in approximately one minute, when we start with the vote.

(The sitting was briefly suspended)

6. Tkomplija tas-sessjoni

(The sitting resumed at 12.12)

Markus Buchheit (ID). – Frau Präsidentin! Wir hatten hier gestern ein recht durchwachsendes Stimmungsbild zur Gebäudeeffizienzrichtlinie, und deswegen hätte ich einen Antrag nach Artikel 59 der Geschäftsordnung. Wir haben das Chaos gesehen, das sich jetzt gerade im Rat ausbreitet in Bezug auf die Abschaffung des Verbrennungsmotors. Wir sehen auch jetzt schon den Widerstand zweier Mitgliedstaaten gegen die Gebäudeeffizienzrichtlinie, und wir sehen den erheblichen Widerstand auch hier im Hause fraktionsübergreifend gegen den Zwangscharakter der entsprechenden Maßnahmen. Ich stelle deswegen den Antrag, diesen Vorschlag an den Ausschuss zurückzuüberweisen.

President. – We will take this point when we come to the vote on that file.

7. Hin tal-votazzjonijiet

President. – The next item is the vote.

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

7.1. Talba għat-tnehhija tal-immunità ta' Ioannis Lagos (A9-0053/2023 - Andrzej Halicki) (votazzjoni)

7.2. Talba għat-tnehhija tal-immunità ta' Nicolaus Fest (A9-0055/2023 - Ilana Cicurel) (votazzjoni)

7.3. Mobilizzazzjoni tal-Fond Ewropew ta' Aġġustament għall-Globalizzazzjoni – applikazzjoni EGF/2022/002 BE/TNT – Belgju (A9-0043/2023 - Olivier Chastel) (votazzjoni)

7.4. Ogġezzjoni skont l-Artikolu 112(2) u (3) tar-Regoli ta' Proċedura: Żrieragħ żejtnija ġenetikament modifikat MON 94100 (MON-941ØØ-2) (B9-0162/2023) (votazzjoni)

7.5. Bastimenti tal-passiġġieri ro-ro: rekwiziti tal-istabbiltà (A9-0255/2022 - Roberts Zile) (votazzjoni)

7.6. It-tnaqqis annwali vinkolanti tal-emissjonijiet ta' gassijiet serra mill-Istati Membri (Regolament dwar il-Kondiviżjoni tal-Isforzi) (A9-0163/2022 - Jessica Polfjärd) (votazzjoni)

7.7. L-użu tal-art, it-tibdil fl-użu tal-art u l-forestrija (LULUCF) (A9-0161/2022 - Ville Niinistö) (votazzjoni)

7.8. Reviżjoni tar-Riżerva tal-Istabbiltà tas-Suq ghas-Sistema tal-UE għall-Iskambju ta' Kwoti tal-Emissjonijiet (A9-0045/2022 - Cyrus Engerer) (votazzjoni)

7.9. Ir-rendiment tal-bini fl-użu tal-enerġija (riformulazzjoni) (A9-0033/2023 - Ciarán Cuffe) (votazzjoni)

— *Before the vote:*

President. – We move to the report by Mr Cuffe on energy performance of buildings. Now we come back to the request by Mr Buchheit. Your request, Mr Buchheit, has to be dealt with. We will need to check the low threshold.

Mr Zanni, is this your group's request? It is a different procedure. There is no low threshold.

— *After the vote on the Commission proposal:*

Ciarán Cuffe, rapporteur. – Madam President, a compelling case for the renovation of buildings.

But on the substantial issue, I would like to refer the file back to committee for interinstitutional negotiations.

(Parliament decided to refer the matter back to the committee responsible under Rule 59(4))

7.10. L-Att dwar id-Data (A9-0031/2023 - Pilar del Castillo Vera) (votazzjoni)

— *After the vote on the Commission proposal:*

Pilar del Castillo Vera, rapporteur. – Madam President, I would like to request referral back to committee for interinstitutional negotiations pursuant to Rule 59(4).

(Parliament decided to refer the matter back to the committee responsible under Rule 59(4))

7.11. L-attivitajiet tal-Ombudsman Ewropew – rapport annwali 2021 (A9-0054/2023 - Anne-Sophie Pelletier) (votazzjoni)

7.12. Koerenza tal-Politiki għall-Iżvilupp (A9-0019/2023 - Janina Ochojska) (votazzjoni)

— *Before the vote:*

Janina Ochojska, Sprawozdawczyni. – Pani Przewodnicząca! Celem tego sprawozdania jest ocena dotychczasowych rezultatów w zakresie stosowania PCD oraz przedstawienie rekomendacji dla poszczególnych instytucji europejskich. Bez PCD działania na rzecz rozwoju tracą na efektywności oraz skuteczności. Dziękuję wszystkim posłom zaangażowanym w powstanie tego sprawozdania i liczę na współpracę we wdrażaniu jego postulatów.

— *After the vote:*

President. – This concludes the vote.

(The sitting was briefly suspended)

PŘEDSEDNICTVÍ: DITA CHARANZOVÁ

místopředsedkyně

8. Tkomplija tas-seduta

(The sitting resumed at 12.48.)

9. Is-Semestru Ewropew għall-koordinazzjoni tal-politika ekonomika 2023 — Is-Semestru Ewropew għall-koordinazzjoni tal-politika ekonomika: prijoritajiet soċjali u tal-impjieġ għall-2023 (dibattitu)

President. – The next item is the Joint debate on the European Semester – the report by Irene Tinagli on the European Semester for economic policy coordination 2023 [2022/2150(INI)] (A9-0044/2023) and the report by Estrella Durá Ferrandis on the European Semester for economic policy coordination: Employment and social priorities for 2023 [2022/2151(INI)] (A9-0051/2023).

Mrs Tinagli, the floor is yours.

Irene Tinagli, rapporteur. – Madam President, last year, when we debated the Semester report in this House, war had just broken out in Ukraine. The war had, and is still having, a devastating impact on the Ukrainian population. To a completely different extent it had, and it still having, an impact on us as well.

The EU was one of the most exposed advanced economies to downward risks, given its proximity to Ukraine and also the heavy reliance on energy imports, particularly on gas from Russia. The impact of high energy prices and the subsequent inflation led to the erosion of household purchasing power and industry competitiveness, in particular that of SMEs.

So, on the one hand, we all know that the low and stable inflation rate will be an important condition for long-term sustainable economic growth and so it is important to intervene on inflation. But, on the other hand, we also know that a reduction in aggregate demand, combined with the less favourable financing conditions, which are related, when you have high interest rates, could lead to a sharp decline in investment and therefore in future economic growth.

So investment in renewables and energy efficiency, for example, could also suffer, although these are precisely the investments required to reduce reliance on imported fossil fuels and structurally limit inflation driven by energy prices. So it's quite a complicated conundrum.

These deteriorating economic conditions have increased the vulnerabilities and risks. The rising mortgage rates and the deterioration in debt servicing capacity resulting from the decline in real income of households may cause further distress for families and for financial markets in general. So against this background, we need to act.

In our public debate, we always recall that the primary objective of the ECB is to maintain price stability, of course. But we should also recall that the aim of the Union as a whole should be to dampen the impact of current turbulences on the real economy and to minimise future risks, thereby defending the well-being of our citizens and preserving our production structure and the international competitiveness of our companies, as well as decent working conditions for our workers.

So in this regard, we need adequate and coordinated fiscal, structural and regulatory policies that complement the ECB's monetary policy actions in order to support household incomes and provide targeted and temporary support to companies suffering from supply bottlenecks and high energy costs. The policy leeway created by the activation of the general escape clause was very important and was determinant in strengthening Member States' economic and social resilience, both during the COVID pandemic and also in the last year after the war started.

The Commission released last week the fiscal policy guidance for 2024. However, we need more clarity as regards the medium and long term. This is why we call in this report for an urgent review of the EU fiscal framework, preferably to be completed prior to the deactivation of the general escape clause. The Commission's communication of last November is an important step in the right direction. It addressed most of the concerns to emerge in the last years in the public debate, in particular as regards the simplification of the framework and the more tailor-made governance. The revised regulatory framework should allow Member States to have sufficient leeway to deliver decisive crisis resolution measures when they are needed and should preserve the flexibility already in-built in the Stability and Growth Pact.

Of course, there are some issues that are not addressed in the Commission communication, but which are important. For example, the issue of macroeconomic stabilisation is not properly addressed, and we believe that the Commission should build also on the positive experience we've had in the past years, for example with SURE. But most importantly, we hope that there will be a debate and that the Commission, the Council, will consider our contribution to the Semester cycle and the Commission will soon be able to bring forward legislative proposals on the reform of economic governance.

Estrella Durá Ferrandis, ponente. – Señora presidenta, señor comisario, señora presidenta en ejercicio del Consejo, navegamos por una transición. Nuestra nave debe tener un timón social para llegar a buen puerto. El Semestre Europeo que defendemos este año desde el Parlamento Europeo pone toda su fuerza en garantizar que los objetivos de crecimiento económico vayan ligados a una transformación socioecológica e inclusiva de nuestras economías, considerando todas las transiciones al mismo nivel y evitando los desequilibrios sociales, económicos y medioambientales mediante la lucha contra la pobreza, la reducción de las desigualdades y la creación de puestos de trabajo dignos, con salarios y condiciones decentes.

Por ello, y también como prioridad, el Semestre Europeo de este año, reconoce la necesidad de mejorar el marco de gobernanza actual. Los objetivos de crecimiento económico deben estar en consonancia con los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible y el pilar europeo de derechos sociales. Y la arquitectura de gobernanza europea debe basarse en la solidaridad, la convergencia social al alza, la integración y la inversión en servicios públicos de calidad.

Las normas presupuestarias europeas tienen un papel fundamental para este fin y por ello destacamos que deben facilitar la inversión pública y la financiación necesaria para conseguir la transición hacia una economía justa con la naturaleza, pero también justa con las personas y los territorios. En esta línea, y en previsión de la desactivación de la cláusula de salvaguardia, los Estados miembros van a necesitar mayor flexibilidad y la exclusión de las inversiones sociales del cálculo del déficit excesivo. Con ello, los Estados miembros más endeudados podrían adoptar sendas de ajuste individual más flexibles que les permitan tener un margen presupuestario suficiente para llevar a cabo las inversiones y reformas necesarias para unas transiciones ecológica y digital socialmente justas.

La consolidación presupuestaria sólo será sostenible si el impacto distributivo de los gastos reasignados o los cambios en los ingresos está bien calibrado y contribuye a reducir las desigualdades socioeconómicas.

El Semestre Europeo, como principal instrumento de coordinación de políticas con el que contamos, tiene que permitir a los Estados miembros hacer frente a las crisis y prevenir futuros choques, pero no solo económicos, sino también sociales. Por ello, el informe de este año también contempla la creación de un marco de convergencia social como sistema de vigilancia de los posibles riesgos para la convergencia social al alza y que detecte potenciales consecuencias negativas de otras políticas para la implementación del pilar social. Este marco de convergencia incluiría también objetivos sociales concretos que alcanzar.

Desarrollar instrumentos que autorregulen las fluctuaciones del mercado y garanticen la sostenibilidad y supervivencia de nuestro sistema de bienestar social es uno de los puntos centrales de este Semestre. Medidas, por ejemplo, que contribuyan a frenar la volatilidad de los precios energéticos.

Por ello, necesitamos herramientas para abordar el impacto desigual del cambio climático y la degradación del medio ambiente en los diferentes grupos de ingresos, así como las consecuencias sociales de la transformación de nuestras sociedades hacia la neutralidad climática. Un fondo social del clima puede ser el inicio de un mecanismo que sienta las bases de esquemas de protección social ecológica a escala nacional, con el apoyo de la Unión Europea para reforzar la resiliencia social frente a los cambios climáticos y la degradación medioambiental.

Asimismo, en lo que respecta a fondos, el informe contempla como novedad un fondo de soberanía con el fin de garantizar, entre otras cosas, que todos los Estados miembros dispongan de flexibilidad para hacer frente a los retos sociales, climáticos y medioambientales.

Además, se considera que cualquier futura iniciativa de financiación de la Unión Europea debe integrar la justicia social como principio rector. En definitiva, un Semestre ecosocial que proteja a las personas.

Eleni Stavrou, *rapporteur for the opinion of the Committee on Budgets*. – Madam President, dear colleagues, I will speak on behalf of my colleague Petri Sarvamaa, who is the rapporteur of the budget opinion on the European Semester for Economic Policy Coordination 2023.

First, we would like to thank Ms Tinagli for this report. It raises important and topical issues related to the current challenges and opportunities of the EU economy. The annual European Semester cycle has also an important role in anticipating the EU's economic outlook.

Coming from the Budget Committee perspective, Mr Sarvamaa has a few observations. We need to remember how uncertain times we are living because of past current and future crises. All of these relate to the uncertain economic outlook of the European Union.

On the other hand, it is good that we have been able to respond to this crisis. The most concrete example is the Recovery and Resilience Facility and its stabilising impact on the EU economy. It is also good that we have started to discuss the economic sustainability of the EU in the long term, especially bearing in mind that government debt-to-GDP ratios are historically high. Member States should be able to return to a sustainable budgetary approach eventually.

Lastly, it is worth mentioning that the introduction of new own resources, as agreed also in the interinstitutional agreement, is crucially important so that the Next Generation EU debt can be refinanced without detriment to future programmes.

Jessika Roswall, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Madam President, honourable Members, Commissioner, thank you for this opportunity to hold the regular discussion on the European Semester here today.

The European Semester remains a very important framework to ensure effective policy coordination across four dimensions: environmental sustainability, productivity, fairness and macroeconomic stability. All of these are key for the economic prosperity and sustainable competitiveness of our Union.

The policy coordination is more important than ever, as we are facing multiple challenges resulting from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

Our post-COVID recovery is being challenged at various levels and this requires policy measures that are supportive of inclusive and sustainable growth. Rising inflation, interest rates and energy prices have left many companies and households struggling. Given this mix of challenges, our policies must remain coordinated and flexible.

The EU and the Member States must work both on immediate actions to address the current challenges and notably the long strategy to boost competitiveness and productivity for a green and digital transition.

These crucial questions will be on the agenda at the next week's European Council. We must step up our efforts to implement the digital and green transition. This requires swift, targeted and coordinated actions both at the EU and national levels to carry out structural reforms. With NextGenerationEU and REPowerEU, we also have funding to finance key investments and reforms in Member States.

Honourable Members, so far, labour markets are proving surprisingly resilient. But there are several challenges. Real wages are declining, which are weighing on households. At the same time, employers are finding it hard to hire in some sectors. That is why we need more ambitious actions at the EU and national level to promote skills through education, training, upskilling and reskilling. Therefore, I am happy that this is emphasised in the European Year of Skills 2023.

In the context of demographic challenges, these actions will contribute to meet the challenges of labour shortages and the transformation of jobs. Policies geared towards skills and competences for the green transition hold the key to Europe's full resilience and prosperity.

Honourable Members, as Council Presidency, we intend to ensure a smooth European Semester cycle and that all parties concerned do their utmost to achieve the common objectives of seeing the country-specific recommendations approved by the European Council in June.

Allow me also to add a word on the reform of the EU economic governance framework. The Council has been working intensely on the Commission's orientation for this reform, and the Presidency has worked hard to find a compromise. We hope that we will find a compromise that all States can agree on.

Many of the multiple challenges we are facing require ambitious reforms and substantial investments. Moreover, we need to address the increase of public debts as a result of the COVID crisis and the war in Ukraine. Reducing these high levels of debt should be done in a gradual and realistic manner.

We now stand ready to examine the Commission's new legislative proposal on economic governance.

Nicolas Schmit, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, first, in the name of my colleagues, Vice-President Dombrovskis and Commissioner Gentiloni, who are attending today's ECOFIN, and myself, I would like to thank the rapporteurs Ms Tinagli and Ms Estrella Durá Ferrandis, and the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs for their reports, which provide a valuable contribution in view of the European Semester priorities for 2023.

Let me first focus on the economic and fiscal side. The European economy is facing multiple shocks, but has shown also remarkable resilience. We narrowly avoided a recession and started 2023 on a more optimistic footing. But even if the peak of inflation appears to be behind us, consumers and businesses still struggle with high energy and food prices, and inflationary pressures remain. So while the economy is doing better than initially expected, we are not out of the woods yet. In all, in 23, growth is likely to remain subdued. There are also structural challenges we need to tackle the EU's energy dependence, the green and digital transitions, skills shortages and the need to strengthen our overall competitiveness. All this against the background of high uncertainty as Russia continues its criminal aggression against Ukraine.

The European Semester has proven to be an agile instrument for European policy coordination. Our focus now is to deal with the immediate consequences of the ongoing shocks and to meet longer term common EU objectives and priorities. In recent months, Member States and the Commission have worked to coordinate targeted and affordable measures to cushion the impact of the energy crisis on vulnerable households and the most impacted businesses, while safeguarding public finances and the single market. Together with the ERF, the semester will continue to ensure an effective reform momentum in each Member State up to 2026. Combined with the reform and investment strategies enabled by other EU programmes.

Fiscal policy coordination is vital. It provides an anchor of stability, supports investments in the twin transition, strengthens resilience, and allows buffers to be built to cope with future shocks. Last week, the Commission presented its orientations for fiscal policy for 2024. After three years of sizeable fiscal support, the focus should now be on improving debt sustainability. Prudent fiscal policy will support monetary policy in the current high-inflation environment. As the European economy is no longer in severe downturn, we confirm that the general escape clause will be deactivated at the end of 2023. The guidance also reflects the fact the EU's fiscal framework is in a transition phase. As views converge on several key issues, the Commission intends to table legislative proposals after the European Council later this month.

The guidance should be seen as a bridge between how the rules have worked in the past and how they may work in the future. This means that certain elements of the Commission's reform orientations can already be applied. To be specific, we invite Member States to set fiscal targets that ensure the respect of the 3% of GDP deficit reference value and ensure a path for credible continuous debt reduction over keeping it at sustainable levels. On that basis in spring, the Commission will propose fiscal recommendations with a quantitative requirement as well as qualitative guidance on investment and energy measures.

As regards the measures to cushion the impact of high energy prices on households and businesses remaining measures should be better targeted on those most affected. Moreover, as energy prices head lower, governments should move to phasing out most of the support measures, starting with the least targeted ones.

Finally, all Member States should preserve investment to boost sustainable and inclusive growth in line with the common EU priorities, namely in the field of fair transitions. The co-legislators have acted rapidly to phase out the EU's dependence on Russian fossil fuels, promote zero carbon sources and strengthen energy resilience. Now that the REPowerEU Regulation has come into force, we are leveraging the Recovery and Resilience Facility to achieve a secure, affordable and sustainable supply of energy. Revising National Recovery and Resilience plans and incorporating REPowerEU chapters with additional funding represent an opportunity to respond to persistent as well as to new challenges in the context of the new Green Deal Industrial Plan.

Let me now turn to the employment skills and social dimension. The employment report provides an important input on the employment and social priorities, focusing, inter alia, on wage and social protection policies, the European Child Guarantee, the use of distributional impact assessments, as well as its call for the strengthening of the social dimension of the semester and the introduction of a social convergence framework. This important debate on the European Semester takes indeed place in an uncertain, as already mentioned, in an uncertain and challenging environment. While the unemployment rate remains low overall in the Union, at only 6.1%, specific groups are still under-represented in the employment statistics. In particular, youth unemployment is still very high at 15%, and the employment gap between women and men continues to be substantial, 10.8 percentage points. Furthermore, the potential of older workers is not sufficiently used. At the same time, labour and skills shortages are increasing across Member States and sectors and this is also due to inadequate quality, equity and labour market relevance of the education and training systems.

Let me just mention one particular issue, which is appalling. It's the youth NEET rate, which still remains high with over 13%. This represents and this represents a real challenge with more than 8 million young people excluded from the labour market and all kinds of training schemes. A social problem with long lasting consequences, a major loss for our economies facing labour shortages, and here I think strong action is absolutely needed.

With the ongoing high inflation, we still need prompt, adequate and well-targeted policy responses to address poverty risks, as more people and households are experiencing a drop in real incomes. Adequate wage policies and updates of minimum wages in line with the directive as well as collective bargaining, play a key role to prevent increases of in-work poverty. This is particularly important as inflation has significantly outpaced wage growth so far, which brings social risks, especially for low-wage earners. The European Semester remains the key integrated policy coordination framework to address these challenges and pursue key common priorities. Let me underline that coordinated policy action in this semester is key to advance the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights. I welcome Parliament's call to progress in the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights in the framework of the European Semester and the Economic Governance Review. Implementing the 21 Pillar Action Plan also means advancing on the 2030 EU headline and national targets, unemployment skills and poverty reduction. This requires that ambitious reforms and investments are put into place by Member States in line with the commitments made in Porto for a strong social Europe. This is all the more important also in view of the very significant transformations that Europe has to undergo to affirm itself as a global leader on the twin transitions. Skills are, of course, central to this. And this is why 23, as the European Year of Skills, will be crucial in promoting skills acquisition, reskilling and upskilling, helping people get the right skills for quality jobs.

Through the Green Deal Industrial Plan, we will further accelerate our work on skills for the green transition, including digital skills with the final aim of supporting competitive and sustainable industrial policies in the EU and creating quality jobs. Skills are an essential tool for our competitiveness as well as for enhancing productivity. The revisions of the Recovery and Resilience Plans in the context of REPowerEU give all Member States an opportunity to boost green skills and reskill our workforce, and also importantly to address the causes of energy poverty. The semester itself will evolve, discussions are ongoing on the economic governance review and, in parallel, Member States are discussing a possible new social convergence framework. This will have implications for the future European Semester of Economic and Employment policy coordination. And I am sure that by using the tools we have more effectively, we can make the semester stronger as a framework to jointly pursue our common priorities and achieve a fairer, more inclusive and greener growth with a competitive and innovative economy that works for people.

PRESIDENZA DELL'ON. PINA PICIERNO

Vicepresidente

Markus Ferber, *im Namen der PPE-Fraktion*. – Frau Präsidentin, Herr Kommissar, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Europa steht in den kommenden Monaten vor enormen Herausforderungen. Die europäische Wirtschaft steht am Rande einer Rezession. Viele Mitgliedstaaten sind hoch verschuldet. Die Inflation erreicht ein Rekordniveau, die Finanzierungskosten steigen, und gleichzeitig sind enorme Anstrengungen zum Umbau unserer Wirtschaft notwendig.

Eine effektive Koordination der europäischen Wirtschaftspolitik ist entsprechend dringender notwendig denn je. Das Europäische Semester ist dafür ja auch grundsätzlich das richtige Instrument. Wir müssen auch anerkennen, dass das Semester in der Vergangenheit nicht besonders effektiv war. Wir haben schon vor zehn Jahren als EVP-Fraktion darauf hingewiesen: Man muss dann das Dach reparieren, wenn die Sonne scheint, bevor der nächste Sturm aufzieht. Diese Chance wurde leider versäumt.

Schon damals war abzusehen, dass der enorm hohe Schuldenstand in vielen Mitgliedstaaten und der Mangel an Wettbewerbsfähigkeit spätestens dann zum Problem werden wird, wenn die Zinsen wieder ansteigen und die Refinanzierungskosten in die Höhe schnellen. Viele Mitgliedstaaten haben die guten Jahre aber nicht zur Haushaltskonsolidierung genutzt, sondern weitere Schulden angehäuft, meist auch nur für konsumptive Ausgaben. Sie haben nicht nichts für Wettbewerbsfähigkeit gemacht, sondern Strukturreformen verschleppt.

Für uns als EVP bedeutet das, dass wir uns in diesem Jahr auch mit dem Blick auf die anstehende Reform der wirtschaftspolitischen Steuerung noch mehr als ohnehin auf den eigentlichen Kern des Semesters fokussieren wollen: verantwortungsvolle Fiskalpolitik und Maßnahmen, die die Wettbewerbsfähigkeit stärken.

Joachim Schuster, *im Namen der S&D-Fraktion*. – Frau Präsidentin, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! In der Tat, wir stehen in Europa vor schwierigen wirtschafts- und finanzpolitischen Aufgaben. In einem Umfeld steigender Zinsen und hoher Inflation muss ein sozial verantwortlicher klimaneutraler Umbau unserer Wirtschaft vorangetrieben werden. Zugleich gilt es dafür zu sorgen, dass die hohe Inflation nicht zu einer wachsenden sozialen Ungleichheit und einer Verarmung breiterer Bevölkerungsschichten führt.

Wir brauchen eine dauerhafte und deutliche Steigerung der Investitionen in die klimaneutrale und digitale Transformation. Dabei geht es nicht nur um private Investitionen; wir brauchen auch eine erhebliche Steigerung öffentlicher Investitionen. Wir brauchen neue reguläre Einnahmen, um eine solide Finanzierung der öffentlichen Haushalte sicherzustellen. Deswegen stehen die Mindestbesteuerung großer Unternehmen, eine Abgabe für große Vermögen und die Finanztransaktionssteuer auf der Tagesordnung.

Bei all dem müssen wir realisieren: Der gemeinsame Binnenmarkt mit einer gemeinsamen Währung erfordert klare europäische Regeln und vor allen Dingen auch europäische Solidarität. Das müssen wir bei der Reform der Fiskalregeln realisieren.

Stéphanie Yon-Courtin, *au nom du groupe Renew*. – Madame la Présidente, Monsieur le Commissaire, chers collègues, demain, dans cet hémicycle, nous, députés européens, nous prononcerons sur le Semestre européen 2023. Ce cycle annuel coordonne les politiques économiques entre États membres et évalue leur compatibilité avec nos priorités européennes. Jusqu'à présent, il est incompris par nos concitoyens européens parce qu'il est trop complexe. Il doit être simplifié, mais pas seulement. Pour la démocratie, les parlements nationaux et le Parlement européen doivent avoir leur mot à dire.

Ce rapport s'inscrit dans un moment charnière, la révision des règles de gouvernance économique qui visent à surveiller et à réduire la dette et le déficit public des États membres. Dans le contexte actuel d'inflation galopante, nous n'avons pas le droit à l'erreur. Ces règles, qui doivent être révisées ces prochains mois, doivent être simplifiées, pragmatiques, ambitieuses pour relever les défis d'aujourd'hui que sont l'autonomie stratégique et la transition écologique et numérique, dans un contexte d'incertitude majeur.

Ernest Urtegas, *en nombre del Grupo Verts/ALE*. – Señora presidenta, el proceso del Semestre Europeo sigue siendo en gran medida un ejercicio económico. El Parlamento Europeo debe apoyar que, en la próxima revisión de la gobernanza económica, se pongan la convergencia económica y la social en pie de igualdad.

En un documento publicado antes de la Cumbre Social de Oporto, en mayo de 2021, los gobiernos de Bélgica y España propusieron un instrumento para abordar los desequilibrios sociales: el procedimiento de desequilibrio social o, como prefieren llamarlo la Comisión ahora, el marco de convergencia social. Dicho procedimiento abordaría los desequilibrios sociales que podrían afectar negativamente a las condiciones laborales o de vida de un país y, a su vez, tener un efecto indirecto para el conjunto de la zona del euro.

El riesgo de desequilibrios sociales para cada país se determinaría en función del número de indicadores que se detecten en situación de deterioro como, por ejemplo, un nivel excesivo de abandono escolar temprano o una brecha salarial de género en aumento. Cuando se comprobase que un Estado tiene desequilibrios sociales, la Comisión actuaría en diálogo con ese Estado miembro.

Sabemos que el Consejo está trabajando en ello. Creo que la mejor manera de darle una verdadera alma social al Semestre Europeo sería hacer de esta propuesta una realidad.

Johan Van Overtveldt, *namens de ECR-Fractie*. – Voorzitter, commissaris, collega's, het Europees Semester is de cyclus die het economisch en begrotingsbeleid van de lidstaten op elkaar moet afstemmen. Welvaart en groei bestendigen en onze concurrentiepositie bewaken, dat zijn de doelstellingen. Die uitdaging wordt nu bovendien op scherp gesteld door de fameuze Amerikaanse Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), met haar lange trein aan subsidies.

Het Europese antwoord daarop kan en mag niet dezelfde logica volgen. Op het vlak van subsidiëring moeten we immers nu al niet onderdoen voor de VS. Integendeel. Voorzichtig geschat pompen we nu al – gespreid over meerdere jaren – ruim 500 miljard EUR aan subsidies in onze industrieën. Als we het menen met de versterking van onze concurrentiepositie én met een ernstig antwoord op de IRA, dan moeten we de moed opbrengen een cruciale vraag te stellen: nog meer geld, nog meer subsidies, is dat het juiste antwoord?

Subsidies staan al decennialang centraal in het Europese economische beleid, in de hoop dat ze zouden volstaan om investeringen aan te trekken en groei te bevorderen. Dat is hooguit gedeeltelijk gelukt. Onze achterstand is niet te wijten aan een gebrek aan subsidies en ook onze kansen moeten we daar niet zoeken. De focus moet eindelijk komen te liggen op minder betutteling, verstandiger regulering, eenvoudige procedures en minder bureaucratie, kortom, op meer vrijheid en meer zuurstof. Het eerder statische subsidiemodel leidt tot een cyclus van vaak inefficiënte uitgaven en is niet bevorderlijk voor de economische groei op langere termijn.

Gunnar Beck, *im Namen der ID-Fraktion*. – Frau Präsidentin! Die jüngste Wirtschaftsprognose der Europäischen Kommission sollte uns alle wach rütteln. Vier Mitgliedstaaten befinden sich nun offiziell in der Rezession. Die vier sind die größten Pro-Kopf-Nettozahler zum EU-Haushalt: Deutschland, Österreich, Schweden und Dänemark.

Die EU hat sich im Gegensatz zu den USA nicht von der Coronakrise erholt, auch weil sie wegen ihrer unsinnigen Klimapolitik stärker von steigenden Energie- und Lebensmittelpreisen betroffen ist als irgendwer sonst. Besonders betroffen ist Deutschland, wo das Wachstum kollabiert und Löhne und Renten die galoppierende Inflation nicht ausgleichen.

Die EZB indes ignoriert ihr Mandat und nimmt die Inflation hin. Deutschland zahlt netto mittlerweile über 40 % des gesamten EU-Haushalts. Was bekommen die Deutschen dafür? Die höchste Inflation seit über 70 Jahren, wirtschaftliche Stagnation und die Eskalation des Ukraine Konfliktes, der die Stagflation nicht schuf, aber beflügelt.

Vor gut 50 Jahren war der Libanon die Perle des Nahen Ostens. Dann nahm das Land Millionen unqualifizierte Flüchtlinge auf. Die Inflation stieg, und das Bruttosozialprodukt pro Kopf ist heute niedriger als 1970. Deutschland ist auf dem besten Wege, der Libanon in Mitteleuropa zu werden. Von der Leyen spricht ja gerne von der Mondlandung der EU. Vielleicht finden Sie da Ihre neue Steuerkolonie.

José Gusmão, *em nome do Grupo The Left*. – Senhora Presidente, durante a resposta europeia à crise da Covid-19 houve quem alimentasse a esperança de que as instituições europeias tivessem aprendido com a desastrosa resposta à crise financeira. Infelizmente, parece que esse foi um otimismo infundado.

O que verificamos neste processo do Semestre é que regressamos ao mesmo discurso e às mesmas políticas que marcaram, após um período de políticas contracíclicas, a resposta à crise financeira. Diz-se que agora vamos introduzir os objetivos sociais e ambientais no Semestre Europeu. O que se vê é tudo menos isto.

Enquanto se fazem algumas declarações vagas e sem nenhuma consequência para as obrigações da Comissão, a Comissão já está a pressionar os Estados-Membros e a dar instruções para que se corte na despesa social, coisa a que, por exemplo, o Governo português já veio ceder com a obediência habitual.

Ao mesmo tempo que recusa um instrumento permanente de investimento europeu e exige uma consolidação orçamental imediata, a Comissão Europeia pede mais investimentos na transição energética. As exigências são contraditórias, mas a última também não é para cumprir.

Enikő Győri (NI). – Tisztelt Elnök Asszony! Tisztelt Képviselőtársaim! Az európai szemeszter, mely 2011-ben magyar elnökség alatt született, eredetileg a tagállamok gazdasági folyamatainak összehangolására, a pénzügyi fegyelem biztosítására szolgált. Mára erősen túlterhelte vált: baloldali nyomásra túlmutat eredeti mandátumán és ideológiai töltetet kapott. A Bizottság továbbá már olyan kérdésekben is számon kéri a tagállamokat, melyek nemzeti hatáskörben vannak. Négy javaslatom volna.

Az első: a zöldítést ne a versenyképesség, a kohézió és a konvergencia rovására valósítsuk meg, hanem mindezeket összehangolva. Második: az országspecifikus ajánlásokkal a Bizottságnak nem szabad túlterjeszkedni a hatáskörén, azokat objektív módon, a tagállam helyzetéhez igazodva, a kettős mércének még a gyanúját is elkerülve szabad csak kiadni. Ehhez érdemi párbeszéd kell a tagállam és a Bizottság között.

Harmadrészt: a helyreállítási eszköz egy egyszeri helyzetet kezel, a Covid-válságot. Nem alkalmas arra, hogy a gazdasági koordinációs keretrendszer annak alapján újítsuk meg.

Végezetül, tisztelt Képviselőtársaim! Kis önmérséklet: azt javaslom, hogy az EP maga is tartsa tiszteletben a játékszabályokat. Maradjon a saját hatáskörén belül, ne követeljen magának nagyobb befolyást a gazdasági koordináció folyamataiban. Ezzel gátat szabhatnánk az ideológia előtérbe kerülésének, s mindenki a hatékonyságra és végrehajthatóságra koncentrálhatna.

Eugen Tomac (PPE). – Doamna președintă, domnule comisar, cred că după criza de sănătate, criza economică, criza energetică, criza de securitate, avem în față mari provocări și cred că este esențial să ne concentrăm atenția pe soluționarea problemelor cu care se confruntă societățile noastre, astfel încât recomandările din Semestrul european să fie aplicate exact așa cum sunt ele să menite să creeze o coordonare mult mai eficientă pentru a depăși toate vulnerabilitățile prin care trec statele membre ale Uniunii Europene.

Penru c inflaia, crizele sociale, crizele economice, crizele financiare prin care trece Europa acum pot fi depsite doar printr-o mai bun coordonare i este esenial ca statele membre, mpreun cu Comisia, s implementeze reforme necesare, astfel nct societtile noastre s opreasc risipa banilor, s se concentreze pe vulnerabilittile pe care le ntmpin cettenii atunci cnd i doresc o stabilitate, locuri de munc mai bine pltite, iar acest lucru se poate realiza doar prin investiii inteligente.

Europa trebuie s fac fa tuturor provocrilor prin care trece acum i evident c acest lucru l putem face doar cu investiii inteligente i, evident, printr-o mai bun coordonare, astfel nct competitivitatea s fie cuvntul de baz i s reuim s ne aprm investiiile i, bineneles, s ne proiectm un viitor bazat pe cretere economic.

Agnes Jongerius (S&D). – Madam President, over the last few months I feel like I have been visited by the ghost of Christmas past. But of course, this ghost is not about Christmas. It’s about the ghost of the 2008 financial crisis.

Talking about a danger of higher wages in time of inflation. And I think it’s high time to say good-bye to this old school, outdated neoliberal narrative. It’s the profits, not the wages that are pushing up inflation. So let me repeat that again: it’s the profit, not wages that are pushing up inflation.

We cannot have the EU hit by austerity again, for we really need a true convergence of the social and economic policies. So when the Commission is going to propose its plan for the revision of the economic governance framework, I expect a mandatory social objective. I expect a social dimension before we all expect a visit of the ghost of austerity yet to come.

Marie-Pierre Vedrenne (Renew). – Madame la Prsidente, Madame la Ministre, Monsieur le Commissaire, face aux inquitudes lies au chmage pendant la crise de la COVID, nous avons mis en place l’instrument commun SURE pour garantir un salaire commun  chacun. Face  la crise nergtique lie  la guerre en Ukraine et pour atteindre nos objectifs de neutralit carbone, nous crons notamment le Fonds social pour le climat. Face aux demandes pour soutenir la comptitivit europenne, nous poussons pour plus de flexibilit sur les aides d’tat. Mais ne nous arrtons pas l, car les chocs se succdent et nos concitoyens en subissent les consquences, particulirement les plus vulnrables.

La Commission europenne a prsent les grandes lignes d’une rforme du pacte de stabilit et de croissance. Il est impratif que cela aille de pair avec une rforme ambitieuse du Semestre europen. Les indicateurs de suivi et de coordination de nos politiques doivent voluer. voluer pour permettre  l’Union europenne de faire face  des crises de plus en plus fortes et plus en plus svres. voluer pour une action ancre dans le progrs social et la lutte contre le changement climatique. voluer, en fait, pour une Europe plus juste qui rponde aux aspirations et aux proccupations de tous nos concitoyens.

Rosa D’Amato (Verts/ALE). – Signora Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, Commissario, Consiglio, il patto sociale tra le istituzioni e i cittadini  rotto. Le regole a livello europeo sono incapaci di rispondere alla crisi sociale e, anzi, nella loro rigidit, vanificano gli sforzi degli ultimi anni per una vera ripresa economica, territoriale e sociale.

Il semestre europeo, cos come il Patto di stabilit e crescita, sono strumenti oramai superati che rappresentano un ostacolo alla convergenza sociale. I principi del pilastro europeo dei diritti sociali sono rimasti lettera morta.

Ecco perch noi Verdi chiediamo una riforma del quadro di governance economica, obiettivi obbligatori per l’eliminazione della povert e l’esclusione sociale e una valutazione dell’impatto sociale dei piani dei vari Stati membri e dei soldi stanziati dai governi nazionali.

Senza il necessario spazio fiscale che permetta di tornare ad investire nella scuola, nella sanit e in misure di inclusione, come il reddito minimo, non potr mai esserci una transizione giusta. Ripartire dalla giustizia sociale  l’unica possibilit che abbiamo e noi Verdi abbiamo le idee chiare: serve una riforma.

Beata Szydło (ECR). – Pani Przewodnicząca! Szanowny Panie Komisarzu! Szanowni Państwo! Agresywna wojna, którą Rosja prowadzi przeciwko Ukrainie, wpływa oczywiście na to, co dzieje się w całej Europie, wpływa na warunki gospodarcze, społeczne i mamy wszyscy świadomość tego, że będzie cały czas wpływała na naszą sytuację. Musimy mieć też świadomość, że musimy zrobić wszystko, aby Rosję powstrzymać, aby Ukraina wygrała. W związku z tym musimy dostosować również nasze działania do tego, co dzieje się w tej chwili w Europie. Musimy podejmować działania pragmatyczne i realistyczne. Ja mam wrażenie, że czasami wystarczą niektórym politykom tylko debaty i deklaracje, natomiast tutaj chodzi oczywiście o czyny, a w związku z powyższym musimy dostosować naszą politykę europejską również do tego, co dzieje się za naszą wschodnią granicą. A w związku z tym, musimy mieć świadomość, że trzeba tutaj podejmować decyzje racjonalne i musimy przede wszystkim chronić europejskich obywateli, europejską gospodarkę, sprawiać, żeby była dalej konkurencyjna.

Na przykład dzisiaj wprowadzaliśmy projekty w ramach programu „Gotowi na 55”, czy te wszystkie projekty, które są związane z polityką, transformacją klimatyczną, one niestety będą skutkowały tym, że będzie ubożać Europa. Więc bądźmy bardziej racjonalni, bądźmy bardziej pragmatyczni, bo dzisiaj to jest potrzebne nam wszystkim.

Antonio Maria Rinaldi (ID). – Signora Presidente, Commissario, onorevoli colleghi, nella proposta della Commissione del 9 novembre scorso e il successivo dibattito che si è instaurato sulla revisione del Patto di stabilità, si continua a soffermarsi sul debito pubblico mentre si ignora totalmente quello privato, che ha dimostrato in passato più responsabilità nelle cause delle crisi.

Quanti sono gli Stati dell'eurozona e del mondo che rispettano il limite del 60% del debito pubblico/PIL? Pochissimi! La media dall'eurozona è del 95%.

È necessario inoltre che i Paesi membri crescano al numeratore PIL, archiviando le politiche di austerità e le rigide regole di rientro del debito che hanno sempre sistematicamente fallito, invece di rincorrere sterili percentuali senza fondamento scientifico.

I trattati sono stati scritti a Maastricht e a Lisbona non sul Monte Sinai! Smettiamola quindi di fingere di ignorare questi problemi e mettiamo finalmente mano ai trattati, adeguandoli alle reali esigenze del mondo in cui viviamo.

Κωνσταντίνος Αρβανίτης (The Left). – Κυρία Πρόεδρε, νομίζω η εισήγηση του κυρίου Schmit είναι σε σωστή κατεύθυνση, απλώς θέλω να προσθέσω δυο-τρία πράγματα. Νομίζω ότι ζούμε πάλι μπροστά σε μια επανάληψη του ίδιου εφιάλτη, ειδικά για τις χώρες που έχουν ζήσει χρεοκοπία: οι κοινωνικές ανισότητες αυξάνονται, προβάλλει μια νέα δυναμική φτωχοποίησης των μεσαίων και μικρομεσαίων στρωμάτων, για τους πολίτες που είναι ήδη στη σφαίρα της φτώχειας, ούτε λόγος, η κατάσταση είναι τραγική. Πολλοί συμπολίτες μας Ευρωπαίοι αδυνατούν πλέον να πληρώσουν τους δυσβάσταχτους λογαριασμούς που αφορούν τη στέγη, την επικοινωνία, το νερό, την ενέργεια, τη διατροφή. Το Ευρωπαϊκό Εξάμηνο λοιπόν, πρέπει και μπορεί να προωθήσει ένα νέο παραγωγικό μοντέλο βασισμένο στις ανάγκες των πολλών και στην κοινωνική, περιβαλλοντική και φορολογική δικαιοσύνη και βεβαίως τα βασικά αγαθά να είναι στον δημόσιο χώρο και στον δημόσιο έλεγχο. Μιλώ για τις συλλογικές συμβάσεις εργασίας, το είπε και ο κύριος Schmit, θα συμφωνήσω μαζί του, για δίκαιους και επαρκείς μισθούς, τη διασφάλιση της ψυχικής υγείας των εργαζομένων, την ισότητα των φύλων. Σε αυτή την κατεύθυνση βρίσκεται η έκθεση που συζητάμε, η οποία συμπεριλαμβάνει πολλές από αυτές τις προτεραιότητές μας. Νομίζω ότι πρέπει να πάρουμε και χώρο και δράσεις σε αυτή τη διαδικασία.

Tatjana Ždanoka (NI). – Madam President, Commissioner, colleagues, in this crisis situation, people and only people may be at the forefront. The employment report calls on the Member States to rapidly implement the provisions established in the minimum wage Directive, saying that decent wages are an essential tool in helping households keep up with rising energy prices.

Let's take some examples of how these ideas are implemented. Concerning my country, the Commission launched the opinion that Latvia has made limited progress with regards to the structural part of the fiscal recommendations. How does this limited progress look like? The minimum wage in Latvia in 2023 was raised by 24% while remaining the quite low EUR 620. Meanwhile, the salary of the chairman of Parliament has been raised by 75%, Minister President by 53%, Members of Parliament by 34%. The salary of chairmen, therefore, is 13 times bigger than the minimum salary. Really decent wages for the few and unworthy for the many. I think that the semester process needs a more thorough look at the elements of dispersion of wages and the just effective fight against poverty in general with a special focus on in-work poverty, direct support of most vulnerable groups. This is the solution which we need.

Lídia Pereira (PPE). – Senhora Presidente, a revisão do Semestre Europeu, o exercício de coordenação das políticas económicas e sociais, é necessária e é urgente. Estamos a falar das regras orçamentais europeias, do controlo dos défices, da gestão da dívida e da capacidade de investimento público.

Depois da pandemia, da pressão inflacionista e do verdadeiro esforço de guerra na Europa, ninguém entenderia voltar a 2019, ao passado. As palavras-chave desta reforma têm de ser três: flexibilidade, simplicidade e responsabilidade. Esta coordenação económico-social tem de ser mais flexível, determinando prazos mais realistas e exigindo medidas mais estruturais do que temporárias. Naturalmente, isto implica tempo, investimento e abordagens que respeitem a realidade nacional de cada Estado-Membro.

O Semestre Europeu tem de ser mais simples para que os cidadãos possam compreender e avaliar melhor o valor das medidas e a quem devem pedir contas. E, por isso mesmo, o Semestre Europeu tem de promover mais responsabilidade. O princípio da solidariedade intergeracional implica maior ambição na redução da dívida e que esse caminho não seja feito à custa da destruição dos serviços públicos, sobretudo na saúde ou na educação.

O debate está feito e é preciso agora tomar decisões. O Parlamento tem estado em consenso em torno deste tema. Falta os governos encontrarem o mesmo consenso.

Delara Burkhardt (S&D). – Frau Präsidentin, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Es scheint für einige ganz schwer vorstellbar, dass Wirtschaft nicht in einem luftleeren Raum stattfindet, sondern eben ziemlich real von gesellschaftlichen und ökologischen Krisen betroffen ist. Ein gutes Beispiel dafür ist die verschleppte Energiewende. Menschen leiden unter der hohen Inflation, die steigende Preise in ganz Europa zur Folge haben. Die Inflation ist dabei aber vor allen Dingen eins: eine fossile Krise. Wenn Diktatoren und Autokraten ihre Hähne zudrehen, wird fossile Energie knapp und teuer, während Erneuerbare so günstig waren wie noch nie.

Das Gute ist: Mit dem Grünen Deal haben wir die Instrumente in der Hand, um uns von dieser Abhängigkeit zu befreien. Den Einfluss ambitionierter Umwelt- und Klimapolitik auf die europäische Wirtschaftspolitik müssen wir sichtbar machen. Nicht das Wachstum des Bruttoinlandsprodukts, sondern das gesellschaftliche Wohlergehen innerhalb planetarer Grenzen muss Ziel unseres Wirtschaftens sein. An dieser Realität muss sich das Europäische Semester 2023 endlich messen lassen.

Dragoș Pîslaru (Renew). – Madam President, dear Commissioner, dear Minister, I need to observe right now that we have a lot of young people that are watching us right now, and they are visitors and there are much more of them than us as Members of Parliament or the Commission or the Council in this room.

And this is a pity because they are really interested about this shift that we are talking about. The change of the semester. The semester is the way that people, the young people, everyone, are looking to see how we are shifting towards a sustainable, inclusive and resilient growth model.

This debate is crucial. This is not just a technocratic thing that we're doing here. The future of investment, if we want to do investment, cannot be foreseen without a social component that responds to the fears and expectations of the young generations and all the citizens in Europe.

We have to fight against all forms of social exclusion and poverty, especially poverty among children. The recovery and resilience plans are essential for supporting smart reforms and investments. And then the review that we are talking about of this semester, it's a unique opportunity to redesign the architecture of EU economic governance and to create a tool for reinforcing reforms and investment.

We look forward to working together to create a stronger and more resilient Europe. And we also look forward to working with the young generations that right now are interested in knowing more about Europe.

Denis Nesci (ECR). – Signora Presidente, Commissario, onorevoli colleghi, le scelte economiche e politiche che faremo nei prossimi mesi saranno decisive per le generazioni future. Per il rilancio della competitività europea, la strada da seguire non è quella del rialzo dei tassi di interesse, che già ha avuto un impatto negativo su consumatori, famiglie e imprese, ma occorre mettere in campo una solida politica industriale e commerciale.

L'istituzione di un fondo sovrano europeo dovrà appunto essere il perno su cui la nuova programmazione dovrà svilupparsi. Ma prima di tutto è perentorio rivedere le regole delle politiche di bilancio degli Stati membri, che evidentemente non sono più adatte all'attuale contesto socioeconomico.

La comunicazione della Commissione, benché costituisca un primo passo nella giusta direzione, è ancora lontana dalle esigenze degli Stati e, soprattutto, presenta diversi nodi da sciogliere. Mi riferisco in particolare all'ambito di applicazione, al potere della Commissione e all'imposizione di un tetto pluriennale della spesa pubblica.

Infatti, d'accordo con il premier Giorgia Meloni, penso che il futuro Patto di stabilità e crescita debba tenere maggiormente in considerazione il tema dell'equilibrio tra questi due valori: stabilità e crescita, entrambi necessari.

Pertanto, auspichiamo che la proposta della Commissione valuti di non calcolare nel deficit gli investimenti pubblici a favore di innovazione, ricerca e infrastrutture.

France Jamet (ID). – Madame la Présidente, sous couvert de coordination économique, le Semestre européen de Bruxelles poursuit ses objectifs ultralibéraux et ses visées impériales. Par exemple, la Commission «recommande» – doux euphémisme – à la France «d'harmoniser» – autre euphémisme – notre système de retraite. En d'autres termes, de supprimer nos régimes spécifiques à certains métiers qui se justifient par la pénibilité de ces métiers ou du fait de la conjoncture démographique entre bénéficiaires et cotisants, ou quelquefois même les deux, et je pense notamment aux régimes de nos marins. Nous n'avons décidément pas les mêmes valeurs.

Si l'Union européenne défend à l'autre bout du monde le droit des peuples à disposer d'eux-mêmes, elle piétine allègrement la souveraineté populaire à Bruxelles. Ah, il est vrai que le prédécesseur de M^{me} von der Leyen affirmait: «Il n'y a pas de démocratie face aux traités». Eh bien, en France, il n'y a qu'un seul souverain, c'est le peuple.

Gheorghe Falcă (PPE). – Doamna președintă, domnule comisar, dragi colegi, doresc să punctez câteva aspecte care, în opinia mea, trebuie adresate de urgență și care sunt în concordanță cu zecile de discuții pe care le-am avut în ultima vreme cu cetățenii europeni din România și din alte state.

Oamenii așteaptă de la Uniunea Europeană rezultate concrete care să-i ajute să trăiască mai bine. Dar, astăzi avem o pandemie care i-a afectat, avem invazia rusă în Ucraina, care afectează, avem o creștere a prețurilor la energie care afectează, la fel cum ne afectează zi de zi șomajul și lipsa de oportunități reale. Mulți nu știu cum o să-și plătească utilitățile, nu știu dacă vor avea un loc de muncă, nu știu dacă vor plăti creditele.

De aceea ne interesează foarte mult să avem soluții acum și nu în 2025 sau 2050.

Micile companii care trebuie să concedieze oameni sau care trebuie să închidă porțile, ce le putem spune în acest moment? Ce soluții concrete le oferim acum, dincolo de bunele intenții și de planurile pentru următorul deceniu? Locuri de muncă nu se creează din aer. Ele sunt create de antreprenori, de oameni care trebuie sprijiniți și în niciun caz împovărați de noi versiuni legislative sau de birocrăția de la Uniunea Europeană. Dacă firmele și antreprenorii dispar sau sunt tentați să plece în America sau în Asia, cum vom genera locuri de muncă de calitate și din ce bani vom asigura necesarul de care au nevoie cetățenii europeni?

De aceea, este foarte important să investim în oameni, în primul rând în programe și în antreprenorii care vor crea acele locuri de muncă bine plătite pentru cetățeni.

Margarida Marques (S&D). – Senhora Presidente, Senhora Ministra, Senhor Comissário, neste debate convém lembrar que estamos preocupados com as regras de governação económica. Aguardamos o compromisso hoje no ECOFIN e o compromisso no próximo Conselho Europeu. Mas, sobretudo, aguardamos com expectativa as iniciativas legislativas da Comissão para a revisão do Regulamento sobre o Semestre Europeu e sobre o Pacto de Estabilidade e Crescimento.

O tempo é escasso. Temos compromissos para com os europeus: fazer as transições ecológica e digital, concretizar o Pilar Europeu dos Direitos Sociais e o Compromisso do Porto. Nenhum deles se fará com políticas de austeridade que rejeitamos.

Aprendemos as lições do passado e não podemos, como aconteceu com a crise financeira, quatro anos depois do início da crise, passar da recomendação de investimento – o NextGenerationEU está aí para isso – para a recomendação de políticas de austeridade. Mas estamos também a aprender as lições positivas do Mecanismo de Recuperação e Resiliência ou do SURE.

Senhora Ministra, Senhor Comissário, temos de saber encontrar as convergências necessárias que melhor sirvam os cidadãos e as economias. O Parlamento tem vindo a trabalhar para isso.

Billy Kelleher (Renew). – A Uachtaráin, Sa réamhaisnéis is déanaí, deirtear gur bheag nár bhuail cúlú geilleagrach an Eoraip, gur baineadh buaicphointe an bhoilscithe amach, agus go bhfuiltear ag súil le fás eacnamaíoch. An tseachtain seo caite, d'fhógair an Coimisiún go bhfuil geilleagar an Aontais ar ais ar an leibhéal réamh-phaindéime, agus gur féidir deireadh a chur leis an gclásal éalaithe ginearálta ag deireadh na bliana.

Tréimhse chrua a bhí ann le cúpla bliain anuas. Tá áthas orm go ndearna an tAontas na bearta agus na cinntí crua a rinne sé. Bíodh sin mar atá, ní féidir linn ligean dár bhfiachas imeacht as smacht. Ní mór do na Ballstáit leibhéal a bhfiachas a smachtú, ach ag an am céanna, ní mór dúinn tacú i gcónaí leis na daoine is leochailí. Dá bhrí sin, is díol sásaimh dom na tograí ón gCoimisiún chun cur chuige níos solúbtha a thabhairt isteach maidir le fiachas a laghdú. Leis sin, beidh na Ballstáit ábalta infheistíochtaí a dhéanamh bunaithe ar riachtanais shonracha a gcuid saoránach.

Procedura «catch the eye»

Margarita de la Pisa Carrión (ECR). – Señora presidenta, señorías, la verdad es que podemos decir que la línea política elegida por la Unión Europea en este último mandato nos ha llevado a estar en una situación comprometida, con errores previsibles, advertidos por grupos como el mío. Vemos cómo se destruyen puestos de trabajo, cómo pierde densidad nuestro tejido empresarial y la industria no encuentra en nuestro entorno las condiciones para poder desarrollar su actividad. Las exigencias medioambientales han dado lugar a la carestía y al aumento de los precios de la energía, la inflación y la inseguridad jurídica. Esta situación es la que está generando la pobreza y la miseria, que no puede solucionarse solo a base de políticas sociales. Porque debe existir equilibrio entre estabilidad y crecimiento; hay que apoyar generando a la vez prosperidad, creando el ambiente que nos permita ser competitivos, favorecer el emprendimiento y reactivar nuestra economía. Sorprende que ahora que debemos replantear y ordenar las prioridades, se ponga una huida hacia adelante, hasta el punto de pedir que las recomendaciones del Semestre Europeo pierdan su foco económico y supongan una intromisión en áreas donde la Unión no tiene competencias, con una visión ideológica que ya ha tenido y sigue teniendo efectos devastadores allí donde se aplica.

João Pimenta Lopes (The Left). – Senhora Presidente, por muito que o queiram pintar de social ou de verde, o Semestre Europeu não deixará de ser aquilo que sempre foi: um instrumento de condicionalidade e interferência na política orçamental dos Estados, em prejuízo dos povos, em favor das grandes potências e grupos económicos.

Recordemos que as recomendações específicas por país de 2022, no caso de Portugal, evidenciaram o reforço das pressões orçamentais até 2023, visando conter a despesa corrente do Estado, ou seja, pressionando no sentido da contenção dos salários reais e dos investimentos nos serviços públicos.

Esta discussão não pode dissociar-se do momento em que se anuncia o fim da cláusula de escape do Pacto de Estabilidade e a reposição dos procedimentos por défices excessivos, associado ao debate em curso sobre a revisão da chamada governação económica, visando aumentar os condicionamentos sobre a despesa e o investimento público dos Estados e o seu quadro sancionatório.

Desenvolvimentos negativos que se antecipam em prejuízo de países como Portugal.

(Fine della procedura «catch the eye»)

Nicolas Schmit, Member of the Commission. – Madam President, Members, our growth strategy is based on the four dimensions of competitive sustainability. It remains the compass for coordinating EU economic and social policies both in the short and medium term. And the framework for doing so is the European Semester, and I fully agree this should not be a technocratic exercise. This should be an exercise — a political one, a democratic one — based on realities.

By integrating Next Generation EU as well as REPowerEU in the European Semester we have shown that the EU can both be agile and flexible in responding to the important challenges and persistent uncertainty which we all face. The EU has, for the time being, considerable resources which should be used in an efficient and targeted way to precisely respond to these challenges, also those challenges coming from competitors outside the EU. And each new payment reflects steady progress in meeting milestones and targets and implementing key reforms and investments.

The next weeks and months will also be crucial to shape the future of our fiscal rules. And, while the Commission has proposed a bridging solution for '24, it is urgent to agree on a revised set of fiscal rules. The Commission will present legislative , and we rely on the European Parliament to play an active role in reaching a rapid agreement because it is important to guarantee stability, to allow reforms and enhance investments. This is the key for successful and socially fair transitions.

Effective employment and social policies are key to enable fair transitions and to protect and accompany people. We need to ensure that the EU is at the forefront of the industrial transformation aimed at ending the dependency on fossil fuels, but also improving its competitiveness and creating quality jobs.

The effective coordination of economic employment and social policies in the context of a strong European Semester remains key to succeed. And this should also be reflected in a reformed economic governance, as asked by many speakers.

Jessika Roswall, President-in-Office of the Council. – Madam President, honourable Members, Commissioner, many of you speakers, for example, Mr Ferber and Mr Van Overtveldt raised the issue of competitiveness and the lack thereof. It was said that we need to mend the roof while the sun is shining. Now, when it has begun to rain, this is even more pressing.

As was said, the solution is not only more money and more subsidies; the lack of European competitiveness goes deeper. That is why the Swedish Presidency is prioritising long-term competitiveness.

The European Semester is an important element of this. To attract investments, stability and predictability is key. The European Semester is instrumental to achieve this.

Allow me also to assure you once more that the Council gives great attention to the European Semester. You have touched on some important points today, and your ideas will make a valuable contribution to the ministerial debate on this European Semester, which continues in the Council.

As I also said earlier, we must step up our efforts to implement the digital and green transition, and it requires swift, targeted and coordinated policy actions both at the EU and the national levels to carry out structural reforms.

I would also like to emphasise the importance of also engaging with our citizens to increase national ownership. I welcome the initiatives taken in this regard, such as dialogues and consultations with stakeholders, civil society and social partners in Member States.

Today's debate has shown that, despite some differences, there is a lot of common ground between us on which we should build. In a Union of highly integrated systems, enhanced economic and social policy coordination can help prevent discrepancies and contribute to ensuring convergence and stability in the EU as a whole and in its Member States.

I am therefore confident that we will continue to work together to find appropriate solutions to meet the challenges before us.

Estrella Durá Ferrandis, ponente. – Señora presidenta, señor Schmit, señora Roswall, señorías, estamos en una legislatura que aborda retos sin precedentes, promoviendo iniciativas que deben poner rumbo hacia un nuevo modelo europeo que consolide la estabilidad económica, el progreso y la inclusión. No es fácil, ustedes lo saben. Por eso nosotros, políticos europeos, debemos aportar perseverancia e ilusión, porque es con ilusión y trabajo como se cambian los paradigmas.

La situación actual lo requiere y la urgencia de actuación es más que evidente. El propio Informe Conjunto sobre el empleo de la Comisión y del Consejo, relativo a la orientación de las políticas sociales y de empleo en el año 2023, reconoce que los salarios mínimos disminuyeron en todos los Estados miembros menos en cuatro. La pobreza laboral en la Unión Europea no ha disminuido en la última década. La tasa de sobrecoste de la vivienda sigue estando por encima del 40 % para más del 8 % de la población, y apenas se ha avanzado en la reducción del *sinhogarismo*.

Por otro lado, las ayudas sociales, como los esquemas de renta mínima, no alcanzan el nivel de adecuación necesario en la mayoría de los Estados miembros. Y no lo harán si no se aprueban medidas vinculantes al respecto, como una directiva sobre renta mínima.

Compañeras y compañeros, este Semestre Europeo debe apostar por una Europa de bienestar y de oportunidades. Debe contar con nuevos instrumentos de gobernanza e inversión basados en la justicia social para superar cualquier desequilibrio socioeconómico subyacente y avanzar hacia un crecimiento sostenible e inclusivo y unas transiciones ecológica y digital justas.

Un Semestre Europeo que luche contra el fraude y la evasión fiscales, apueste por crear puestos de trabajo estables y de calidad, contribuya a reducir las desigualdades sociales y la brecha entre hombres y mujeres, y refuerce los salarios y las pensiones. En definitiva —como señalaba antes— un Semestre Europeo ecosocial que proteja a las personas.

Presidente. – La discussione congiunta è chiusa.

La votazione si svolgerà domani, mercoledì 15 marzo 2023.

Dichiarazioni scritte (articolo 171)

Атидже Алиева-Вели (Renew), в писмена форма. – Днес ЕС е изправен пред огромен брой предизвикателства – от една страна такива, породени от високите цели на Зелената сделка в областта на екологията и цифровизацията, а от друга – зависимостта на Европа от енергия и от галопиращата инфлация, коренящи се в руското нападение в Украйна. Съюзът трябва да докаже, че е устойчив и има просперираш модел на функциониране, който може да се справя с кризи. Нуждаем се от повече инвестиции в цифровия преход и климатично неутралните отрасли. ЕС трябва да осигури достъпна енергия за всички европейски граждани.

В същото време, сега е моментът да се даде отговор и на социалната криза. Ръстът на безработицата при младите все още е твърде висок и една причина за това е недостигът на умения. 2023 г. е годината на уменията. Затова призовавам националните парламенти да инвестират повече в младите хора, като им помагат да развият способностите си, така че да могат да разгърнат своя потенциал. Заедно с това, ЕС и държавите членки трябва да направят необходимото, за да се превъзмогне бедността, особено детската бедност. Недопустимо е в модерния свят децата ни да бъдат лишавани от основните им нужди. Нужни са амбициозни и последователни политики, за да може ЕС да се справя по-бързо и адекватно с кризите!

Anna-Michelle Asimakopoulou (PPE), in writing. – Prudent fiscal positions and sustainable growth are key pillars of the Union’s fiscal strategy. Greece has clearly conformed, and in fact has surpassed related expectations. The strides Greece has made under the Mitsotakis government, despite COVID and the war in Ukraine, are nothing short of exceptional. Under Mitsotakis’ leadership, Greece has witnessed unprecedented growth, with the economy expanding by 5.9% in 2022, and a further 1.2% is expected for 2023. Over the last three years, Greece has consistently outperformed expectations. Under the Mitsotakis government, Greece has achieved: the lowest levels of unemployment since 2010; consecutive records in export growth and inflows of FDI in 2021 and 2022; exited the EU’s enhanced surveillance framework after 12 years. Prudent fiscal management has seen Greece repay IMF debt two years ahead of schedule. Since 2021, our public debt to GDP ratio has entered a fast-declining path, which continues unabated. In January 2023, Greece recorded a surplus of EUR 1.47 billion – a staggering EUR 500 million over the target. No wonder the FT has touted Greece as ‘one of the seven economic wonders of the world’. The Mitsotakis government’s commitment to securing Greece’s long-term economic growth and prosperity is unwavering. The results show this.

Andżelika Anna Możdżanowska (ECR), na piśmie. – Raport „Europejski semestr na rzecz koordynacji polityki gospodarczej” wreszcie dostrzega istniejące zagrożenia. Pandemia, kryzys surowcowy, wojna na Ukrainie, inflacja i konieczność jej przeciwdziałania – to naprawdę solidny kubeł zimnej wody dla marzycieli, którzy widzieli europejską gospodarkę jako skazaną na sukces i odegranie przewodniej roli w zielonej transformacji. W sytuacji, kiedy wychodząca z zapaści europejska gospodarka musi dodatkowo sprostać wyzwaniom konkurencji, jakie stwarza np. amerykańska ustawa o redukcji inflacji, pojawia się pytanie o równe szanse państw członkowskich. W czasach hojnego szafowania pomocą publiczną wygranymi zostają ci, którzy mogą sobie pozwolić na zwiększenie zadłużenia. A tak się składa, że są to głównie północne i silniej rozwinięte kraje, których gospodarcza przewaga nad pozostałą częścią UE teraz jeszcze się powiększy... Chciałabym przestrzec, że nowy fundusz to nowe, wspólne długi. I że większość korzyści i tak odniosą najsilniejsi, których gospodarka jest najlepiej przygotowana do zielonej transformacji... Obecna sytuacja to kolejny dowód, że nie można zwiększać zadłużenia w nieskończoność i że solidne finanse publiczne są najlepszym ubezpieczeniem na niepewne czasy. W tym kontekście warto wspomnieć np. o Polsce, której dług publiczny – poniżej 60%PKB – korzystnie kontrastuje ze średnią europejską (89,4% PKB) czy jeszcze wyższą średnią strefy EURO (97,2% PKB).

ΠΡΟΕΔΡΙΑ: ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΟΣ ΠΑΠΑΔΗΜΟΥΛΗΣ

Αντιπρόεδρος

10. Introjtu minimu adegwat li jżgura inkluzjoni attiva (dibattitu)

Πρόεδρος. – Το επόμενο σημείο στην ημερήσια διάταξη αφορά ερωτήσεις με αίτημα προφορικής απάντησης προς το Συμβούλιο σχετικά με το Επαρκές ελάχιστο εισόδημα που διασφαλίζει την ενεργό ένταξη των Dragos Pislaru, Krzysztof Hetman, Estrella Durá Ferrandis, Lucia Ďuriš Nicholsonová, Sara Matthieu, Giuseppe Milazzo, Özlem Demirel εξ ονόματος της Επιτροπής Απασχόλησης και Κοινωνικών Υποθέσεων (O-000050/2022 - B9-0008/2023) και προς την Επιτροπή σχετικά με το Επαρκές ελάχιστο εισόδημα που διασφαλίζει την ενεργό ένταξη των Dragos Pislaru, Krzysztof Hetman, Estrella Durá Ferrandis, Lucia Ďuriš Nicholsonová, Sara Matthieu, Giuseppe Milazzo, Özlem Demirel εξ ονόματος της Επιτροπής Απασχόλησης και Κοινωνικών Υποθέσεων (O-000051/2022 - B9-0009/2023).

Dragos Pislaru, author. – Mr President, dear Commissioner, dear Minister, living in dignity is a human right. In 2021, 95.4 million people in the EU, representing 21.7% of the EU population, were at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Just to clarify, that means that one in five people in the EU are in poverty or at risk of social exclusion. The COVID-19 pandemic and the rising cost of living further exacerbated the plight of individuals and households in precarious socioeconomic situations.

Minimum income schemes serve as social safety nets, guaranteeing a minimum standard of living and the right to dignity at all stages of life. For people lacking sufficient resources and decent, stable employment, access to adequate minimum income plays an essential role in reducing poverty, social exclusion and inequalities and such schemes should be combined with incentives and measures enabling labour market activation for people who are able to work.

Why do we have this debate? We have this debate because the situation in Europe is such, that there are many Member States that do not have such provisions. I myself, as a Minister of Labour in 2016 initiated the law on the minimum income for inclusion, it has not been implemented in 2017, and it should, and it has been postponed. It is still not implemented today. That is why we need this debate.

Representing the Committee of Employment and Social Affairs, I would like to ask the Council the following questions: how will the Council encourage Member States to gradually set their minimum income schemes to at least the level of the national at risk of poverty threshold while providing incentives to reintegrate people who can work into the labour market? How will Member States ensure that beneficiaries of such schemes are not forced to accept precarious work? How does the Council intend to improve the coverage of the existing national scheme? How will Member States tackle the non-take-up problem – a very serious problem? What kind of mechanism will they establish to raise the awareness and ensure that those eligible are receiving the support that they can actually benefit from it? How will the Member States ensure that such minimum income schemes do not substitute for social policy measures in other areas such as housing, healthcare, disability support or labour market integration? And how are Member States cooperating with social partners, civil society and all the other relevant stakeholders on the design, implementation and monitoring of the minimum income schemes, and where do they see room for improvement?

The Committee of Employment and Social Affairs would also like to ask the Commission a couple of questions. How does the Commission intend to ensure that Member States gradually increase their minimum income schemes to at least the international AROPE threshold while providing the incentives that I have referred to before and enabling the measures to reintegrate those who can work in the labour market? Then the question is how will the Commission monitor the implementation of this recommendation and the contribution to achieving the 2030 targets, in particular, reducing the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion by at least 15 million, including the 5 million children – we are, right now, close to two years after Porto. How will it help Member States to tackle the non-take-up problem? Similar question for the Council as well. And what action does it intend to promote non-discrimination in the context of the minimum income schemes? And last but not least, certainly, how will it involve the social partners at European level in implementing and monitoring the Council recommendation?

These are the questions that stem from the debate that we had in the Committee of Employment and Social Affairs. You will hear my colleagues underlining other very important elements in that. But I am really glad that we have this opportunity to discuss about this very, very serious situation. And I will thank you very much for your pertinent answers.

Jessika Roswall, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Mr President, honourable Members, Commissioner, the social safety nets in our Member States are a trademark of what Europe stands for in terms of solidarity, social inclusion and cohesion. Building on the Council conclusions from 2020, the EPSCO Council reached an agreement on the recommendation on adequate minimum income last December.

The recommendations include substantial measures to improve access to the labour market for those who can work. Indeed, strengthening an inclusive labour market is important to mitigate long-term dependence on income support. For example, this can be done through activation requirements that provide incentives to enter or re-enter the labour market, supporting job seeking and improving investments in human capital through education and training policies.

As this Parliament's motion for a resolution also recalls, the fight against unemployment is the best tool to fight poverty. And, as you all know, to fight unemployment, you need to boost our long term competitiveness.

At policy level, Member States are recommended, among others, to provide a coherent package of income support and labour market activation measures and to empower stakeholders to effectively participate in the design and implementation of the minimum income scheme.

In order to ensure that minimal income schemes, in accordance with national traditions and legislations, reach all those who need it, Member States are recommended to assure ensure that all persons who lack sufficient resources are covered by minimum income.

On the take-up problem raised in the oral question, Member States are recommended to encourage or facilitate the full take-up of minimum income. The ways to do this will depend on the context in each Member State.

The recommendations include various measures ranging from simplification of the application to raise awareness and facilitate the take-up among persons who lack sufficient resources. Ensuring that minimum income schemes do not substitute social policy measures will be a matter for careful and regular assessment by Member States in their national legislative context.

To achieve our goals, we need to involve relevant stakeholders. Let me stress that if we address and try to improve the prospects for a life in dignity for those most in need, it is a contribution to the cohesion of our whole society and the resilience of our democracy.

Nicolas Schmit, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, honourable Members, I would first like to thank the Parliament for putting this issue of adequate minimum income high on its agenda. I would also like to thank the Employment Committee for its resolution on minimum income that focuses on the accessibility, adequacy and enabling aspects of minimum income schemes with a view to promoting upward social convergence.

Against the background of the multiple crises that we are facing, we need to work together to ensure social cohesion. We are on the same side on the fight against poverty, social exclusion and inequality. More than one in five people – and this has already been said – in the EU are at risk of poverty or social exclusion. The situation might worsen in view of the soaring living costs and economic uncertainty, so we must ensure our safety nets are up to the task.

Guaranteeing that every person who lacks sufficient resources can have access to adequate income support and services that foster inclusion is essential: essential to ensure a decent standard of living; essential for human dignity; essential to build fair and resilient economies and societies; and essential to promote active participation in society.

Inspired by principle 14 of the European Pillar of Social Rights on minimum income, the Commission proposed the Council recommendation that has now been approved by the Council. This recommendation aims to improve the adequacy of income support while ensuring sufficient incentives for those who are able to work to enter or re-enter the labour market.

The recommendation is part of a comprehensive package to tackle poverty and social exclusion to achieve upward social and economic convergence and to promote solidarity, as put forward in the European Pillar of Social Rights and its Action Plan.

For recipients who can work, minimum income should act as a stepping stone towards employment or complement the income from work in view of specific personal or family circumstances.

Member States are now called to achieve the proposed adequacy levels by 2030. They are expected to regularly review and adjust the level of minimum income. The recommendation also focuses on making access to the labour market more inclusive. This can be done through improving skills, safeguarding work incentives or creating work opportunities in the social economy. It also calls for supporting those who cannot immediately work through social inclusion plans.

Lastly, it calls for improving effective access to support services. At the Commission, we continue to work together with Member States via the Social Protection Committee and the network of the national authorities responsible for minimum income. We will also support and complement Member States' action via the European Semester.

The European Social Fund Plus will be a key driver to implement the recommendation. It will provide large-scale financial support for disadvantaged groups and marginalised communities. It will make Member States more resilient while promoting socially fair green and digital transitions. And the Recovery and Resilience Facility is also promoting reforms of minimum income systems in line with the principles set out in the recommendation.

The stocktaking of the recommendation will take place in 2030. This time horizon is aligned with the 2030 headline poverty reduction target as well as with the targets on employment and skills.

Member States have welcomed these targets and presented their own national targets. Regarding the poverty reduction target, the sum of the national targets exceeds the EU target. That is good news, but it is now time to walk the talk.

The European Semester, including the Joint Employment Report, will yearly monitor the progress on the headline targets and on the national targets. Every three years, the Commission and the Social Protection Committee will also prepare a joint report on the progress in implementing the recommendations.

Let me now address the specific issue of non-take-up that you have raised. This is a common challenge for all the Member States. On average, around 30-50% of the eligible population do not seek the minimum income support they would be entitled to. The recommendation invites Member States to facilitate the full take-up of minimum income by reducing administrative burden, simplifying the application procedures and ensuring step-by-step guidance, by ensuring access to user-friendly and transparent information, by combating stigmatisation and intensifying reaching out, and finally by regularly assessing the reasons behind the low take-up.

The recommendation also calls upon Member States to establish transparent and non-discriminatory eligibility criteria that would facilitate access to minimum income. This can help increase coverage and reach some groups which, despite their need, are not covered in some Member States. I am thinking of young adults, non-nationals or the homeless.

Finally, let me underline that the successful implementation of the recommendation requires broad ownership across all stakeholders, including social partners. The European social partners were consulted on the content of this proposal and the Commission will promote social partners' involvement using the existing fora of the European Social Dialogue.

The Commission also urges Member States to engage in a policy dialogue with civil society organisations, people experiencing poverty, social partners and other economic and social actors in implementing and monitoring the recommendation, including to deliver on its active inclusion approach.

And finally, your Parliament can be an important actor also in relation to the implementation of this recommendation. We remain, of course, ready also to facilitate sharing good practices between Member States in order precisely to implement the recommendations.

Krzysztof Hetman, w imieniu grupy PPE. – Panie Przewodniczący! Panie Komisarzu! Szanowni Państwo! Problem ubóstwa i wykluczenia społecznego w Unii Europejskiej to poważny problem. W następstwie skutków pandemii Covid i dramatycznie rosnących kosztów życia ponownie stał się kwestią priorytetową i dotyczącą wszystkie bez wyjątku państwa członkowskie i ponad jedną czwartą naszych obywateli. To z całą pewnością złożony problem i musimy do niego podejść całościowo.

Systemy dochodów minimalnych mogą stanowić ważny element walki z ubóstwem i wykluczeniem. Mogą, ale tylko wtedy, gdy będą skrojone na miarę, łatwo dostępne dla potrzebujących i – co chyba najważniejsze – będą częścią większej całości systemu opieki społecznej oraz połączone ze środkami aktywizacji zawodowej, aby tych najbardziej wykluczonych ponownie włączyć na rynek pracy. Zapewnienie dostępu do edukacji, możliwość kształcenia i zindywidualizowane doradztwo zawodowe to kluczowe elementy nowoczesnego wsparcia społecznego, o których nie możemy zapominać. To wszystko nie jest łatwym zadaniem i uważam, że aby dało się to osiągnąć, krajowe systemy dochodu minimalnego muszą być projektowane jak najbliżej obywatela i odpowiadać specyfice każdego z państw członkowskich.

Dlatego nie jestem zwolennikiem tworzenia ogólnoeuropejskiej dyrektywy w tej sprawie. Uważam, że w dyspozycji zarówno państw członkowskich, jak i Komisji Europejskiej są inne narzędzia, które należy najpierw wdrożyć, i w pierwszej kolejności dążyć do tego, aby z istniejących możliwości wsparcia korzystali wszyscy do tego uprawnieni, gdyż niestety, ale szczerze mówiąc, w chwili obecnej nawet połowa nie korzysta z przysługującego im wsparcia. Apeluję więc do państw członkowskich o pragmatyczne i odpowiedzialne podejście i determinację we wdrażaniu niedawno przyjętych rekomendacji Rady w sprawie odpowiedzialnego dochodu minimalnego.

Estrella Durá Ferrandis, *en nombre del Grupo S&D*. — Señor presidente, señor comisario, señora ministra, señorías, es nuestro deber impulsar mecanismos que luchen contra las desigualdades sociales y ayuden a las personas en situación de vulnerabilidad. Los sistemas de renta mínima son un instrumento eficaz para luchar contra la pobreza y la exclusión, además de garantizar la integración y el acceso al mercado de trabajo, siempre y cuando sean adecuados y estén bien diseñados.

Este no es el caso a día de hoy. Además de las grandes diferencias existentes entre los esquemas de renta mínima de los diferentes Estados miembros, muchos los sitúan por debajo del umbral nacional de pobreza. Es evidente que los actuales esquemas nacionales no han dado lugar a una suficiente convergencia al alza ni a una reducción significativa de la pobreza. Por ello, como socialista, considero imprescindible una directiva europea que garantice que ninguna persona en la Unión Europea tenga unos ingresos económicos por debajo del umbral nacional de riesgo de pobreza o exclusión social y que asegure su integración en el mercado laboral.

Esta directiva es imprescindible para cumplir con el objetivo fijado en la Cumbre Social de Oporto de reducir el número de personas que viven en la pobreza o exclusión social en la Unión Europea en, al menos, quince millones para 2030. Por eso, desde este Parlamento pedimos también que se evalúe la situación de la pobreza en la Unión Europea en el período previo a ese objetivo de Oporto, y no en 2032, como propone la Comisión en su Recomendación.

En definitiva, son tiempos de impulsar medidas vinculantes e invertir en lo social para avanzar hacia una sociedad más justa y un progreso real e inclusivo.

Lucia Ďuriš Nicholsonová, *za skupinu Renew*. – Vážený pán predsedajúci. Čelíme mnohým krízam a evidentne sa nám nedarí budovať sociálnu Európu, v ktorej nikto nemôže zostať pozadu. Deväťdesiatpäť a pol milióna Európanov čelí sociálnemu vylúčeniu a chudobe. Jednou z najväčších zraniteľných skupín sú ženy, jednorodičovské domácnosti, ľudia so zdravotným postihnutím alebo ľudia z marginalizovaných skupín. Tridsať až päťdesiat percent z týchto ľudí nedostáva žiadnu podporu alebo dostane nedostatočnú podporu, a to napriek tomu, že všetky členské štáty majú zavedenú schému minimálneho príjmu. Minimálny príjem musia dostávať všetci ľudia, ktorí takúto pomoc potrebujú, ktorí sa ocitnú v núdzi, a to bez akýchkoľvek úradníckych prekážok. Štát je iba taký silný, aký silný je najslabší z jeho článkov, a Európska únia je taká silná, aké sú členské štáty, a nielen to, ľudia, ktorí žijú v členských štátoch. Preto si myslím, že Európska únia musí prevziať vedúcu úlohu v oblasti boja proti sociálnemu vylúčeniu. Zároveň však musí rešpektovať kompetencie členských štátov.

Sara Matthieu, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – Mr President, we are only halfway through the month, but for a lot of European citizens now the struggle begins. Transaction denied when you're trying to buy food at a supermarket. You're feeling guilty keeping your child at home because of a very expensive school trip. You're ignoring the calls of your landlord on your phone when he's asking where the rent is.

Today, a minimum income doesn't lift people out of poverty. Too many people are struggling every day, putting all of their energy into a fight for survival. The soaring cost of living crisis is hitting the most vulnerable households the hardest.

How do we lift people out of poverty? We need an adequate minimum income that ensures that every European citizen is able to buy food, to afford their rent, to be able to pay their electricity bills, and to be able to find a good job. This is about a young Spanish guy that, with no support from his parents, can now afford a good education. This is about a middle-aged Belgian woman who took care of the children instead of working, and whom we need to protect so she doesn't end up in poverty after a divorce. This is about supporting people with long-term illnesses who cannot work in order to make sure that they don't end up in poverty.

These are the people that would benefit most from minimum income above the poverty threshold, but as of today, not one of our Member States has decided to implement this. So tomorrow, colleagues, the choice is yours: do we continue on the same path and let the most vulnerable people down, or do we give these people the hope and the perspective they deserve by supporting the resolution of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL)? I ask you, vote tomorrow for a directive on minimum income. Vote for the most vulnerable people's future.

Elżbieta Rafalska, *w imieniu grupy ECR*. – Panie Przewodniczący! Panie Komisarzu! Koleżanki i Koledzy! Idea dochodu minimalnego jest społecznie nośna i ważna, bo dochód minimalny ma na celu przeciwdziałanie ubóstwu, wykluczeniu społecznemu poprzez propagowanie odpowiedniego wspierania dochodu, skutecznego dostępu do usług wspierających i podstawowych, integracji na rynku pracy osób do niej zdolnych. Jednak cele te należy realizować bez uszczerbku dla uprawnień państw członkowskich, ponieważ polityka społeczna i zatrudnienia jest realizowana przede wszystkim przez państwa członkowskie, do których należy identyfikacja potrzeb i dopasowanie ich do wewnętrznych możliwości. Inicjatywy Unii Europejskiej muszą być realizowane z poszanowaniem traktatowego podziału kompetencji, zasady pomocniczości i dialogu społecznego.

Decydującą kwestią dla mojej pracy jest zawarte w tekście rezolucji nawiązanie do dyrektywy w sprawie odpowiedniego dochodu. A więc ta dyrektywa jest głosem kluczowym, a jej odrzucenie w głosowaniu plenarnym przesądzi o naszej rekomendacji co do głosu finalnego.

Guido Reil, *im Namen der ID-Fraktion*. – Herr Präsident, Herr Kommissar, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Die EU möchte ein europäisches Mindesteinkommen einführen. Das ist erstaunlich, denn jeder Mitgliedstaat hat da schon eine eigene Gesetzgebung. In Deutschland war es mal Hartz IV. Hartz IV wurde eingeführt, um Langzeitarbeitslosen wieder den Weg in den Arbeitsmarkt zu ermöglichen. Funktioniert hat das ganz schlecht: 2022 haben es gerade mal 1,6 % der Hartz-IV-Bezieher geschafft.

Das ist auch spannend, denn gerade 2022 wurden Arbeitskräfte dringend benötigt, z. B. an den deutschen Flughäfen. Es ist traurig, dass es kein einziger Hartz-IV-Empfänger geschafft hat, einen Koffer auf ein Transportband zu legen. Spannend ist auch: 5,5 Millionen Menschen bezogen in Deutschland Hartz IV, davon 2,5 Millionen Ausländer. Die Zahl ist seit 2016 um 45 % gestiegen. Spannend ist auch: 66 % der Syrer beziehen in Deutschland Hartz IV.

Und jetzt gibt es noch etwas Neues: Jetzt gibt es das Bürgergeld. Es gibt also noch mal eine Schippe drauf. Das ist für mich ein Schlag ins Gesicht für die vielen Menschen, die im Niedriglohnsektor arbeiten, und das sind in Deutschland viele, viele Millionen.

Wenn wir die Armut bekämpfen wollen, müssen wir diesen Menschen helfen; wir müssen diese Menschen unterstützen, und wir müssen den Bürgergeldbeziehern die Möglichkeit geben, auch zu arbeiten, gemeinnützig zu arbeiten, um Wertschätzung zu erfahren. Niemand darf sich in der sozialen Hängematte ausruhen.

Özlem Demirel, *im Namen der Fraktion The Left*. – Herr Präsident! Menschen, die am Monatsende nur noch trockene Nudeln essen, Kinder, die hungrig zur Schule gehen, Rentnerinnen, die in Mülleimern Pfandflaschen suchen, Arbeiter, die trotz Arbeit nicht mehr über die Runden kommen – längst sind das keine Einzelschicksale mehr.

Schon vor den Preisexplosionen war jeder fünfte EU-Einwohner von Armut bedroht. Wie viele sind es inzwischen, Herr Kommissar? Wie viele Menschen, denen das Gefühl gegeben wird, sie seien ganz persönlich schuld und gescheitert? Wie viele Menschen sind das? Dabei ist doch niemand, der nicht zur Klasse der Superreichen gehört, wirklich vor Armut geschützt.

Armut ist auch kein Einzelschicksal. Sie hat System, und die reiche EU leistet sich viel zu viel Armut. Deshalb ist es richtig und überfällig, dass wir über Mindestsicherungssysteme in der EU beraten. Doch wir brauchen nicht nur eine Empfehlung, Herr Kommissar, sondern eine verbindliche Richtlinie. Wir müssen nämlich sicherstellen, dass wir Grundsicherungssysteme in allen Mitgliedstaaten haben, die ein Leben in Würde sichern, die das existenzielle Minimum absichern, die Teilhabe für alle ermöglichen, die den Zugang zu Bildung, Umschulung und Weiterbildung gewähren und die gute Arbeitsplätze schaffen, die vor Armut schützen.

Im Übrigen sind schwache Sozialsicherungssysteme auch immer ein Angriff auf gute Löhne. Kolleginnen und Kollegen, die Schere zwischen Arm und Reich ist nicht gottgegeben. Ihre Ursache hat systematische Gründe. Ja, es ist die Profitmaximierung, und politische Entscheidungen der Vergangenheit haben diese Situation verschärft. Deshalb lassen Sie uns dem einen Riegel vorschieben. Herr Kommissar, bitte noch in dieser Legislaturperiode eine Richtlinie!

Ádám Kósa (NI). – Tisztelt Elnök Úr! A minimáljövedelem alapvetése, hogy minden embernek kötelező ezt segélyként adni élete végéig. Ezt a megközelítést több okból is elutasítom. Többen lesznek inaktívak, mert a segélyt választják a munka helyett. Ezért az európai országok versenyképessége leromlik. A szociálpolitikai ellátórendszer kiegyensúlyozottsága megbomlik, és egyre kevesebb lesz a befizető, illetve egyre több lesz a kedvezményezett. Ez garantált gazdasági összeomlást és államcsődöt jelent. Magyarországon tíz év alatt közel egymillió új munkahelyet hoztak létre. A személyi jövedelem adókulcsa egységesen 15 százalék mindenkinek, és igen komoly családi adókedvezményrendszer segíti az emberek jobb életét, ahogyan a 25 év alatti fiatalok számára az adómentesség. A munkaalapú társadalom a kulcs a jobb és igazságos jövő felé. Mert ha munka van, minden van.

Dennis Radtke (PPE). – Herr Präsident, Herr Kommissar, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Die jüngsten Zahlen des letzten Eurobarometers machen eigentlich die Dramatik und die Notwendigkeit dieser Debatte noch einmal deutlich. 92 % der Europäer fürchten sich vor sozialem Abstieg. 42 % sagen, sie haben aktuell große Schwierigkeiten, überhaupt ihre laufenden Rechnungen zu bezahlen, und 45 % sagen, dass sie in der Inflationskrise bisher einen erheblichen Verlust an Lebensstandard erfahren haben.

Das kommt sozusagen alles noch hinzu zu der Situation, die wir vorher hatten, die wir auch vor COVID hatten, wo wir das Thema Armutsbekämpfung hier schon im Fokus hatten und gesagt haben, die Situation ist dramatisch, aber die Situation ist im Grunde durch COVID und die Inflationskrise noch dramatischer geworden, und ich werbe darum, das Thema weiter ganzheitlich zu bespielen.

Ich glaube, wir können es uns nicht so einfach machen und sagen, wenn wir eine Richtlinie machen, dann haben wir einen erfolgreichen Schritt in Richtung Armutsbekämpfung getan. Mir ist einfach wichtig, dass wir insgesamt den Weg, den wir hier mit einer großen Mehrheit in diesem Haus gemeinsam beschritten haben, fortsetzen.

Wir haben als EU wirklich geliefert; wir haben den europäischen Mindestlohn auf den Weg gebracht. Wir sind jetzt dran beim Thema Plattformregulierung. Das, was wir beim Thema ESF+ auf die Schiene gesetzt haben, kann sich sehen lassen. Auch das ist ein wichtiger Aspekt für das Thema Armutsbekämpfung und für die Organisation von Partizipation.

Denn das muss doch insgesamt auch unser Antrieb sein. Wir wollen doch nicht Menschen alimentieren, sondern wir wollen Teilhabe für Menschen organisieren. Deswegen mache ich es mir nicht ganz so einfach und sage: Richtlinie einfach ja oder nein, dann sind alle Probleme gelöst, sondern ich werbe weiterhin für einen ganzheitlichen Ansatz.

Agnes Jongerius (S&D). – Voorzitter, ook voor de ouderen met een klein pensioen zijn de prijzen van de boodschappen gestegen. Ook voor de arbeidsongeschikten is de huur omhooggegaan. En ook voor de mensen met een bijstandsuitkering is de energierekening niet meer op te brengen. Overall in Europa nemen de betalingsproblemen toe. En de armoedecijfers gaan de lucht in, samen met de rijzende prijzen.

De minimuminkomens zijn dus niet meer toereikend om de rekeningen te kunnen betalen en een fatsoenlijk leven te kunnen leiden. Niet alleen het minimumloon, maar ook het minimuminkomen moet toereikend zijn voor mensen. Dat moeten we durven te vragen van de lidstaten. Dat moeten we durven te eisen van de lidstaten.

Daarom ben ik voor een richtlijn rond het minimuminkomen. Als iemand mij zegt dat dit onmogelijk is, dan zeg ik: "dat zullen we nog wel eens zien". We hebben geen tijd meer om met de duimen te draaien. Vertel mij niet dat het onmogelijk is. Laten we ervoor gaan: een richtlijn "minimuminkomen".

Max Orville (Renew). – Monsieur le Président, Monsieur le Commissaire, plus d'une personne sur cinq est menacée de pauvreté ou d'exclusion sociale dans l'Union européenne. Derrière ce chiffre, il y a des individus en souffrance. Cette réalité est insupportable. Face à ce constat, il est capital de pouvoir s'appuyer sur des régimes de revenus minimums robustes. C'est une mesure de justice sociale. Le Conseil a adopté sa recommandation sur le sujet. Il s'agit d'un instrument non contraignant pour les États membres.

Monsieur le Commissaire, je vous appelle à présenter une directive sur le revenu minimum. Cette directive doit pouvoir assurer le niveau adéquat des revenus minimums dans chaque pays pour que chacun puisse vivre dignement. Elle doit aussi coordonner nos approches pour renforcer les politiques de retour vers l'emploi. C'est notre responsabilité d'élus d'arriver à une Europe plus juste, qui promeut partout la dimension émancipatrice du travail, mais qui toujours accompagne ceux qui en ont le plus besoin.

Mounir Satouri (Verts/ALE). – Monsieur le Président, Monsieur le Commissaire, Madame la Ministre, le constat est sans appel: montée de la précarité, crise, augmentation de la pauvreté et difficulté de se nourrir. Il nous faut garantir un revenu minimum digne pour toutes et tous. Et pour pouvoir le garantir, il nous faut une directive, une directive forte qui l'impose.

Alors j'entends que certains s'expriment contre ce projet de directive. Comment votre doigt peut-il trembler quand il s'agit enfin d'apporter sa protection aux plus vulnérables? Aujourd'hui, en France, par exemple, les jeunes font la queue pour pouvoir bénéficier de l'aide alimentaire pour se nourrir. Et notre RSA ne leur permet pas de bénéficier de ce revenu minimum. Aujourd'hui, il n'y a que deux États membres qui permettent de garantir à leur population un revenu minimum digne de ce nom.

Alors, chers collègues, je vous appelle solennellement à faire pencher la balance pour qu'enfin une directive européenne soit adoptée et à ne pas être dans le camp de celles et ceux pour qui la dignité des gens n'est pas essentielle.

Λευτέρης Νικολάου-Αλαβάνος (NI). – Κύριε Πρόεδρε, το ψήφισμα για το ελάχιστο εισόδημα χύνει κροκοδείλια δάκρυα για τη δεινή κατάσταση των εργαζομένων που δουλεύουν για ψίχουλα και αντιμετωπίζουν την κούρσα του πληθωρισμού, των τιμών βασικών προϊόντων και υπηρεσιών, το ξεσπίτωμα από τις τράπεζες και τα funds. Καλεί την Επιτροπή να καταθέσει σχέδιο οδηγίας αντίστοιχης με εκείνης για τον κατώτατο μισθό, της οδηγίας δηλαδή που ονομάζει την απαράδεκτη κατάργηση των Συλλογικών Συμβάσεων Εργασίας και τον καθορισμό κατώτατου μισθού με νόμο εθνική παράδοση της Ελλάδας και άλλων κρατών μελών.

Είναι γνωστή η στρατηγική των ελαχίστων. Την εφαρμόζουν χρόνια η κυβέρνηση της Νέας Δημοκρατίας, του ΣΥΡΙΖΑ, του ΠΑΣΟΚ/ΚΙΝ.ΑΛ. στη χώρα μου: Μοιράζει ψίχουλα με pass σε όσους στερούνται τα στοιχειώδη, που τα παίρνει από εκείνους που είναι λιγότερο φτωχοί. Σπρώχνει τα κοινωνικά δικαιώματα προς τα κάτω, ορίζει μια γραμμή εξαθλίωσης πάνω από την οποία κανείς δεν δικαιούται στήριξη, ενώ οι όμιλοι πουκούνουν με χρήματα του λαού.

Ενίσχυση του λαϊκού εισοδήματος αποτελούν τα μέτρα που διεκδικούν με αγώνα σήμερα οι εργαζόμενοι, το ταξικό συνδικαλιστικό κίνημα: συλλογικές συμβάσεις εργασίας, αυξήσεις σε μισθούς και συντάξεις, στη βάση των σύγχρονων αναγκών, κατάργηση του ΦΠΑ στα είδη λαϊκής κατανάλωσης, των ειδικών φόρων κατανάλωσης σε καύσιμα και ενέργεια, διαγραφή των πανωτοκιών και των χρεών λαϊκών νοικοκυριών στις τράπεζες και προστασία της λαϊκής κατοικίας από τους πλειστηριασμούς.

Gabriele Bischoff (S&D). – Herr Präsident, Kolleginnen und Kollegen, Herr Kommissar, Frau Ministerin! Es ist richtig, dass wir diese Entschließung hier auf den Weg bringen. Aber ich möchte noch einmal in Erinnerung rufen, worum es geht. Wir reden nicht darüber, ob wir Sozialsysteme brauchen oder nicht, was einige ja schon infrage stellen, sondern wir reden über die Angemessenheit dieser Systeme und die Zugänglichkeit. Hier sehen wir, dass es riesengroße Probleme in Europa gibt.

Ich frage mich ehrlich manchmal – ich weiß nicht, wie es dem Kommissar geht –, ob es Fluch oder Segen ist, schon so lange in der europäischen Sozialpolitik aktiv zu sein. Wie viele Präsidentschaften, wie viele Entschließungen, wie viele OMK-Prozesse, wie viel freiwillige Selbstverpflichtung ich schon gesehen habe – keine davon wirkt.

Deshalb kann ich mir nicht vorstellen, einen neuen EU-Kommissionspräsidenten oder eine neue EU-Kommissionspräsidentin zu wählen, der bzw. die die nicht ganz oben auf die Agenda setzt, eine Richtlinie für ein Mindesteinkommen auf den Weg zu bringen. Ich werde diese Richtlinie immer als die Fintan-Farrell-Richtlinie in Ehren halten – wo immer er jetzt ist. Es ist einfach an der Zeit und überfällig, in Bezug auf die Richtlinie zu Taten zu schreiben.

Διαδικασία «catch the eye»

Milan Brglez (S&D). – Gospod predsednik, spoštovani komisar, kolegice in kolegi!

Varstvo pred tveganjem revščine je temelj socialne države, človekove varnosti in svobodne izbire.

V tem mandatu smo uspeli narediti prvi korak s sprejetjem direktive o ustreznih minimalnih plačah. Ker pa je bila ključna pravzaprav politična volja in ne toliko pravna osnova, ta politična volja je bila ključna tudi, ko so države članice intervenirale v času pandemije in prilagodile svoje sheme socialnih minimalnih dohodkov.

Direktiva o zadostnem minimalnem dohodku, ki jo zahtevamo, je logičen odziv na sosledje kriz in predstavlja trajen mehanizem na permanentno krizo. Jamčila naj bi dostojno življenje tistim z najnižjimi dohodki, dlje časa odsotnim s trga delovne sile ter socialno ogroženim, mladim, upokojencem ter drugim, ki jim grozi revščina ali socialno izključevanje.

Jutrišnje glasovanje, tudi s predlogom direktive, torej je preizkus naše politične volje in resnosti obljub, da je res socialna Evropa v službi ljudi.

Rosa D'Amato (Verts/ALE). – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, la surreale polemica della destra contro il reddito minimo è una prova lampante che il patto sociale non esiste più. Noi Verdi chiediamo semplicemente una direttiva europea che porti il reddito minimo al di sopra della soglia di povertà, affinché diventi uno strumento di vera inclusione sociale e non di mera sopravvivenza.

Un reddito minimo adeguato va accompagnato da un sistema di politiche attive ambizioso per far fronte la crescente povertà anche tra chi lavora. Non è accettabile che in Europa governi come quello italiano usino una retorica disgustosa per distrarre i cittadini, aizzarli gli uni contro gli altri per nascondere la sua incompetenza e le sue vere intenzioni.

La verità? Ridurre il numero dei beneficiari e l'importo complessivo del reddito ha un solo obiettivo: forzare i più vulnerabili ad accettare lavori precari e malpagati. Abbiate il coraggio di dirlo, però.

Sandra Pereira (The Left). – Senhor Presidente, as políticas de rendimento mínimo devem ter natureza temporária, transitória e assegurar um nível mínimo de rendimento que permita viver com dignidade àqueles que se encontram em situação de maior privação e vulnerabilidade.

A introdução de regimes de rendimento mínimo em todos os Estados-Membros da União Europeia, consistindo em medidas específicas de apoio às pessoas cujo rendimento é insuficiente e na garantia do direito à saúde, educação, habitação, entre outros direitos fundamentais, a par de medidas de inclusão, visa garantir um nível adequado de vida e promover a integração social.

Mas não nos iludamos. O caminho mais eficaz de combate à pobreza radica no combate às suas causas. São necessárias medidas concretas que promovam políticas públicas de emprego e de apoio e promoção da capacidade produtiva nacional, com vista à criação de emprego com direitos, à valorização do trabalho e dos trabalhadores, ao aumento dos salários, à valorização dos serviços públicos e à garantia do direito à habitação.

Matjaž Nemeč (S&D). – Gospod predsednik!

Energetska kriza in druginja, s katerima se soočamo tudi v Sloveniji, sta izjemno pospešili socialne stiske in socialno neenakost. Grozljive posledice se kažejo v povečani socialni izključenosti.

Kar 95 milijonov Evropejk in Evropejcev je bilo v letu 2021 izpostavljenih tveganju revščine. Te številke pa so se lani še povečale. To pomeni, da se kar ena petina naših državljanek in državljanov težko prebije čez mesec. Ta podatek mora strezniti vse dvomljivce, da odločne politike za socialno vključenost potrebujemo tukaj in zdaj.

Vse države članice morajo obvezno sprejeti ukrepe za pomoč aktivnega vključevanja, torej pomoč, ki bo ljudem pomagala najprej in naprej v dostojno življenje. Takšno odločnost smo lani jeseni pokazali s sprejemom zakonskega paketa o minimalni plači. Takšno odločenost pričakujemo tudi jutri.

Ne pustimo, da naša dobra namera ostane le na papirju, zato „da“ podpora resoluciji Parlamenta, še večji „da“ za konkretne ukrepe, za socialno vključenost po celotni Evropski uniji.

Leila Chaïbi (The Left). – Monsieur le Président, en France, il existe un revenu minimum qui s'appelle le revenu de solidarité active, le RSA. Mais quand on a moins de 25 ans, on n'y a pas droit. La France est un des seuls pays de l'Union européenne à mettre une condition d'âge dans l'accès au revenu minimum. Des milliers de jeunes Français se retrouvent condamnés à démarrer leur vie dans la pauvreté parce qu'ils sont discriminés dans l'accès au RSA.

Une directive peut remédier à ça. Pas une simple recommandation aux États membres, une directive. Une directive contraignante, avec une clause de non-discrimination, obligerait la France à ouvrir l'accès au RSA aux moins de 25 ans. Monsieur le Commissaire, faites une directive. Montrez aux jeunes Français qu'ils peuvent compter sur vous, qu'ils peuvent compter sur l'Union européenne.

(Λήξη της διαδικασίας «catch the eye»)

Nicolas Schmit, *membre de la Commission*. – Monsieur le Président, chers membres du Parlement, d'abord, je tiens à vous remercier pour avoir organisé ces débats. Pendant un peu plus d'une heure, vous avez donné une voix à ceux qui, bien qu'ils soient des millions en Europe, n'en ont pas.

Et je crois que c'est un pas vers plus de justice. C'est un pas aussi pour leur dire qu'on ne les oublie pas. On ne doit pas les oublier. Et le projet européen est un projet, doit être un projet inclusif. Il ne peut pas être un projet qui fait une croix sur des millions d'hommes, de femmes et d'enfants qui simplement ne savent pas comment survivre, comment vivre le lendemain.

Je crois que vous avez bien décrit la situation concrète de millions de citoyens européens, leur détresse. Parfois leur désespoir aussi. Et il est illusoire, illusoire, de penser qu'on peut se sortir tout seul d'une telle situation. Donc il est extrêmement important d'avoir des soutiens, d'avoir une vraie politique sociale, d'avoir un revenu minimum sur lequel on peut compter, mais qui vous permet aussi de vous en sortir, d'organiser votre vie et d'aller effectivement vers l'emploi si vous pouvez travailler. Je crois qu'il y a beaucoup de lignes, beaucoup de perspectives qui ont été ouvertes dans ce débat.

Vous me demandez une directive. Et je ne peux pas vous cacher que ma première idée, quand on s'est occupé de ce sujet important – il faut d'abord reconnaître que cette commission s'est lancée sur ce sujet – et donc, la première idée, c'était effectivement d'envisager une directive. Malheureusement – et croyez-moi je n'aime pas trop avancer des arguments juridiques – mais malheureusement le traité ne nous donne pas beaucoup de marge.

Le traité n'a pas été écrit pour effectivement intervenir dans les politiques sociales des États membres. Et d'ailleurs j'ai entendu tous ceux qui défendaient ici les intérêts des personnes frappées par la pauvreté, plaidant à la fois pour des instruments en matière de revenu minimum et en même temps chaque fois, invoquer la subsidiarité, le droit des États de déterminer jusqu'où ils peuvent, ils veulent aller.

Et donc je pense que, à ce stade, peut-être le choix entre la directive et la recommandation n'est pas la question la plus essentielle. La question essentielle, c'est la volonté politique à l'échelle européenne, à l'échelle des États membres, d'aller de l'avant et de dire: la pauvreté est un scandale, c'est un scandale pour notre société et on veut aborder ce problème. La précarité n'est pas une fatalité, n'est pas une fatalité. Et je crois que c'est cela finalement, ce qui est inscrit dans le socle des droits sociaux.

Et donc cette recommandation met en place au moins un appel permanent, un processus qui oblige les États membres à faire face à leurs responsabilités. Les responsabilités effectivement de lutter, de combattre efficacement, individuellement contre la pauvreté, la pauvreté qui a un visage, qui a des noms, et de ne pas laisser de côté des millions de personnes qui théoriquement auraient le droit de toucher un revenu minimum mais qui ne le touchent pas, soit parce qu'ils ne le savent pas, parce qu'ils ne savent pas se débrouiller, soit parce qu'ils ont honte.

Eh bien, cette honte-là, ce n'est pas de leur côté qu'il faut la rechercher, la honte est du côté qui laisse des gens dans la pauvreté. Et donc, bien sûr, nous allons mettre en application cette recommandation. Et peut-être, si un jour on peut modifier le traité, il faut renforcer cet aspect du traité en matière de lutte contre la pauvreté, pour plus de justice, pour plus d'inclusion.

Et c'est vrai que la jeunesse, notre recommandation est très claire à ce sujet On ne fait pas de la discrimination sur la jeunesse. On n'exclut pas les jeunes d'un droit, d'un droit essentiel, parce qu'il y a des millions de jeunes aujourd'hui qui doivent faire la file pour avoir de l'aide alimentaire, qui ne savent pas comment financer leurs études, qui n'ont pas le goût de chercher un emploi parce qu'ils n'ont pas la force, parce qu'effectivement ils ne savent pas comment et de quoi le lendemain sera fait.

Eh bien, cet appel là que vous avez initié aujourd'hui, il faut qu'il soit entendu et qui soit traduit en politiques concrètes.

Jessika Roswall, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Mr President, honourable Members, Commissioner, I would like to thank you all for this debate on this important topic. Minimum income schemes as a part of our social safety nets is a tool to contribute to reducing poverty and combating social exclusion. The recommendation is an encouragement to Member States to set their income support at a level that allows a life in dignity while safeguarding the incentives to integrate and remain in the labour market for those who can work. It is within the Member States' competence to define and organise their social protection system. But I would like to emphasise that the broad support shown by the Member States are a proof of the importance attached to this topic. There is a high level of ambition among the Member States to ensure that minimum income support is at an adequate level that fosters participation in society and contributes to a sustainable participation in the labour market. The Council recommendations recently adopted reflect just that. But once again, thank you very much for the debate and thank you for your attention.

Πρόεδρος. – Η συζήτηση έληξε. Έλαβα δύο προτάσεις ψηφίσματος για την περάτωση αυτής της συζήτησης.

Η ψηφοφορία θα διεξαχθεί αύριο.

Η συνεδρίαση διακόπτεται για λίγα λεπτά και θα επαναληφθεί στις 3.00 με την Ώρα των ερωτήσεων προς την Επιτροπή.

Γραπτές δηλώσεις (άρθρο 171 του Κανονισμού)

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D), *raštu*. – Europos Sąjungoje daugiau nei 95 mln. ES gyventojų gresia skurdas arba socialinė atskirtis. Skurde atsiduria ne tik dirbantys žmonės, bet ir jų vaikai. Šiandien turime apie 18 milijonų skurstančių vaikų. Skurdas ir socialinė atskirtis yra asmeninės ir kolektyvinės socialinės atsakomybės klausimas ir jų priežastys sietinos su valstybių narių ir ES ekonomine ir socialine politika. Socialinę atskirtį dar labiau padidino COVID pandemija bei tebesitęsiantis karas Rusijoje, kas iššaukė dešimtmečiais nematytą infliaciją, maisto ir energijos kainų augimą. Minimalios pajamų sistemos yra skirtos padėti pragyventi žmonėms, neturintiems kitų pajamų šaltinių dėl įvairių priežasčių. Tačiau labai dažnai minimalios pajamų sistemos neatitinka realaus pragyvenimo lygio ir labiausiai pažeidžiami žmonės atsiduria skurde. Nors šiuo visose valstybėse narėse taikomos įvairių rūšių MPS, tačiau jų poveikis didinant konvergenciją ar mažinant skurdą nėra pakankamas, o kartais nustatytas MP dydis yra netgi mažesnis nei skurdo rizikos. Tai reiškia, kad asmenys, gaunantys minimalias pajamas, neturi pakankamai pajamų, kad galėtų pragyventi. Esami privalomos teisinės galios neturintys mechanizmai, kaip antai konkrečioms šalims skirtos rekomendacijos (KŠSR) ir pagal Europos semestrą nustatyta socialinių rodiklių suvestinė, padėjo kovoti su skurdu ir socialine atskirtimi, tačiau jie yra nepakankami. Todėl mums būtina turėti veiksmingą ir privalomą teisės aktą dėl minimalių pajamų sistemų.

Jarosław Duda (PPE), *na piśmie*. – Na wstępnie chciałbym podziękować sprawozdawcom za przygotowanie tego kompleksowego dokumentu. Od 1995 roku zajmuję się polityką społeczną, temat więc jest mi bliski i znany. Uważam, że opracowując strategię wsparcia, należy oprzeć się na podejściu opartym na cyklu życia i obejmującym szeroki wachlarz działań. Pomoc może być potrzebna na każdym etapie życia. Cieszę się, że idea ta została zastosowana w nowej strategii Komisji Europejskiej w sprawie opieki długoterminowej. Zgadzam się też z autorami rezolucji, że same systemy dochodu minimalnego nie wystarczą, aby wyciągnąć ludzi z ubóstwa. Jestem zdania, że potrzebujemy znacznie szerszych systemów wsparcia, obejmujących również kształcenie i szkolenie lub rozwój umiejętności w celu reintegracji na rynku pracy dla osób, które mogą pracować, czy włączenie społeczne osiągnięte poprzez proaktywne postawy pracowników socjalnych. Potrzebujemy dobrych systemów łączenia zasiłków z aktywnym wsparciem zatrudnienia. Tylko dobre i kompleksowe systemy pozwolą na osiągnięcie celów wyznaczonych podczas szczytu w Porto, czyli wyciągnięcia co najmniej 15 milionów osób z ubóstwa.

Laura Ferrara (NI), *per iscritto*. – La forza politica a cui appartengo, il M5S, ha sempre agito per proteggere la dignità di chi vive in stato di bisogno. Lo ha fatto anche con l'introduzione, per la prima volta in Italia, del «Reddito di Cittadinanza». È uno strumento ancora perfetto, che prevede requisiti, condizioni e obblighi del beneficiario, al fine di perseguire obiettivi di politiche attive del lavoro e di inclusione sociale, favorendo crescita occupazionale ed economica.

Mentre nell'Unione si dibatte su come migliorare l'accessibilità, l'adeguatezza e l'efficacia dei regimi di reddito minimo, anche attraverso una proposta di direttiva, il Governo della Meloni persegue la scellerata decisione di abolire il «Reddito di Cittadinanza».

L'intenzione è di sostituirlo con misure che rischiano di ridurre, anziché aumentare, le risorse da destinare a persone e famiglie svantaggiate, sempre più danneggiate dall'aumento dei prezzi energetici e del costo della vita. Continueremo la nostra battaglia in Italia e in Europa per garantire a tutti una vita dignitosa ed un'occupazione di qualità. Nessuno deve rimanere indietro.

Cindy Franssen (PPE), *schriftelijk*. – Tijdens de afgelopen plenaire zitting hebben we over een resolutie gestemd waarin wordt opgeroepen tot een Europees adequaat minimuminkomen. In 2021 liepen 95 miljoen Europeanen een armoederisico, waarvan 18 miljoen kinderen. De Europese Commissie heeft de ambitie om in samenwerking met de lidstaten tegen 2030 het aantal mensen in armoede met minstens 15 miljoen te verlagen. Daarvoor hebben we de voorbije jaren al heel wat initiatieven genomen, zoals de loontransparantie, de adequate minimumlonen, de kindergarantie, het sociaal klimaatfonds, het Europees Platform voor de bestrijding van dakloosheid en het lopende dossier voor een betere sociale bescherming van platformwerkers.

Door de energiecrisis en hoge inflatie rijzen de kosten voor levensonderhoud inzake energie, huisvesting, voeding... de pan uit. Mensen kunnen nauwelijks overleven. Steeds meer gezinnen geraken in moeilijkheden. Daarom is het tijd om alle zeilen bij te zetten en te voorzien in een minimuminkomen voor de meest kwetsbaren. Dat is uiteraard geen universeel Europees minimuminkomen. Daarvoor zijn de verschillen tussen de lidstaten te groot. Alle Europese landen hebben al een soort van minimuminkomen, maar het is te laag om effectief te zijn. We moeten het optrekken richting de Europese armoederisicogrens. Armoede mag in onze samenleving geen plaats hebben. Europa zal sociaal zijn, of zal niet zijn.

Katarína Roth Neveďalová (S&D), *pisomne*. – Debata o minimálnom príjme je dnes ešte dôležitejšia ako inokedy, pretože v Európe máme obrovskú infláciu a rastú nám ceny potravín. Zároveň tu máme aj energetickú krízu, pre ktorú nám krachujú firmy. Toto všetko dokopy spôsobuje, že ľudia si za svoje peniaze môžu dovoliť stále menej a menej. Aktuálne na Slovensku poklesli reálne mzdy najviac za posledných 20 rokov, čo si nikto nevšíma. Preto treba zabezpečiť podporu najzraniteľnejších skupín, aby sociálne dávky a príspevky, ale hlavne mzdy ľudí boli dostačujúce na dôstojný život.

Podľa informácií EUROSTAT-u bolo v roku 2021 viac ako 95 miliónov ľudí v EÚ ohrozených chudobou a sociálnym vylúčením, čo predstavuje až 21 % našej populácie. Pandémia odhalila medzery v systémoch sociálnej ochrany a vojna na Ukrajine spolu s infláciou rastúcou rýchlejšie ako príjmy situáciu ešte viac zhoršila. Členské štáty síce majú systémy minimálneho príjmu, no všade fungujú inak a nie vždy sú primerané. Často sa dokonca nachádzajú pod vnútroštátnou hranicou chudoby a nemotivujú ľudí k návratu na pracovný trh. Preto je potrebné, aby sme sa touto tematikou zaoberali na európskej úrovni a nastavili si aspoň minimálne spoločné štandardy tak, aby nikto v EÚ nemal príjem pod vnútroštátnou hranicou chudoby alebo sociálneho vylúčenia.

Stefania Zambelli (ID), *per iscritto*. – Gentili colleghi, i regimi di reddito minimo, presenti in diversi Stati membri, sono sicuramente un utile strumento per combattere la povertà assoluta e per garantire una forma di sostentamento a chi non può lavorare.

Tuttavia essi non devono trasformarsi in un dannoso ostacolo per l'accesso al mondo del lavoro. Dunque le persistenti richieste da parte dell'Europa per una direttiva sul reddito minimo non possono essere condivisibili. Occorre mettere le aziende e tutte le realtà produttive nella condizione di creare lavoro, il modo più efficace di combattere la povertà è infatti quello di creare un'occupazione stabile e di qualità.

Bisogna, inoltre, ribadire come le prerogative di stabilire i criteri sui redditi minimi siano solamente in capo agli Stati membri. Ogni regime di reddito minimo deve solamente rappresentare una forma di sostegno temporaneo volta a combattere l'esclusione sociale per incoraggiare l'accesso al mondo del lavoro, non per impedirlo.

VORSITZ: RAINER WIELAND*Vizepräsident***11. Tkomplija tas-seduta**

(Die Sitzung wird um 15.05 Uhr wieder aufgenommen.)

12. Approvazzjoni tal-Minuti tas-seduta ta' qabel

Der Präsident. – Das Protokoll der gestrigen Sitzung und die angenommenen Texte sind verfügbar.

Ich sehe keine Einwände.

Das Protokoll ist damit genehmigt.

13. Hin għall-mistoqsijiet (Kummissjoni) - Kif niżguraw is-sigurtà tal-enerġija fl-UE fl-2023

Der Präsident. – Als nächster Punkt der Tagesordnung folgt die Fragestunde mit Anfragen an die Kommission gemäß Artikel 137 der Geschäftsordnung.

Ich begrüße Frau Kommissarin Simson zu dieser Fragestunde.

Das Thema dieser Fragestunde lautet: „Wie lässt sich die Energieversorgungssicherheit in der EU im Jahr 2023 gewährleisten?“

Die Fragestunde wird etwa 90 Minuten dauern. Die Redezeiten sind: eine Minute, um eine Frage zu stellen, zwei Minuten für die Antwort, 30 Sekunden für eine Zusatzfrage und weitere zwei Minuten für die Antwort.

Ich weise Sie darauf hin, dass eine mögliche Zusatzfrage nur dann zulässig ist, wenn sie in einem engen Zusammenhang mit der Hauptfrage steht und keine neue Frage enthält.

Wenn Sie eine Frage stellen möchten, ersuche ich Sie, Ihren Antrag jetzt zu registrieren, indem Sie die Funktion Ihres Abstimmungsgeräts für spontane Wortmeldungen nutzen, nachdem Sie Ihre Stimmkarte eingeschoben haben. Während der Fragestunde erfolgen Wortmeldungen von Ihrem Sitzplatz aus, und ich ersuche alle Redner, die ihnen zugewiesene Redezeit einzuhalten.

Die Kolleginnen und Kollegen benötigen möglicherweise einige Augenblicke, um ihren Antrag, eine Frage zu stellen, über ihr Abstimmungsgerät zu registrieren. Daher ersuche ich Sie erneut, Ihren Antrag jetzt zu stellen, und wir beginnen mit der ersten Frage.

Maria Spyraki (PPE). – Commissioner Simson, my question is concerning the issue of production of green hydrogen in the framework of how to ensure energy security in the period of 2023. I would like to focus on the issue of the delegated acts that the Commission has already tabled.

According to my opinion, and I think that we can share this opinion in this house, the industry needs clarity, needs stability and needs predictability. In this regard, I would like to ask you if the Commission is ready to give some kind of clarification when it comes to the use of hydrogen, the definition of green hydrogen for industrial reasons, for production reasons, for chemical reasons and at the same time for fuel. And secondly, if you are ready to give clarification when it comes to the term of 'additionality', which is provided in the delegated acts.

Kadri Simson, Member of the Commission. – Thank you, honourable Member, and thank you for allowing me to address this still very important question: how we will be better prepared for next winter in the current volatile environment of energy prices.

As you know, clean hydrogen is one of our workstreams that allows us to replace natural gas in the sectors where electrification is not possible or is just too costly. And the European Commission has been debating the precise wording of the Hydrogen Delegated Act for two years. We really did listen to all the options and reached out to all the stakeholders. We knew that we could not make everyone happy but there is no industry segment that fundamentally opposes our regulatory framework.

And after the Commission published the delegated act, there have been some very promising developments. For example, Thyssenkrupp announced a 2 billion investment in clean steel, which will require one driver tower of hydrogen by 2030. And I think that this is a clear testimony that the delegated act works and gives certainty and predictability for the sector. And we also see support from hydrogen consumers, the hydrogen infrastructure developers. And also we will address the remaining challenges after two days when, accompanied with our Net-Zero Industry Act, there will also be a dedicated part on a hydrogen bank.

We do have already project pipelines in place year by year. And last year alone, the total volume of electrolyser projects before 2030 grew by 17%. And this shows that the industry is increasingly confident about the chances for the European market, and indeed these projects are all across Europe.

And from an international perspective, there is great interest towards our regulatory framework. We aim to create a global certification scheme that other major market players will also acknowledge, and that gives also a possibility to scale up the hydrogen market.

Maria Spyraki (PPE). – Mr President, coming to scaling up the market, I would like to go to the Hydrogen Valleys. And of course, you are familiar with the joint undertaking. We have a very few number of hydrogen valleys in the EU ground – two or three. And I would like to ask you if the Commission is preparing some action in this regard, particularly in terms of raising awareness at the regional level.

Kadri Simson, Member of the Commission. – Indeed, we have set up an EU-level framework that allows regional developers to share the best practices. But on top of that, we are addressing the remaining bottlenecks, the infrastructure question and, of course, access to affordable, renewable electricity. Just an hour ago, the Commission adopted an electricity-market design that will promote renewables, that will give clear incentives to accelerate renewables by using PPAs, and that should also allow hydrogen projects to scale up in speed because, indeed, by 2030 we will need 10 million tons of green hydrogen produced domestically here in EU.

Dan Nica (S&D). – Doamnă președinte, doamna comisar, pentru mine și grupul meu politic este foarte clar că dacă vrem să avem o securitate energetică în Uniunea Europeană, trebuie să ne uităm la modul în care reușim să reducem, să eliminăm această volatilitate excesivă a pieței de energie electrică, de gaze în Uniunea Europeană.

Este clar că trebuie să creștem capacitățile de energii regenerabile, eficiența energetică și este pentru mine o întrebare cum facem ca, încercând să creștem mult, mult, foarte mult cantitatea de energie regenerabilă, să nu creăm o altă dependență de energiile prime necesare care să producă, să contribuie la producerea panourilor solare și în special mă refer la baterii. Avem materiale critice și cum facem ca acest lucru să nu se transforme într-o nouă dependență și care este strategia Comisiei Europene în acest sens?

Kadri Simson, Member of the Commission. – Thank you for this question. We are at this stage in the situation where prices are not as high as they were last year. Last year it was just a matter of survival. But despite the decrease of electricity and, of course, gas prices, they remain higher than in regions where partially domestic consumption is produced using gas and oil produced in these regions, for example, in the United States. And that means that our only long lasting and sustainable way to deliver affordable and relatively low prices for our consumers is to accelerate renewables.

We don't want to create another dependency, and I know that on the renewables side, there are several bottlenecks that make it difficult to accelerate. The first one was permitting and to address that, our Renewable Energy Directive and some Article 122 temporary proposals. Then there is a problem of how to connect these renewable installations into the grid. We have to address the grid developments and we will do so. And on top of that, from where are the engines for turbines and solar panels coming? That question we will address after tomorrow with our Net-Zero Industry Act, we have to bring some of the production back to Europe. We cannot address this necessarily in the sector, all the possible sectors, but we will address the sectors where Europe still keeps the global leadership or where we might create new vulnerabilities. And solar industry for sure is such a sector where right now majority of the panels are coming from the

only single supplier. But saying that, last year was a very good year for solar. It was 41GW of new installations – a record year. And we do expect that this year will be another record year. And so it will continue because the solar sector has already announced that they do expect 53GW this year of new installations.

Dan Nica (S&D). – Domnule președinte, doamna comisar, sigur că obiectivul nostru este să avem o predictibilitate a prețurilor la energia electrică și la gaze, pentru că acest lucru, aceste facturi care, pe de o parte, au avut o fluctuație foarte mare, pe de altă parte, nivelul foarte mare, i-au afectat și pe oameni și industria.

Întrebarea mea este: cum faceți să determinați operatorii și distribuitorii de energie electrică să se ocupe de contracte pe termen mediu și lung, în loc să se ocupe de prețurile pe a doua zi și să intre într-o zonă care este considerată de foarte multă lume ca fiind o zonă a speculațiilor și care a dus la aceste prețuri uriașe pentru facturile la energia electrică?

Kadri Simson, Member of the Commission. – Mr President, one of the challenges of last year for consumers was that despite the fact that wind and solar in 2022 provided more electricity to our grids than coal, affordable pricing was not felt by retail consumers. We aim to solve this issue by promoting long-term contracts that will give investment incentives for project developers, but also allow, not only industry, but also small and medium companies and retail consumers to opt for predictable pricing schemes.

These kind of power purchase agreements were existing already under current regulation. Now we have mapped all the shortcomings that have not made these schemes as popular as we think they are necessary, because also investors will find ways to finance their projects better if they know that for five to ten years they do have agreed pricing on the table and that allows them to also provide predictable pricing for the final consumers.

Valter Flego (Renew). – Poštovani predsjedavajući, kada govorimo o energiji, u prošlosti malo je tko, vjerujem, tako ozbiljno o njoj razmišljao kao danas.

Bilo je energije, cijena je bila OK i nismo se puno opterećivali, ni građani ni gospodarstvo s energijom. Ja bih rekao da smo se previše opustili. To je sada jasno, ali od 24.2. i ovog nesretnog rata u Ukrajini svi smo odjednom postali svjesni važnosti energije. I naravno, svi smo počeli razmišljati o alternativnim izvorima, o solarima, o energetske obnovi zgrada i tako dalje. Ali, ne idu stvari posvuda u svim državama jednako brzo. Postoje, naravno, dokumenti Fit for 55, Green Deal i tako dalje, ali ponavljam, neke države zaostaju. Moja Hrvatska ne ide u tom smjeru tako brzo.

Zato moje pitanje, poštovana povjerenice, je da li ovo ljeto planirate iskoristiti za dodatne kontrole, za razgovore, za, ja bih rekao nadzor u državama članicama, kako ide provedba svih preuzetih obaveza oko povećanja energije iz alternativnih izvora upravo čim, čim prije, sada.

Kadri Simson, Member of the Commission. – Yes, I am planning to do that because exactly this year, in 2023, Member States have to upgrade their national energy and climate plans, and the previous ones were not aligned to our higher climate targets. I hope that very soon we will be able to conclude the trilogues on the Renewables Directive. And we did so last just last Friday on the Energy Efficiency Directive.

That means that Member States also have to upgrade their plans by promoting renewables, but also taking measures that allow them to save energy, because at this very moment we do know that the only sustainable solution to replace the remaining Russian gas in our energy mix is to promote savings and also to promote renewables.

So there is not enough natural gas and new natural gas developments coming to the market this year to replace gas from Russia with trusted partners production. So this is an ongoing process. Right now, all 27 Member States are upgrading their national energy and climate plans. Already last year they were very successful in installing new renewable installations and connect them to the grid and altogether we did see this installed new capacity in 2022: 41 GW of solar and, and 15 GW of wind respectively.

This allowed us to save approximately 11 billion m³ of gas, so this is a significant development. And if Member States will achieve even higher targets this year, it allows us to tackle this challenge that the remaining Russian natural gas in our grid still represents.

Valter Flego (Renew). – Poštovani predsjedavajući, da, hvala na ovom odgovoru i vidim da vam je zbilja u fokusu ova tema i to me raduje.

Ali imam jedno kratko pitanje, evo za vas možda znate odgovor. U vašoj državi, ako bi vi, baš vi, kao građanin postavili na krov svoje kuće solare i dali zahtjev vašem isporučitelju električne energije da vas priključi, koliko bi to otprilike u vašoj državi trajalo, odnosno koliko bi vi kao građanin čekali odgovor i priključenje ?

Kadri Simson, Member of the Commission. – We addressed this issue with one of the Article 122 proposals – that solar rooftops should be granted grid access in a very short time frame, but of course, temporary emergency measures will expire. That is the reason why we have to address this issue also in ordinary legislation.

Now, the question was, how long will it take in my home country? And I think that I come from a country where it is relatively fast due to the fact that our grid is digitalized and that allows distribution system operators to accommodate more renewables. So digitalisation is key. This is one of the challenges that many bigger Member States will face. But we will, from our side, promote that, and we will also advise Member States to use some of the recovery funds specifically to strengthen the grid, because this seems to be the next bottleneck after the permitting procedures.

Cristian-Silviu Buşoi (PPE). – Dear Commissioner, we should remain committed to our climate goals and also to the principles of the free market and competition. This past year and a half, when we have been living under extraordinary circumstances – with high prices of energy because of the pandemic, and then, of course, because of the market manipulation by Russia, and then because of the aggression of Russia against Ukraine – show us that we need to have instruments to intervene when there is clearly market manipulation and or high volatility.

I welcome the proposal that will be released today on EMD, and therefore some measures will have to be considered to better manage vulnerabilities and price volatilities. In your opinion, will EMD strike a balance between building a market, incentivising investments and low carbon solutions on one hand, and reducing volatility on the other hand?

Kadri Simson, Member of the Commission. – Thank you Cristian. And first of all, thank you for the very good cooperation that we do have with the committee. We just had a chance to discuss last week the results of the REPowerEU proposal that was presented a year ago. And next week we will discuss electricity market design and I do hope that Parliament will treat electricity market design as a priority file because we don't have time to waste.

From my perspective, I believe that the Commission has proposed some very effective provisions to reduce the weight of gas and electricity prices. One of them that should make the difference is that we propose a peak shaving mechanism to reduce demand at times in which gas is needed to cover it. And we already saw that our Article 122 proposal that addressed electricity price peak hours consumption allowed us to cut gas consumption.

Of course, the other important part of this proposal is to empower the consumers to allow them to opt for different pricing contracts, even one designed for their domestic consumption, and another flexible contracting scheme, for example, to charge their electric vehicle. So in this proposal, there are several very practical provisions that will help our consumers already in a very short time frame.

But the only lasting solution, the only way how we can actually decrease our electricity prices in a sustainable way is to accelerate renewables. And there are some measures that we have to strengthen and we will address these measures exactly with our electricity market design this time.

Cristian-Silviu Buşoi (PPE). – Commissioner, you mentioned renewables and you also mentioned the debate last week in ITRE. Thank you for that, and for the very good cooperation with the ITRE Committee, which I chair.

You remember that we discussed a lot, and maybe the main obstacle is not the lack of investment, not the lack of interest, but the permitting and the bureaucracy in many of the EU Member States.

Besides what we are doing in terms of updating the legislation, do you intend also to put political pressure on Member States to move a little bit faster with permitting for renewables?

Kadri Simson, Member of the Commission. – I think that you can help us in this regard because there is still ongoing discussion and ongoing dialogue on the Renewables Directive. If our targets will be as ambitious as the Commission proposed for 2030, that also means that Member States have to address these bottlenecks – because 2030 is not so far away anymore. And if we continue business as usual, then many offshore wind projects, for example, that are in the pipeline will not materialise by the time they are needed.

We will consult Member States and help them. I will give you as an example the offshore wind developments: how to strengthen the sea basins approach because it makes offshore projects more cost effective if Member States will not make the planning and permitting only for radial connections, but they will cooperate with their neighbours and allow wind farms to be connected to several markets. And of course, since we finalised our TEN-E trilogues, the Commission can also support financially the necessary grid developments that will connect big offshore wind farms to the mainland. That also helps project developers to fast track these investments. So my plea to Parliament: please prioritize also the Fit for 55 files that remain open and help us to conclude this ambitious agreement.

Κώστας Μαυρίδης (S&D). – Κύριε Πρόεδρε, η ενεργειακή ασφάλεια είναι σημαντικός πυλώνας για επίτευξη του στόχου μας ως Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης για στρατηγική αυτονομία. Σημαντική παράμετρος της ενεργειακής μας ασφάλειας είναι και η απεξάρτηση από αυταρχικά καθεστώτα, όπως αυτό του Πούτιν. Αυτό όμως σημαίνει ότι διαμορφώσαμε και ένα αυστηρό πλαίσιο κυρώσεων. Πώς μπορούμε να απεξαρτηθούμε από τέτοια αυταρχικά καθεστώτα, και όχι μόνο του Πούτιν; Και αναμένω την απάντησή σας στο κατά πόσον το καθεστώς Ερντογάν σήμερα εξυπηρετεί τα δικά μας συμφέροντα ή τα συμφέροντα του Πούτιν.

Το δεύτερο μου ερώτημα: Τα κοιτάσματα του φυσικού αερίου στην Ανατολική Μεσόγειο είναι στρατηγικής σημασίας και για το μεταβατικό στάδιο, αλλά και για τη μείωση των τιμών για τους καταναλωτές, στην οποία προηγουμένως αναφερθήκατε. Αισθάνεστε ότι σήμερα υπάρχει τέτοια προτεραιότητα και πώς το τεκμηριώνετε; Με συγκεκριμένα παραδείγματα.

Der Präsident. – Vielen Dank, Herr Kollege Mavrides. Ich will mal darauf hinweisen, dass es sich um eine *question time* handelt und nicht um eine *questions time*. Also wir sollten uns jeweils auf eine Frage beschränken, und auch bei der Nachfrage soll man sich auf die erstgestellte Frage konzentrieren.

Selbstverständlich ist die Frau Kommissarin frei zu antworten, aber die Antworten belasten dadurch den Zeitplan auch dann dementsprechend.

Kadri Simson, Member of the Commission. – Earlier I was mentioning that last year was a very challenging year. Actually, there was a question of our survival because if one major supplier will disappear – and Russia was a single biggest supplier who decided to cut their gas deliveries very rapidly – then markets will face difficulties.

Since the war started, we have addressed this challenge with many different legal proposals, but also by addressing our vulnerabilities, for example, giving a specific strategic position to underground gas storage. Because underground gas storage in Europe gives us assurance that no unexpected development against, for example, existing gas pipelines can impact us, or impact is limited.

When we announced that we will replace two thirds of Russian gas by the end of 2023, then we were also very clear that we will not replace these 90 billion m³ of gas only with alternative gas suppliers. We were very successful. We attracted additional LNG shipments and trusted, reliable partners who were connected with Europe via pipeline – like Norway, Algeria, Azerbaijan, who uses a pipeline via Turkey – were able to increase shipments. This was accompanied by energy savings measures and by accelerating our renewables deployment.

This is our strategy for years to come. We will replace a significant part of lost Russian gas volumes by replacing gas in power generation with renewables, by replacing gas in the building sector with heat pumps, and by simply prioritising energy savings where we can.

So, wrapped up in short, we will never end up in a situation where we are so dependent on one single supplier. And by diversifying our energy sources, we will also take care of our security of supply and, in a broader context, our independence.

Κώστας Μαυρίδης (S&D). – Η ερώτησή μου θα είναι πολύ απλή. Θα ανέμενα να μας απαντήσετε κατά πόσον το αυταρχικό καθεστώς Ερντογάν έχει ευθυγραμμιστεί με τις πολιτικές μας σε σχέση με την ενεργειακή ασφάλεια. Είναι πολύ απλή η ερώτησή μου και αναμένω μια απλή απάντηση. Αν δεν έχετε απάντηση, πείτε το μας. Αλλά αναμένω μιαν απάντηση και όχι οτιδήποτε άλλο.

Kadri Simson, Member of the Commission. – Me and my services we do have several energy dialogues with important energy partners, but not with Turkey because we don't have a Council mandate for that. So we don't have energy dialogue with Turkey.

Marie Toussaint (Verts/ALE). – Monsieur le Président, Madame la Commissaire, nous sommes ici dans un débat sur la sécurité énergétique de l'Union et donc aussi, en arrière-plan, sur la sécurité de l'Union européenne. Or, il y a dans la politique qui est menée aujourd'hui un point aveugle qui est celui de l'uranium en provenance de Russie.

Les importations d'uranium naturel ont atteint 2 358 tonnes en 2021, pour un montant d'environ 210 millions d'euros, sans compter les 234 millions d'euros envoyés au Kazakhstan, où l'uranium est exploité par l'entreprise russe Rosatom. Pour la France, le pays dont je viens, c'est près de deux tiers de l'uranium enrichi qui nous vient de Russie et 43 % de Kazakhstan et d'Ouzbékistan, où travaillent également Rosatom ou ses filiales. Sans compter la dizaine de tonnes qui partent chaque année sous la forme de déchets vers la Sibérie, en Russie là également.

Alors, je vous pose la question. On voit aujourd'hui un véritable élan pour l'énergie nucléaire dans la législation européenne. On l'a vu avec la taxonomie, on l'a vu avec le paquet relatif au gaz. On le voit dans les discussions en cours sur l'hydrogène, ou encore dans la directive sur la réforme du marché de l'énergie. On le voit peut-être même émerger dans le cadre des énergies renouvelables ou dans des projets comme celui de BarMar, véritable cheval de Troie pour l'énergie nucléaire.

Madame la Commissaire, ma question est simple: n'y a-t-il pas là une contradiction? Et comment répondre à cette question de la sécurité énergétique vu le contexte dans lequel nous sommes?

Kadri Simson, Member of the Commission. – This is true that five of our Member States do still use nuclear fuel that is Russian-designed. And we have assisted them to put forward a clear timetable for when, and with the help of alternative suppliers, they can diversify away from Russian-designed fuel.

There are good examples that some of the nuclear installations that were previously using fuel from Russia have been able to replace it. And several companies have already notified us that they have started talks with alternative suppliers such as Westinghouse. To do so, my services will provide all the necessary assistance so that certification procedures to allow them to use alternative fuel will be smooth. And I think that this is a key that, also in the future, the nuclear power plants should be able to rely on several suppliers, not only the single supplier.

Most probably you have heard that our Ukrainian partners have requested us also to address the dependence on Russian nuclear fuel. And we have. We have addressed this issue as a priority concern of ours. Right now, these five Member States, they do have sufficient fuel supply in their storage. But, as I was mentioning, in the coming months, they have to present their plans on how they will diversify away from Russian supply.

Marie Toussaint (Verts/ALE). – Vous me répondez, Madame la Commissaire, sur la diversification de l'approvisionnement en uranium naturel et enrichi. Vous ne répondez pas à la question des déchets, et il y a en outre une autre menace pour la sécurité énergétique en ce qui concerne le nucléaire, qui est la question de l'eau.

Le nucléaire, c'est 150 à 180 litres d'eau pour produire un mégawattheure d'électricité. Et il suffit d'un court épisode de canicule pour rendre indisponibles jusqu'à cinq gigawattheures de puissance nucléaire, soit 8 % du parc français, qui est celui qui alimente le reste de l'Europe, sans compter évidemment que ça met en danger l'approvisionnement en eau pour l'agriculture ou simplement pour la consommation humaine.

La question de la sécurité n'est donc pas terminée, épuisée, une fois qu'on a réglé la question de la diversification des ressources en uranium. Je vous relance donc la question: comment sécuriser l'approvisionnement énergétique et la production d'énergie dans l'Union européenne dans un contexte de modèle énergétique reposant sur l'énergie nucléaire?

Kadri Simson, *Member of the Commission*. – I was checking the facts, and on top of the nuclear fuel, there is also 25% of the EU's nuclear front-end services, conversion and enrichment, that is dependent on Russian supply. The discussion of nuclear in our future energy mix has become more intense in the past few months, and my responsibility is to provide technology-neutral solutions.

Member States who have opted for nuclear power plants can do so, of course keeping in mind the highest safety standards. My services – DG ENER units – will provide them with all the necessary assistance. Of course, we have to be ready since not only last summer, but the summer of 2023 might bring us extreme weather conditions. There are some predictions that we will face extreme drought this summer again. This just reminds us of the same challenges that we had last year: challenges with hydropower, very low hydro capacity and, on top of that, the possible impact to coal-fired power plants or nuclear.

With our electricity sector and with our answer, we are mapping the summer challenges. This is regular work that we do, and very soon there will also be a risk assessment of what might await us in the summer this year.

Christian Ehler (PPE). – Herr Präsident, Frau Kommissarin, lassen Sie uns doch ein bisschen konkreter werden. Die Internationale Energie-Agentur hat eine Studie veröffentlicht, dass wir noch in diesem Sommer und spätestens im Herbst ein riesiges Problem haben werden, die Gasbestände in Europa wieder aufzufüllen, anders als im vergangenen Jahr, wo wir es immer noch über russisches Erdgas und über Flüssigerdgas (LNG) gemacht haben. Die Energie-Agentur hat hier konkrete Vorschläge gemacht.

Insofern ist meine Frage jetzt ganz konkret, und ich weiß, dass sich das auch auf die Mitgliedstaaten bezieht. Wir haben bei den Vorschlägen gehört, wir brauchen mehr Energieinfrastruktur – eine Vertiefung –; wir haben aber gesehen, dass in dem Resilienzfonds des großen EU-Programms keine einzige transnationale Infrastruktur ist.

Das zweite Thema ist: Wir haben auf dem Markt LNG gekauft, was China im letzten Jahr nicht verbraucht hat, dieses Jahr aber absehbar verbrauchen wird. Und das dritte: Wir haben keinen Zugang zu russischem Erdgas. Also die Frage lautet sozusagen: Wie wollen wir ganz konkret über den Sommer bis zum Herbst die Speicher in Europa wieder auffüllen?

Eine letzte Frage: Sie haben sich auf Energieeffizienz bezogen. Die Mitgliedstaaten haben dem verbindlichen Energieeffizienzziel nicht zugestimmt. Insofern wird uns das Thema im Sommer nicht zur Verfügung stehen.

Kadri Simson, *Member of the Commission*. – Indeed, last year when Russia decided to cut off their supplies, we faced some challenges because instead of using legacy pipelines and that connected Eastern Europe and Germany via pipeline with Russian gas fields, we had to find very fast alternative routes. But we were prepared for that. Actually, the first warning that Russia can manipulate our energy markets was obvious already in 2009, and since then, the European Union has financed cross-border energy infrastructure that allowed us to diversify away from Russian gas fields. It was not a very last moment effort that last year we were able to launch pipeline connection between Poland and Norway, the so-called Baltic pipe, which was financed significantly from EU funds. Another pipeline interconnection between Greece and Bulgaria helped to deliver Azeri gas to Bulgaria, which was first of the countries who lost Russian long-term contracts. And on top of that, we were relatively successful by building new LNG infrastructure. In 2022, our import capacity rose by 25 billion m³. And we do expect some 50 billion m³ capacity more coming to them, coming online this and next year. And that allows us to maximise the possibility to replace Russian gas with other trusted gas producers' supply.

I was mentioning earlier that that tomorrow you can hear from us another promising message on the joint gas purchase that also allows our companies, but not only EU companies, but also companies from Ukraine, Moldova and Serbia to pool together the demand and negotiate better prices. So this is ongoing work. We have mapped some of the missing links, but overall we will now prioritise cross-border electricity cables because we have to electrify. This is the way forward.

Christian Ehler (PPE). – Herr Präsident! Meine Frage bleibt ganz nah am Thema, weil es die gleiche Frage ist. Die Energie-Agentur hat ein *gap* von 57 Billionen Kubikmeter attestiert. Wir haben das im vergangenen Jahr durch russisches Erdgas und LNG geschlossen. Erklärtermaßen ist auf dem Markt das LNG zur Verfügung gewesen, weil China in diesen Größenordnungen wegen der COVID-Maßnahmen dieses Gas nicht gekauft hat.

Die Chinesen haben erklärt, dass sie in diesem Jahr massiv den Einkauf steigern werden; das russische Gas wird nicht zur Verfügung stehen. Woher werden wir das Gas bekommen?

Kadri Simson, Member of the Commission. – The International Energy Agency has been a great help, and we have used their analytics to design our policy proposals.

One of their new headline proposals is to prioritise energy savings because it was only 2021 when we received 155 billion m³ Russian gas. They cut it down significantly. Last year we were successful in replacing it with LNG, but also Norway and Azerbaijan scaled up their production and shipped it via pipelines.

Now the remaining 60 will be very challenging to replace. Keeping in mind that Russia does not have alternative pipeline connections, the gas that they are not selling to Europe, they cannot sell to anybody else. That creates deficit in global markets.

So, we cannot opt for a solution that we buy all the available LNG because that leaves third countries in a very difficult position where they have to replace gas with coal, and this is damaging.

We will prioritise renewables. Where we can replace gas with renewables, we will do so. Smart solutions and all the solutions that help us to balance or to limit the peak hours, for example, in our electricity market, help us with almost no costs to cut gas consumption.

Then, of course, renewables in the gas sector. You can expect that we will come out with a strategy to promote green gases, biomethane, because this is something that can also replace partially natural gas. This is also a great opportunity for our regions, but also for municipalities, who too have a responsibility to clean their wastewater, to cover some of their consumption, for example in public transport, with home-grown renewables, being it biomethane or, in the coming years, hydrogen.

Robert Hajšel (S&D). – Vážený pán predsedajúci, pani komisárka. Áno, za rok od začiatku vojny na Ukrajine sa úplne prepísala energetická mapa Európy. Určite je pozitívne, že Európa hľadala a aj do istej miery sa jej podarilo nájsť alternatívnych dodávateľov plynu. Tu sa chcem hlavne spýtať a pokračovať vlastne v logike tej predchádzajúcej otázky, keďže naozaj vieme, že táto zima bola k nám ohľaduplná, ale tá ďalšia nemusí byť. A tak isto ten LNG, čo sa týka tej Číny, tá bude určite viac prítomnejšia na tom trhu a dá sa povedať, že tie zásobníky, ktoré dnes stále sú naplnené asi na 55 percent, nebudú možno môcť byť doplnené do tých 90 percent do novembra. Aké máte argumenty? Ešte aj ďalšie, čo ste už spomenuli, že sa to podarí urobiť?

Kadri Simson, Member of the Commission. – I do believe that right now, in the middle of March 2023, we are less vulnerable than we were a year ago. And I have to thank also Parliament, because there were some initial steps that allowed us to end this heating season with a relatively comfortable stage.

One of those measures was storage obligation. Right now, our underground gas storage is 56% full. This is double the volume that it was last year, and this makes it easier to refill by November. We have also set up the joint gas purchase platform. My colleague, Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič, is in constant contact with private companies all across Europe who have indicated their interest to participate in this in this platform. And we have pooled together the demand.

The Commission, in cooperation with a service provider is working on the demand aggregation and a first tender for gas purchase will hopefully be launched very soon. That allows companies all across Europe, despite their geographical circumstances, to benefit from the EU negotiation power.

And on top of that, we also witnessed last year that Member States are actually able to cut their gas consumption. We agreed that Member States voluntarily should introduce measures that allow them to cut consumption by 15%. In real life, they did more. They cut gas consumption by 19%.

And now I will request Member States to prolong this arrangement because, as many experts are very clearly indicating, this winter might be even more challenging because there was some gas from Russia that we received last year that might disappear. And on top of that, last year, the weather was very mild. Nobody gives us guarantees that this will be repeated this winter.

Robert Hajšel (S&D). – Vážený pán predsedajúci, pani komisárka. Ja som bol zvedavý, že či by ste spomenuli popri týchto úsporách pri spotrebe plynu a samozrejme teda aj pri budúcej výrobe biometánu a vodíka aj možnosť obnovenia ťažby vlastného plynu v našej ríži. V Európe máme najväčšie zásoby, samozrejme v Holandsku, ale máme napríklad aj na Slovensku, kde sa kedysi plyn takisto ťažil. Považujete aj obnovenie a podporu, prípadne, samozrejmem za prísnych environmentálnych podmienok, za takisto jednu z možností, ako zaplniť túto existujúcu diery v chýbajúcich množstvách plynu?

Kadri Simson, Member of the Commission. – There are some projects in the pipeline where Member States or companies in some Member States are exploring the possible extraction projects. On the other hand, there are some environmental considerations that have closed existing gas production sites in Europe. Of course, there will be demand for natural gas in the years to come, but step by step, we will reduce our gas consumption and replace it with renewables. This is our priority. And my priority is also to allow Member States to benefit from the green transition, not only on the power generation side, but also in the hydrogen market and on the biomethane side. Last year we created a biomethane industrial alliance, so I hope that very soon we will see an increase of this production also.

Grzegorz Tobiszowski (ECR). – Panie Przewodniczący! Pani Komisarz! Tu już o tym była mowa, iż Międzynarodowa Agencja Energetyczna przestrzega, abyśmy byli czujni jeśli chodzi o 2023 rok. Chodzi o to, iż pojawia się pewna luka 27 mld zapotrzebowania na gaz. Z jednej strony mamy embargo na rosyjski gaz, z drugiej strony do gry mogą wejść, jeśli chodzi o LNG, Chiny. I stąd moje pytanie: czy widzi Pani, obok ograniczania energii, które już następuje w krajach europejskich, i obok ambitnych planów, jeśli chodzi o odnawialne źródła energii, jeszcze jakieś działania, które mogą pomóc w tym roku, w przyszłym roku, w najbliższych latach, jeśli chodzi o bezpieczeństwo energetyczne? Bo ważne jest, żebyśmy mieli spójny system, bowiem pojawiają się przeciwieź decyzje w energetyce europejskiej, w krajach wysoce rozwiniętych, jak Niemcy i nie tylko, powrót do energii związanej z surowcami kopalnymi, z węglem kamiennym. I czy nie widzi Pani tu zagrożenia, że z jednej strony ograniczamy, nie nadążamy z odnawialnymi źródłami i *de facto* system staje się niespójny.

Kadri Simson, Member of the Commission. – This is very true that last year we very successful to attract additional LNG deliveries to Europe. The majority of the LNG shipments originated from the United States. I do believe that we have created a trusted partnership so that we will not lose these shipments.

But, if China will add their growing demand to the global markets, then that means that the LNG market, as such a global market, will be very heavily contested. Price formation is not only dependent on our activities. So this is behind this warning.

Already in autumn 2021, we started a very active global outreach to the gas producers whom we regarded as trusted gas producers. We have signed several MOUs and there are some promising projects. For example, Egypt and Israel are cooperating to ship Israeli gas via liquefaction facilities in Egypt to Europe. There are some producers, like Norway and Azerbaijan, who did their utmost to scale up their production and took advantage of the pipeline connection that connects our two markets.

So all these global outreach procedures we have done and despite that, we still believe that to calm down the global markets, we have to prioritise also energy savings because there will not be enough new capacities coming to the market this year to replace the lost Russian volumes. We have to keep in mind that if Russia is not able to sell this gas to anybody, then it means that they are venting or flaring this gas in their oil fields when it is a side product, and that also causes climate warming. So this is also not only manipulation of our energy markets, but a very negative decision to create global warming, and as such, it impacts a wider region, not only Europe.

Grzegorz Tobiszowski (ECR). – Panie Przewodniczący! Szanowna Pani Komisarz! Dziękuję za tę informację. W tym kontekście mam pytanie: czy procedowane obecnie rozporządzenie w sprawie redukcji emisji metanu, a konkretnie zapisy nakładające obowiązki informacyjne na producentów i importerów gazu naturalnego, jeśli chodzi o emisje metanu, nie przyczynią się do zniechęcenia producentów LNG do rynku europejskiego w tak ważnym okresie i w tak ważnych planach, o których Pani Komisarz wspomniała?

Kadri Simson, Member of the Commission. – Methane is a very potent greenhouse gas and we have to lead by example.

Well, there are some activities that in the energy sector that actually do not demand additional investments, it is just the issue of awareness. Beyond the activities here in Europe, we are also reaching out to the gas-producing countries who still emit a lot of methane. And we are planning to pilot some projects that we call 'you capture, we buy', because in the energy sector a large share of methane could be tackled with almost no cost. Or we can finance these investments. And, by doing so, also bring to the market additional volumes that are, in this contested situation, very much needed.

Marisa Matias (The Left). – Senhor Presidente, Senhora Comissária, a crise da energia que vivemos tem deixado milhões de famílias e de pequenas empresas numa situação muito difícil, praticamente de joelhos, sem capacidade para pagar as contas de energia. E, enquanto isto acontece, as empresas da energia têm tido o *jackpot*, com lucros absolutamente excecionais.

A Comissão apresentou várias medidas, mas todas elas de curto prazo e nenhuma estrutural, medidas estas que não tocam a questão de fundo. Portanto, a minha pergunta é a seguinte:

Tendo em conta a proposta que apresentaram agora, que não mexe no sistema de fixação de preços e continua a ser marginal, qual é a medida ou quais são as medidas que esperam adotar para proteger as famílias e os pequenos negócios no inverno que se aproxima, em vez de continuar a dar o *jackpot* às empresas da energia?

Kadri Simson, Member of the Commission. – So what is the Commission doing? First of all, as you very correctly mentioned we have introduced emergency measures that are still in place, like the inframarginal revenue cap, which allows governments to channel revenues to consumers to reduce bills. Second, we need to continue cost diversification efforts. That allows us to calm down the price signals that are coming from the gas market. We will also introduce the joint cash purchase platform that allows our companies to benefit from our negotiation power. And of course, if we will manage to bring down the gas prices, it also has a direct impact to our electricity prices. Right now, gas prices are below 50, and this is a lower price than we saw at any moment last year. And third, we need to ensure that industry and SMEs are less exposed to the volatility and high prices of the short-term electricity market. And this is exactly the reason why we proposed the revision of the electricity-market design. There are measures that facilitate access to long-term instruments, like power purchase agreements or contracts for difference, for a new investment in power generation. And this will help customers benefit more directly from the lower cost of renewable generation. So if we will have more hours where our consumption is covered by renewables, that also means that prices for our industry and consumers will be significantly lower than in these hours when we are dependent on gas-fired power plants.

Marisa Matias (The Left). – Senhor Presidente, Senhora Comissária, a verdade é que na proposta apresentada pela Comissão não há nenhuma alteração, como eu disse, ao sistema de fixação de preços. Mantém-se o sistema marginalista.

E, por isso, alguma coisa aconteceu, porque, em julho do ano passado, a Presidente da Comissão Europeia, Ursula von der Leyen, veio aqui a esta Casa, a este Parlamento, dizer que o mercado marginalista não era um mercado adaptado para combater o aumento dos preços da energia e, portanto, tinha que ser alterado.

Entre julho e agora, afinal, mudaram de ideias. O que é que fez mudar as ideias? Continuar a garantir os lucros das empresas?

Kadri Simson, Member of the Commission. – Electricity market reform will not change the mechanics of price formation on the short-term markets because this formation guarantees that our consumption is covered by supply at every single moment. But this doesn't mean that it will not achieve a decoupling of electricity prices from gas prices, because making the final prices paid by consumers more independent from short-term prices is the solution that delivers more affordable and more predictable prices for our final retail consumers. This is achieved by bringing more renewables and flexibility into the market to displace also fossil fuels and by changing the way new investments in inframarginal generation are remunerated.

On top of that, we have few but effective provisions to reduce the weight of gas on electricity prices again by accelerating the green transition, but also by settling the long-term PPAs. That gives us access to pre-agreed pricing schemes for relatively long periods.

Georgios Kyrtos (Renew). – In my view, in order to have energy security, we have to reduce our energy dependence on Russia and also reduce the financing of the offensive war.

I don't think we succeeded in 2022. For instance, in my country, Greece, we had to spend EUR 9 billion to import Russian oil and Russian natural gas in 2022, whereas in 2021 we spent EUR 5 billion. We increased the financing of the war by EUR 4 billion due to the price increases in the international markets.

My question is: how much money did we offer in 2022 to Putin and his offensive war in order to cover our energy needs? And is there a plan to reduce? Are there any targets for 2023 so that he will get less money from us?

Kadri Simson, Member of the Commission. – We were last year successful in negotiating ten packages of sanctions against Russia. And several of these sanctions also covered the energy sector. You were very correct when you mentioned that in 2022, our companies still bought Russian coal or oil, but sanctions came into force for crude oil in the end of 2022, in December. And now, with limited exemptions, they are also covering refined products. So in several commodities, we do not offer Russia a market anymore. And on top of that, with our G7 partners, we have introduced a price cap for oil products so that Russia's revenues will not be as high as if they would have been able to trade their oil products with world crude oil global market prices.

Now on gas: we have not put in place sanctions. But, there are very few Member States who are still receiving some natural gas from Russia. On top of that, there are several companies who are buying Russian LNG and there is no need for that, because these are companies from the geographical regions where, historically, Russian gas did not play a significant part in the gas market. And this is the sector where really we should call for solidarity and request our companies, without implementing any sanctions, to not prolong their existing contracts to stop buying Russian LNG.

Nicolás González Casares (S&D). – Señor presidente, señora comisaria, si queremos más seguridad, lo que está claro es que necesitamos, más energías renovables y menos fósiles. Por fin tenemos una reforma del mercado eléctrico en la Unión Europea; bienvenida sea. Gracias por esta reforma, que hemos pedido largamente y es en sí es una buena noticia; creo que va de algún modo bien encaminada, pero no es suficientemente ambiciosa, sobre todo en lo que respecta a las medidas de emergencia.

Creemos que con estas medidas que ustedes proponen no se resolvería la pasada crisis de precios. ¿Usted cree que se resolvería esa pasada crisis de precios? Quiero que me responda a esta pregunta.

En segundo lugar, bienvenido sea ese nuevo derecho a poder compartir energía que tienen ahora los ciudadanos. Pero no olvidemos que el gas en Europa se paga siete veces más caro que en Estados Unidos. Por lo tanto, no podemos ser conformistas. Estamos perdiendo competitividad. Tenemos que conseguir que esta reforma del mercado eléctrico dé una verdadera señal de que las renovables son la energía más barata. Creo que no lo vamos a conseguir si no somos algo más ambiciosos en esta reforma.

Kadri Simson, Member of the Commission. – I agree that we have to be ambitious, and I agree that renewables are our home-grown energy source that allows us, step by step, to stabilise the energy prices. You compared our gas prices with the United States; the United States is currently an LNG-exporting country. We are importers, so we are competing with other LNG markets globally, such as the Asian market, which is even bigger than ours. In this regard, our prices are comparable.

So how we can address this issue and keep our ambition level high enough? There are some steps that are very urgent. We have to conclude the trade trilogue and keep the high ambition that the Commission proposed under the Fit for 55 Package. Secondly, we need to use all the potential, in particular on biomethane and heat pumps. As I was mentioning earlier, I plan to launch, on top of all the measures we presented last year, a practical initiative to promote biomethane. You can also expect from our side that we will present an action plan on heat pumps, because there are some wonderful examples from some individual Member States where heat pumps very quickly replaced a significant share of gas consumption in domestic heating.

Thirdly, we have to accelerate large-scale offshore projects. It is wonderful that each of us would like to install solar rooftops, but we also need offshore wind. This year we are hosting at least two big summits in Ostend and in Lithuania, but we have three more sea basins. There is also potential for floating offshore, and we should also grasp this situation.

Michael Bloss (Verts/ALE). – We are talking about energy security, and we see that with the current legislation, the electricity market design and the RED, it will be in place in two years, and that leads to investors basically now waiting for two years for the more beneficial setting. So now, we need to bridge these two years.

There is the idea of a renewable energy booster, a European-wide tender of 120 gigawatt – 60 gigawatt solar, 60 gigawatt wind – and it could also help to bridge the gap between the 40% renewable target from the Council in the renewable energy trilogue, and the 45% of you and of us the Parliament. So what do you say about such a renewable booster? I think it would be a great idea also to Europeanise the electricity market. Do you agree that we should have something like this?

Kadri Simson, Member of the Commission. – I do agree. I see developments all across Europe. Basically we will see the outcome in the upgraded national energy and climate plans because Member States already implement what is not agreed yet. But I hope that Member States, by renewing their national energy climate plans, are opting for the higher end of ambition.

Now, you mentioned that the electricity market design will take a couple more years before it will be implemented, but it was our clear decision that we will opt for ordinary legislation. Last year was a year when we were forced to use emergency proposals. But I made a clear case and I also promised to your president, Roberta Metsola, that electricity market design will be necessary for years to come. It is necessary tool to give certainty for investors. So we cannot tackle it as an emergency proposal.

In this package, partially, some of the solutions are in regulations, others in directives. That means that partially we can skip the lengthy implementation procedure. But where I need Parliament's help is, of course, by accelerating also your procedures, because what we see with the Fit for 55 package is that it has taken almost two years already to finalise the discussions and get to the legislation process.

We do not have that time, but sometime it will be necessary for Member States to implement. On top of that there are financing tools for Member States to support renewable investments. There are available funds to strengthen the grids, and there is public acceptance right now also to grant some shorter and simplified permitting for renewable installations, because unless we do so, there is no alternative to gas, no green alternative. I am very grateful that our NGOs do support this approach.

Martin Hojsík (Renew). – Now, it's not only about the future legislation. Let's remember the Clean Energy for all Europeans package back from 2019. Now, there were important elements like the energy communities, like prosumers. And sadly, what we still see is a number of the Member States, including my own, Slovakia, not having implemented it properly. Now, I appreciate that you are taking them to court, but what other measures? Because we do not need the court cases, we need reality on the ground changes. We need liberalisation. We need opening up of the market to prosumers and end of the defence of the monopolies and oligopolies. What measures do you plan to take? Because this could be the decisive year for the people to really take the energy freedom into their hands. So what measures do you plan beyond taking some of the Member States to court?

Kadri Simson, Member of the Commission. – I do remember the negotiations in the Council where this very fragile agreement on a clean energy package was achieved. I was then representing the Presidency, and already then some Member States claimed that their starting position was not as good as others, because the lack of digitalisation of their grids, distribution of meters. Now they have to step up their action. For me, the infringement is the very last option. I prefer assistance and by achieving our agreed goals by also co-financing the necessary works.

As I was mentioning earlier, there are now significant funds available also for distribution-grid operators. So EU funds usually were dedicated to cross-border infrastructure, but of course to accommodate more renewables, to allow cities to introduce thousands and thousands of electric vehicle charging points, the local grid has to be strengthened. And financing is there and a well-functioning EU-level organisation that can provide assistance and share best practices is available. Now really there is a demand from Prosumers side. So we have to insist that Member States will implement what is already agreed. And on top of that our new electricity market design will even strengthen prosumers rights to share their production and overall to strengthen also the consumer's right to opt for several contracting schemes. I think this is necessary. And I think that the energy crisis actually has helped us to accelerate also work on prosumers side.

Radan Kanev (PPE). – Dear Commissioner, in the summer of 2022, we faced a real perfect storm in the European energy system with the problems that blocked French nuclear power plants, with the drought which impeded hydropower on a European level, with heat and subsequent peak consumption of electricity and, of course, the main reason, the war in Ukraine and the disruption of gas markets.

In this period, we relied heavily on coal generation, which was for really a short period crucial and economically feasible, which it's normally not.

So my main question is, does the Commission have any plans of sustaining coal generation as a critical strategic reserve in times of heavy crisis like we faced? Or, if not, what other type of emergency crisis measures do you have in mind?

Kadri Simson, Member of the Commission. – Last summer, on top of Russian manipulation, we had severe environmental conditions that triggered unexpected maintenance of several nuclear power plants and didn't allow us to use the full potential of hydropower. And in spite of that, our market delivered. We had no risk of blackouts. On top of that, in 2022, EU-27 Member States were able to cut their CO₂ emissions by 2.5%, so that shows that actually the new installations of renewables also helped us to tackle this very, very difficult situation.

Now, when you are asking if we are addressing the challenges of storage and power plants that help us to address the capacity mechanism in our electricity market design revision, we will prioritise storage and the other independent renewables because, step by step, when our electricity comes from renewables, which are intermittent, we need to prioritize also demand response and storage solutions. This is something that you can expect from our proposal. We will not open the door to extend the special scheme for coal or other fossil fuel plants because this is not necessary. The current arrangement of capacity mechanism already allows Member States to address this issue.

VORSITZ: OTHMAR KARAS*Vizepräsident*

Στέλιος Κυμπουρόπουλος (PPE). – Κύριε Πρόεδρε, κύριε Επιτροπε, πραγματικά ακούστηκαν πολλά σωστά πράγματα μέσα στην αίθουσα και καταλαβαίνουμε όλοι ότι είναι πολύ σημαντικά όλα τα μέτρα που έχουν παρθεί, αλλά θεωρώ ότι ο χειμώνας συνεχίζει να είναι δύσκολος και οι προσπάθειες των κρατών μελών και της Επιτροπής δεν μπορούν να ανακουφίσουν όσο χρειάζεται τους πολίτες και την αγορά. Αυτή η ακρίβεια και η ενεργειακή εξάρτηση της Ευρώπης πρέπει να σταματήσει άμεσα. Σε αυτό θεωρώ ότι πολλές χώρες, μεταξύ αυτών και η Ελλάδα, έχουν κάνει προσπάθειες. Ακούσαμε για υποδομές υποδοχής LNG. Μια άλλη πρωτοβουλία είναι η συνεργασία Ελλάδας και Αιγύπτου, η οποία βοηθά στην ενίσχυση των ανανεώσιμων πηγών ενέργειας, και ήθελα να σας ρωτήσω συγκεκριμένα αν θεωρείτε ότι πρέπει χώρες όπως η Ελλάδα να υποστηριχθούν, όταν φέρνουν στην Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση την ενέργεια που χρειαζόμαστε για να ανεξαρτητοποιηθούμε από το φυσικό αέριο και το πετρέλαιο.

Kadri Simson, Member of the Commission. – That might be true that I have named several emergency measures on top of existing legislation that helped us to tackle this energy crisis last year. Indeed, each and every of these was important because we had no silver bullet. This was a complex exercise and step by step we achieved the situation where our gas storage by the end of this heating season is still half full. Prices are down to pre-war levels and EU CO₂ emissions are significantly decreased.

Saying that, of course we will need LNG from trusted partners and Greece is a fine example: how you are delivering LNG beyond your own borders. You are a crucial partner for several neighbouring countries.

The EU has financed necessary infrastructure and we will do so also to address the challenges that are not only for EU Member States, but also for the Western Balkans neighbourhood.

Katarína Roth Neveďalová (S&D). – Vážený pán predsedajúci. Pani komisárka. Dnes sme tu napríklad schválili taký dokument, ktorý hovorí o tom, ako by sme mali mať energeticky efektívne budovy. Spomína sa v ňom napríklad to, že chceme, aby sa už viac nepoužívalo na kúrenie fosílnе palivo, z čoho mi jedine vyplýva, že môžeme používať buď tuhé palivo, alebo viacej elektriny. Ja pochádzam z krajiny, ktorá má viac ako päťdesiat percent svojho energetického mixu jadrovú elektrinu alebo elektrinu z jadrových zdrojov. A teda máme ruské reaktory a používame palivo z Ruskej federácie. Chcem sa spýtať, keďže momentálne je diskusia o jedenástom balíčku sankcií voči Rusku, kde sa spomína aj možnosť, že by bol zakázaný dovoz paliva z Ruskej federácie, ako Komisia mieni riešiť pomoc týmto členským štátom, ktoré potom budú musieť získavať tieto zdroje pre jadrové elektrárne z iných krajín, čo bude energeticky, ale aj finančne náročnejšie, pretože nie je to úplne jednoduchá záležitosť. A takisto sa tým potenciálne zvýši aj cena tejto elektriny pre ľudí. A pritom ide naozaj o sebestačnosť krajín, že môžeme hovoriť o obnoviteľných zdrojoch, ktoré sú krásne, ale nie vždy sa dajú využiť a trvá samozrejme nejaký čas, pokým ich naštartujeme.

Kadri Simson, Member of the Commission. – Thank you for your question, and I appreciate very much the chance to discuss energy performance of the buildings directive yesterday in front of this plenary. You mentioned that challenges are bigger for some Member States and it might take time to decarbonise building stock – building stock that is right now responsible for 40% of EU energy consumption. But to start the decarbonisation process, at first, we need to agree that this is our target.

In this regard, I highly appreciate the vote that gave the mandate through your rapporteur to start the negotiations with the Council because buildings have a huge, cost-effective potential to reduce and optimise energy consumption. And the EPBD on top of that clearly addresses also the root cause of energy poverty. Renovations clearly will help us in several different workstreams. They will cut energy consumption. They will create a healthier living environment. And they will also create domestic jobs because the building sector is a very labour intensive sector.

Of course, there are possible exemptions for some Member States, as it has always happened, that during the negotiations with co-legislators, some necessary flexibilities for implementation have been granted.

Der Präsident. – Meine Damen und Herren, ich danke allen, die Fragen gestellt haben, und der Kommissarin für ihre Antworten.

14. **Hin għall-mistoqsijiet (VPK/RGħ) - It-tishih tar-relazzjonijiet trans-Atlantiċi f'dinja multilaterali dejjem tinbidel**

Der Präsident. – Als nächster Punkt der Tagesordnung folgt die Fragestunde (HR/VP) (Artikel 137 GO).

Ich begrüße den Vizepräsidenten der Kommission und Hohen Vertreter Josep Borrell recht herzlich zu dieser Fragestunde.

Das Thema dieser Fragestunde lautet: „*Stärkung der transatlantischen Beziehungen in einer immer komplexer werdenden multilateralen Welt*“.

Die Fragestunde wird etwa ebenfalls 60 Minuten dauern. Die Redezeiten sind wie bekannt: eine Minute, um die Frage zu stellen, zwei Minuten, um zu antworten, und eine 30-sekündige Zusatzfrage und jeweils die Antwort.

Alle, die sich zu Wort melden, bitte ich, dass Sie sich de facto mit dem Abstimmungsgerät melden.

Tom Vandenkendelaere (PPE). – Mijnheer de hoge vertegenwoordiger, welkom in dit vragenuurtje over het trans-Atlantische partnerschap.

Multilateralisme en internationaal recht horen heel hoog op de trans-Atlantische agenda te staan en het gezag en de werking van de VN moeten natuurlijk worden gevrijwaard door hervormingen waar de trans-Atlantische partners de motor van moeten zijn. Maar waar de VN structureel tekortschiet, bijvoorbeeld op het vlak van vredeshandhaving in bepaalde regio's van de wereld, daar mogen wij als trans-Atlantische partners niet blijven toekijken, als internationale gemeenschap die in gebreke blijft. Een schrijnend voorbeeld daarvan, mijnheer de hoge vertegenwoordiger, is Oost-Congo, waar de situatie voor de lokale bevolking wegens geweld compleet dramatisch en uitzichtloos geworden is, en waar wij, als Europese Unie, maar ook als trans-Atlantische partners, de ambitie moeten hebben om toch meer te doen en niet in gebreke te blijven.

Vandaar mijn vraag aan u, mijnheer de hoge vertegenwoordiger: is de situatie in Oost-Congo voorwerp van overleg en samenwerking met de Verenigde Staten en worden er in dit verband initiatieven overwogen?

Josep Borrell Fontelles, vicepresidente de la Comisión / alto representante de la Unión para Asuntos Exteriores y Política de Seguridad. – Yo creía que venía a una sesión de control sobre las relaciones transatlánticas, no sobre la situación en el este del Congo.

Su pregunta hace referencia a la situación en el este del Congo, lo que es sin duda un tema altamente importante y preocupante, pero no es precisamente algo que tenga que ver con la relación transatlántica.

Pero, si usted lo que pregunta es si tenemos una preocupación común y compartida con los Estados Unidos sobre la situación en el este del Congo, sí, claro que la tenemos, pero debo confesarle que recientemente no hemos tenido como parte de nuestro diálogo ese problema concreto por el que usted se preocupa.

Tom Vandenkendelaere (PPE). – The question to the High Representative was if, in the transatlantic dialogue with the United States, you have discussed the topic of Eastern Congo, which is a dramatic situation, or where dramatic events are unfolding?

Josep Borrell Fontelles, *vicepresidente de la Comisión / alto representante de la Unión para Asuntos Exteriores y Política de Seguridad*. – Yo creía que venía a una sesión de control sobre las relaciones transatlánticas, no sobre la situación en el este del Congo. Su pregunta hace referencia a la situación en el este del Congo, lo que es sin duda un tema altamente importante y preocupante, pero no es precisamente algo que tenga que ver con la relación transatlántica.

Pero si usted lo que pregunta es si tenemos una preocupación común y compartida con los Estados Unidos sobre la situación en el este del Congo. Pues sí, claro que la tenemos. Pero debo confesarle que recientemente no hemos tratado, como parte de nuestro diálogo, ese problema concreto que a usted le preocupa.

Tom Vandenkendelaere (PPE). – Ja, korte opvolging. Dit gaat misschien – inderdaad – niet concreet over het thema Oost-Congo, maar gaat er eerder over of de VS en de Europese Unie actief werken aan hervorming van de VN, daar waar het precies nodig is, bijvoorbeeld bij vredeshandhaving in gebieden waar het vandaag niet gebeurt.

Josep Borrell Fontelles, *vicepresidente de la Comisión / alto representante de la Unión para Asuntos Exteriores y Política de Seguridad*. – Sí, claro, claro que trabajamos conjuntamente en nuestro diálogo transatlántico en todos los temas que afectan a la paz, y tratamos de todo lo que podemos llamar «retos mundiales».

Pero, si quiere usted que le diga honestamente, recientemente no hemos tenido una discusión concreta sobre la situación en el este del Congo. No descarto que la vayamos a tener. Sin duda, lo que ocurre allí es una materia que nos preocupa y nos ocupa, tanto a los Estados Unidos como a nosotros. Por lo tanto, tomo buena nota de su interés y preocupación, y la próxima vez que tenga ocasión de discutir con mis colegas de los Estados Unidos pondré también este tema en la agenda.

Tonino Picula (S&D). – Mr High Representative, welcome to the House. It is very timely that we met and discussed our global cooperation with the USA today in the deteriorating security environment at our borders and with a number of security challenges arising across the world daily.

EU Member States have stood by Ukraine throughout Russia's war of aggression with every means possible, including through military support, with experts estimating that EU Member States individually and through the European peace facility have donated approximately 12 billion in military aid in this regard. However, the war has put under pressure European defence industry production capacities, which already faced strong competition from American companies which have dominated the market in Europe for years.

How do you envisage future collaboration with the US in the field of the defence industry in light of both European industry production capacity shortages and strong preference over the years to procure American-made defence products?

What steps are being taken to develop the European defence industry adequately to ensure Member States begin procuring more interoperable equipment?

Josep Borrell Fontelles, *vicepresidente de la Comisión / alto representante de la Unión para Asuntos Exteriores y Política de Seguridad*. – Tanto los Estados Unidos como la Unión Europea están haciendo un enorme esfuerzo de apoyo militar a Ucrania. Y no se crea que el nuestro es insignificante o irrelevante comparado con el de los Estados Unidos, como a veces oigo decir. En su conjunto, hemos suministrado a Ucrania 67 000 millones de euros desde que empezó la guerra y, de ellos, 12 000 millones han sido en asistencia militar. Ciertamente los Estados Unidos han hecho más. Pero si sumamos todo —lo militar, lo financiero, lo humanitario, lo económico—, la Unión Europea está por encima. Somos el primer grupo de países que ayuda a Ucrania.

Ahora el problema se plantea, como usted dice, señoría, en términos de capacidades industriales de la defensa. Y, ciertamente, hay mucho material militar que llega de los Estados Unidos para apoyar a las Fuerzas Armadas de Ucrania. Y parte de esa ayuda llega directamente y parte circula por los stocks de los Estados miembros.

Pero creo que Europa, en este momento, más que confiar en la capacidad militar de otro país, tiene que aumentar la suya propia. Lo que tiene que hacer Europa ahora es aumentar su propia capacidad y no confiar en la que los Estados Unidos puedan aportar, que lo están haciendo y mucho. Pero necesitamos desarrollar nuestras propias capacidades. La interoperabilidad: todos usamos o casi todos usamos armamento «NATO-compatible». Todos usamos los estándares de la OTAN. Por lo tanto, no hay problemas de compatibilidad de municiones. Lo que hay es, por nuestra parte, falta de capacidad. Y eso no nos lo van a arreglar los Estados Unidos. Eso lo tenemos que arreglar nosotros mismos.

Tonino Picula (S&D). – My second question is related to the fact that we are days away from very important presidential elections in Montenegro, following almost three years of political instability and no progress on their European Union path.

How much is the US involved in fixing instability concerning the Montenegrin Government, fighting disinformation and external influence and trying to get the country back on track with reforms?

Would joint EU-US mediation similar to the joint mediation called the Prespa process in North Macedonia maybe an option for Montenegro?

Josep Borrell Fontelles, *vicepresidente de la Comisión / alto representante de la Unión para Asuntos Exteriores y Política de Seguridad.* – Tengo la sensación, señor presidente, de que vamos a dar la vuelta al mundo hablando de todos los problemas bajo la referencia a la cooperación transatlántica. Que sí, sirve de excusa para todo.

Bueno, le puedo decir lo que está pasando en Montenegro, donde estamos ciertamente comprometidos en apoyar las estructuras democráticas del país para que sean más funcionales y que Montenegro pueda estar más comprometido con su perspectiva europea, continuando con sus reformas. Pero, para ello, Montenegro, en primer lugar, tiene que resolver sus diferencias políticas a través de sus propias instituciones; y en eso le estamos ayudando. Y, sí, podemos hacerlo conjuntamente con los Estados Unidos, ¿por qué no? Estamos trabajando muy bien con los Estados Unidos en el diálogo entre Kosovo y Serbia. Muy bien, muy eficientemente.

También lo hemos hecho en el caso de Macedonia. Podemos hacerlo también en el caso de Montenegro, pero, por el momento lo que hay es un trabajo en coordinación que incluye la lucha contra la desinformación. Pero no hay una mediación conjunta entre la Unión Europea y los Estados Unidos, o no la hay todavía.

Aprovecho la ocasión para resaltar cuán importante es la cooperación que mantenemos para resolver el problema entre Kosovo y Serbia.

Catharina Rinzema (Renew). – Vorige week was Commissievoorzitter Von der Leyen bij president Biden in Washington DC om over de Inflation Reduction Act te praten. Dit is een subsidiepakket van honderden miljarden euro's dat Amerikaanse productie zal stimuleren, vaak ten koste van Europese productie.

Ik had gehoopt dat Von der Leyen zou terugkomen met een afspraak ...

(de Voorzitter onderbreekt de spreker)

President. – Madam, excuse me, but can you stand up? Thank you.

Catharina Rinzema (Renew). – Vorige week was Commissievoorzitter Von der Leyen bij president Biden in Washington DC om over de Inflation Reduction Act te praten. Dit is een subsidiepakket van honderden miljarden euro's dat Amerikaanse productie zal stimuleren, vaak ten koste van Europese productie.

Ik had gehoopt dat Von der Leyen zou terugkomen met een afspraak voor Europese bedrijven, zodat die in aanmerking zouden komen voor bepaalde subsidies. Helaas heb ik geen afspraak gezien.

Als we het hebben over het verstevigen van de trans-Atlantische relatie, dan verdienen Europese bedrijven dezelfde uitzondering die Amerikaanse handelspartners, zoals Mexico en Canada, ook krijgen. We kunnen daarmee de Europese banen beschermen.

Mijn vraag aan u is:

Gaan Europese bedrijven dezelfde status krijgen die andere handelspartners van Amerika al hebben?

Josep Borrell Fontelles, vicepresidente de la Comisión / alto representante de la Unión para Asuntos Exteriores y Política de Seguridad. – Señoría, estoy seguro de que mi presidenta, la presidenta de la Comisión, la señora Von der Leyen, también hubiera preferido volver con acuerdos cerrados. Claro que sí, pero las cosas son más complicadas de lo que parecen y todavía no se han alcanzado los acuerdos que necesitamos.

Pero lo que sí le puedo decir es que se va a trabajar en un acuerdo sobre materias primas fundamentales para asegurarnos de que nuestras cadenas de suministro en Europa tengan acceso al mercado y que se va a poner en marcha el diálogo sobre los incentivos para las energías limpias con el fin de reforzar cada uno las capacidades del otro.

Pero, sí, todavía queda trabajo por hacer y mucho que negociar. Comprendo que usted hubiera preferido tener ya resultados, pero habrá que esperar. Las nuevas negociaciones empezarán inmediatamente para alcanzar un acuerdo sobre los minerales críticos que debería permitir a las empresas europeas tener las mismas condiciones que las de Canadá o México. Debería. Es el objetivo de la negociación, pero nadie sabe todavía cuándo y cómo puede alcanzarse este acuerdo.

Y el segundo resultado, como le he dicho, es la puesta en marcha de este diálogo sobre incentivos para las energías limpias con el fin de que los dos trabajemos de una forma complementaria.

Pero está claro que, con la Ley de Reducción de la Inflación (IRA), los Estados Unidos han puesto en marcha una de las políticas más proteccionistas desde los años treinta y esto debemos tomarlo muy en consideración.

Catharina Rinzema (Renew). – Als we het hebben over het beschermen van onze banen, dan moeten we oneerlijke concurrentie uit China aanpakken en samen met de VS minder afhankelijk van China worden. Het is een stap in de juiste richting dat we gaan samenwerken – zoals u zei – op kritieke grondstoffen van bijvoorbeeld batterijen. Moeten wij uiteindelijk niet gaan toewerken naar een meer ambitieuze en bredere samenwerking op het gebied van handel tussen de EU en de VS? Meer handel zou ook meer banen opleveren aan beide kanten.

Josep Borrell Fontelles, vicepresidente de la Comisión / alto representante de la Unión para Asuntos Exteriores y Política de Seguridad. – Sí, por supuesto. Lo que usted pregunta abre la puerta a una cuestión de una enorme importancia, que es cuáles van a ser las posiciones respectivas de la Unión Europea y los Estados Unidos con respecto a China.

Ya lo he dicho en muchas ocasiones: nosotros no somos equidistantes entre China y los Estados Unidos. ¿Cómo íbamos a serlo, si compartimos el mismo sistema político y económico? Pero tenemos nuestros propios intereses y, por lo tanto, tendremos que velar por que las decisiones que toman los Estados Unidos, que tienen efectos colaterales sobre terceros países, no tengan efectos de balanceo contra nuestros intereses.

Una cosa es clara: el sistema que han buscado los Estados Unidos para luchar contra el cambio climático, que son subvenciones masivas a los productores de energías renovables, no es el mismo que hemos usado nosotros hasta ahora, que hemos utilizado instrumentos como los precios, a través del sistema de derechos de emisión, o impuestos, como el impuesto de ajuste en frontera. Digamos que los Estados Unidos han utilizado más la zanahoria y nosotros hemos utilizado más el *stick*, es decir, medidas que castigan a quien no cumple. Los Estados Unidos buscan impulsar la inversión, pero no toman medidas, digamos, de tipo punitivas.

Pero las soluciones deben siempre respetar las reglas del comercio internacional; nosotros siempre lo hemos defendido. Y está claro que lo que han planteado los Estados Unidos en muchas cosas no lo hace.

Francisco José Millán Mon (PPE). – Los Estados Unidos son el socio más importante para la Unión Europea. La agresión de Rusia a Ucrania ha puesto de manifiesto una vez más la enorme relevancia de esta relación y también de la OTAN. Deberíamos reforzar ahora estos vínculos aprovechando estos años en los que contamos en Washington con una Administración realmente cercana a Europa.

Yo celebro los acuerdos iniciales alcanzados por la señora Von der Leyen con el señor Biden este viernes, pero me habría gustado que fuesen más ambiciosos, que no se limitasen básicamente a minerales críticos y a la problemática de los coches eléctricos.

A mí me parece una lástima no haber alcanzado el acuerdo de la ATCI en la etapa Obama. Faltó voluntad política en Washington y también en Europa. Si lo hubiésemos logrado, probablemente no tendríamos los problemas que ahora existen con la Ley de Reducción de la Inflación (IRA).

En este contexto, señor Borrell, ¿no cree usted que sería ahora un buen momento para dar un salto hacia adelante en los vínculos con los Estados Unidos —en los planos económico y comercial, y también en el político— para asegurarnos un marco institucional reforzado para esta relación que futuras administraciones en Washington no puedan ignorar?

Josep Borrell Fontelles, vicepresidente de la Comisión / alto representante de la Unión para Asuntos Exteriores y Política de Seguridad. – Quisiera que mi respuesta le pareciera lacónica, pero la podría resumir en un sí.

Sí, sí, me parece un buen momento para analizar a fondo nuestras relaciones. Nadie ha cerrado ninguna puerta. Se creó el Consejo de Comercio y Tecnología en el que se deben encontrar soluciones a los dos grandes ejes que van a marcar nuestras relaciones y también nuestra posición relativa con respecto al resto del mundo: el comercio y la tecnología, que se van a influir mutuamente.

Usted lamenta que no se llegara en su día al acuerdo, de que se perdiera una ocasión, pero de poco sirve llorar por la leche derramada. Ahora lo que hemos de hacer es utilizar nuestros esfuerzos y capacidades para aprovechar las nuevas oportunidades que nos brinda este empuje inflacionista; la decisión de los Estados Unidos de actuar como lo está haciendo.

Yo creo que Biden está actuando como un buen socialdemócrata. Su política económica está —parece— cortada a la medida de un socialdemócrata europeo clásico. Y estoy seguro de que, en muchas cosas, debemos poder coincidir con él.

Francisco José Millán Mon (PPE). – Señor Borrell, yo creo que debemos ser más ambiciosos. Estos acuerdos iniciales alcanzados son demasiado puntuales sobre temáticas muy concretas.

A mí me preocupa, y supongo que a usted también —aunque, claro está, ni usted ni yo tenemos una bola de cristal—, que en un futuro podamos tener una administración en Washington que se distancie mucho de la línea positiva de ahora y que podamos regresar a una etapa de distanciamiento, como la que tuvimos en la etapa de Trump.

Por eso, ahora serían convenientes acuerdos ambiciosos en los planos político, económico y comercial, y no limitarse a los materiales críticos ni tampoco a las baterías de los coches eléctricos.

Josep Borrell Fontelles, vicepresidente de la Comisión / alto representante de la Unión para Asuntos Exteriores y Política de Seguridad. – Bueno, en realidad no se ha alcanzado ningún acuerdo. No. O sea, me dice que le gustaría que hubiera acuerdos sobre más temas. Yo le voy a poner los pies en el suelo: de momento no tenemos ningún acuerdo.

El único acuerdo que tenemos es el de seguir trabajando para alcanzar acuerdos. Más vale eso que nada. Pero acuerdos de momento no tenemos ninguno. Tenemos un acuerdo para seguir trabajando para conseguir acuerdos sobre dos temas —al menos dos—. Seguramente sería bueno tener más, pero, francamente, vamos a concentrar los esfuerzos en estos dos, que no se crea que son fáciles, sobre todo el de materiales críticos, porque este va a tener muchas consecuencias e implicaciones para el resto del mundo.

Estamos hablando de cadenas de valor que podamos compartir con Estados Unidos y decimos que vamos a trabajar con los socios afines para impulsar la cooperación global. Déjeme que le diga que, si queremos conseguir acuerdos para limitar el cambio climático, la paz y la cooperación, no nos podemos limitar a los países afines. Tenemos que hablar con los que no son países afines, porque algunos de estos problemas globales no tienen solución sin ellos.

Matjaž Nemeč (S&D). – Gospod predsednik, spoštovani visoki zunanjepolitični predstavnik!

Moje vprašanje se bo nanašalo na izjemen napredek Bosne in Hercegovine v približevanju Evropski uniji.

Status Bosne in Hercegovine danes lahko enačimo s tistim, ki ga ima Ukrajina, in sicer po vaši zaslugi, osebni zaslugi, zaslugi tega Evropskega parlamenta ter tudi moje države, Republike Slovenije, ki je v zadnjih mesecih vložila veliko energije in navora za to, da bi ta država po desetih letih zastoja končno dobila evropsko perspektivo.

Podobno kot od vas bi pričakoval tudi od komisarja Várhelyija – njegova vloga mi je nepoznana in neznana v tem primeru.

Ampak ne glede na to – rad bi pohvalil tudi predvsem bosanske oblasti za napredek, ki so ga izvedle od volitev do danes. Tu gre za izjemen napredek, ki je primerljiv s tistim vseh najbolj razvitih evropskih držav.

Dovolite mi vprašanje, gospod komisar, visoki predstavnik. Kakšna je pot Bosne in Hercegovine v vaših očeh? Kaj bo vaša služba naredila v naslednjih mesecih, da bo še pospešila njen napredek na poti v Evropsko unijo?

President. – What was the question?

Matjaž Nemeč (S&D). – Actually in Slovenian it was quite concise. What could the EEAS do in the next future to push forward the ambitions of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the European path?

President. – Dear colleague, that has nothing to do with today's Question Time.

Josep Borrell Fontelles, *vicepresidente de la Comisión / alto representante de la Unión para Asuntos Exteriores y Política de Seguridad.* – ¿Pero esto no era un debate sobre los vínculos transatlánticos?

Matjaž Nemeč (S&D). – Yes.

Josep Borrell Fontelles, *vicepresidente de la Comisión / alto representante de la Unión para Asuntos Exteriores y Política de Seguridad.* – ¿O me he equivocado de sitio?

President. – No, you are right.

Josep Borrell Fontelles, *vicepresidente de la Comisión / alto representante de la Unión para Asuntos Exteriores y Política de Seguridad.* – Yo puedo hablarle de Bosnia y Herzegovina, pero venía aquí para otra cosa...

President. – We are continuing.

Hannah Neumann (Verts/ALE). – Thank you, High Representative, for being with us here today. The topic of the debate is indeed a transatlantic approach in a multilateral world. And one area where we can witness at least a multitude of actors at the moment is the Middle East. Over the weekend, China brokered a deal with Saudi and Iran, while we still have no special envoys, the EU. The US President declared the JCPOA as dead while you are still trying to negotiate it, some EU Member States and the US export arms to Saudi Arabia or the UAE, while others have embargoes in place, and many Gulf countries are trying to be friends with the EU, with the US and Russia at the same time. So I am wondering if there is still such a thing as a transatlantic alliance, or at least a transatlantic approach to the region, and if yes, what it looks like along these very concrete examples.

Josep Borrell Fontelles, *vicepresidente de la Comisión / alto representante de la Unión para Asuntos Exteriores y Política de Seguridad.* – Sí, ha habido un acuerdo, con la mediación de China, entre Irán y Arabia Saudí, que pasa por el restablecimiento de las relaciones diplomáticas entre los dos países. Nosotros hemos celebrado el anuncio de este acuerdo y, desde luego, esperamos ver cómo se aplica.

Hay que reconocer los esfuerzos diplomáticos que han conseguido llegar a ello. Porque los dos países, Arabia Saudita e Irán, son centrales para la estabilidad y la seguridad en la región, y creo que el hecho de que vuelvan a tener relaciones bilaterales puede contribuir a la estabilidad de la región en su conjunto.

Esa es una de nuestras prioridades y cierto es que en esto trabajamos conjuntamente con los Estados Unidos. Desescalar las tensiones en lo que llamamos el Medio Oriente amplio es una prioridad para nosotros. Estamos trabajando con todos los agentes en la zona para intentar ver si es posible estabilizar la región. Pero tendremos que estar vigilantes, porque esos dos países han vivido durante décadas de una hostilidad mutua, especialmente en el desarrollo de las ambiciones nucleares de Irán.

Vamos a ver en qué medida contribuye este acuerdo a la estabilidad de la región.

Hannah Neumann (Verts/ALE). – I'll take the chance of a follow-up question specifically on the JCPOA and the fact that we see nuclear enrichment now in Iran. Are there any consultations between the EU and the US on how either the JCPOA or an alternative plan to deal with this is being pursued?

Josep Borrell Fontelles, Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. – Well, I weigh my words, because this is a very sensitive issue and my role is not to negotiate with the US or to reach agreement with the US, but to make possible agreements between the US, the rest of the international community and Iran. I am not a negotiator. I am not part. I don't negotiate. I coordinate the negotiations, which is a different thing. The negotiations are between Iran, on one side, and the International Community on the other side. And the International Community is being represented by the US, by China, by Russia and by three Member States, two plus the United Kingdom. My role is to coordinate. And I am playing the role even not as High Representative, but as a direct asking of the Security Council. And we stay committed to continue looking for any possibility in order to facilitate this dialogue.

Unhappily, the last news on the reports referred to the presence of 83.7% high-enriched uranium and the Fordow facility has been very much troublesome. We support fully the International Atomic Energy Agency on its impartial work to clarify what is the source of this enriched uranium, and which is the real concern that it represents for the nuclear path of Iran. I continue believing that a restored JCPOA could be or it is the best way to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon. And I continue ready to develop diplomatic efforts to make that possible. But it's not up to me, as I said, and it's important to make the difference. I am not negotiating. I am coordinating the negotiations.

Radosław Sikorski (PPE). – Mr President, High Representative, as chairman of the USA delegation here in the European Parliament, I'd just like to express satisfaction that President Putin's criminal invasion of Ukraine has brought us as the West together. And I'd like to thank the Commission and you personally for your leadership on this, which gives me hope that we will prevail.

I therefore have only two suggestions. Number one: could we make the Trade and Technology Council – which I think is crucial in denying the autocrats the dual use and aggressive technologies – could we broaden it to include key allies such as Australia, Japan, South Korea and the United Kingdom to make it more effective?

And secondly, it appears that the US is far more energetic in applying the Magnitsky Act, which we have also adopted here. Russia now has more political prisoners than the Soviet Union did under Brezhnev. But some of those prosecutors, judges and gaolers of people like Kara-Murza and others still have not been sanctioned and they should be.

Josep Borrell Fontelles, Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. – Your question was about opening the Trade and Technology Council to others? This is a bilateral issue. The Trade and Technology Council is a bilateral issue between the US... and I myself am not part of this council, so it is difficult for me to say how this council should work when one is not part of it. But why not? Sorry I cannot give you a precise answer.

And about these other things, these are much more concrete things to discuss. How can we use our tools in order to support the people who are in Russia today? And enlarge the number of political prisoners? No, I don't think the US is more ready than us to work for that. No, I don't think so. I think that both are equally committed. Both are equally ready. The problem is, how do we do that? But believe me, there is not a difference between the US and Europe on supporting the Russian political prisoners, whose big number is certainly something that marks the Putin regime.

Radosław Sikorski (PPE). – We had a meeting here in the European Parliament this morning with Bill Browder, who initiated the Magnitsky legislation, and he claims that we have not used this mechanism as much as the United States. So, just take a look at it, please.

Josep Borrell Fontelles, Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. – *(inaudible)* I don't think the US is more ready than us to work for that. No, I don't think so. I think that both are equally committed. Both are equally ready. The problem is how do we do that? But believe me, there is not a difference between the US and Europe on supporting the Russian political prisoners, which big number is certainly something that marks the Putin regime.

Pedro Marques (S&D). – Mr President, dear High Representative, the leadership of this group of the Socialists and Democrats, we just came from the US just before Chancellor Scholz and the President of the Commission landed a few days later there.

At our meetings at the White House or at the Congress, there was a lot of appraisal about the unity between Europe and the US regarding the support of the Ukrainians against the Russian aggression. But we were also, of course, discussing the elephant in the room, the IRA. America is trying, as you just said previously, to go more independent on other economies, including from ourselves, promoting American industries, even the green ones.

And we in Europe are, at the same time, discussing strategic autonomy and the sovereignty fund. So I would like to ask you, what comes next for this transatlantic partnership? Will we lead together the reinvention of the multilateral institutions, Mr Borrell, so that we can fight globally the health, the financial and the climate challenges? Or are we to face a kind of a new Cold War with blocs clashing through the world against each other?

Josep Borrell Fontelles, vice-président de la Commission/haut représentant de l'Union pour les affaires étrangères et la politique de sécurité. – Je ne peux pas vous dire s'il va y avoir à nouveau une guerre froide. Je sais qu'il faut faire tout ce qui est possible pour l'éviter. On en a déjà eu une. Mais la guerre froide qu'on a connue était une guerre froide avec un isolement économique et financier entre les parties. Il n'y avait pas de relations commerciales, il n'y avait pas de rapports financiers entre les États-Unis et la Russie soviétique. Les échanges entre les deux blocs, c'était minimal, ridicule.

Et surtout, l'Union Soviétique n'était pas le banquier des États-Unis. Par contre, aujourd'hui, la Chine est le banquier des États-Unis. C'est l'achat par la Chine des bons du Trésor et les crédits aux consommateurs qui ont permis aux États-Unis de poursuivre dans leur dynamique financière. Et les échanges entre la Chine et les États-Unis sont de l'ordre, je n'ai pas les chiffres en tête, de milliards par jour, pas par an, par jour.

Donc c'est une guerre froide entre deux parties qui n'ont pas intérêt à l'anéantissement de l'autre, parce qu'elles sont trop liées. C'est vrai que maintenant, on essaye de chercher la parade pour cet engagement mutuel. Mais si vous parlez avec les États-Unis de *decoupling* avec la Chine, ils vont vous dire que, non, ce n'est pas le *decoupling* qu'on cherche, c'est le *derisking*. C'est autre chose. Et, de ce point de vue-là, il va y avoir une confrontation, on y est et ça va marquer le siècle. Ce siècle sera le siècle de la confrontation entre ces deux grandes puissances. Mais je pense que nous avons tout intérêt à éviter d'abord de jeter la Russie dans les bras de la Chine et provoquer une alliance de ces deux régimes autoritaires, et ensuite à défendre les intérêts qui sont les nôtres.

Pedro Marques (S&D). – I refer to the reform of the multilateral institutions. And we were also in New York at the UN with the Secretary-General, and there was a sense of hope on the reform of the multilateral institutions. And it was good to hear some sense of hope in such difficult times. And I would like to ask you, do you also believe that we can indeed deliver on the reform of the multilateral institutions, namely the Security Council, and particularly to give a role, a concrete role, to the Global South? Latin America and Africa are calling for too long for a stronger role in the multilateral institutions, and I saw the Secretary-General going in that direction. I would like to have your saying on this.

Josep Borrell Fontelles, *Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy*. – Theoretically, we are very much ready for that. And yes, we support the enlargement of the Security Council for a better representation of the world the way it is today, which is not the world when the multilateral institutions were created on the aftermath of World War Two.

But if we have more members of the Security Council in order to have more veto rights, then we are not going to improve the working of the United Nations system. More vetoes means more difficulties to reach agreements, and we have already a lot. But, on the other hand, I don't see a lot of people ready to renounce to their veto rights. Do you know some? Do you know some who say, 'Yes, I'm going to renounce my veto right on the Security Council'? Certainly not.

So, if we want to make the Security Council more flexible, we have first to have more members inside, second to have less veto rights, in order to be able to get decisions quicker and more engaged with the world problems.

But it's not only the United Nations, it's also about financial institutions that have to be renewed and reformed. And for that, last week in Stockholm, the Minister of Development discussed our proposals for the reform of the financial institutions.

Believe me, neither is so easy. Everybody is ready to open and to give roles to the others, but when the time comes to renounce some of your part in order for the others to have a bigger part, then the difficulties start.

President. – Dear colleagues, we have so many colleagues asking for the floor. It is impossible to give everyone the floor, but I ask you to delete the second question. Then it is possible to give more people the floor. So only one question, answer and go on.

Anna Bonfrisco (ID). – Signor Presidente, Alto rappresentante, onorevoli colleghi, in questo secolo sappiamo che poco può fare una singola strategia di sicurezza nazionale, che non basta una strategia di sicurezza europea: serve una strategia di sicurezza transatlantica sempre più forte.

E nell'ambito del dialogo transatlantico, sappiamo, che per il nostro più grande alleato e il più importante, gli Stati Uniti, è diventato materia di sicurezza nazionale il concetto secondo il quale, chi sarà alla guida delle tecnologie abilitanti e di quelle emergenti, dall'energia alle scienze biomediche, dall'intelligenza artificiale al *quantum computing*, emergerà come leader mondiale e sarà in grado di esercitare il *soft power* e l'*hard power* meglio di altri.

Le chiedo, quindi: c'è perfetta sintonia tra Europa e Stati Uniti in questa valutazione dottrinale? Riscontra debolezze, vulnerabilità nell'implementare tale dottrina?

Josep Borrell Fontelles, *Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy*. – These are cosmic questions. Difficult to answer in a minute and a half. Nothing is white, nothing is black on that. We are partners, but we defend our own interests. And certainly the US did not consult us when they approved the Inflation Reduction Act. Now we are trying to negotiate in order to see how the collateral effects of this decision can touch us. And with the contrast with other international powers, we agree that our cooperation has to strengthen not only our economic security, but also national security, but being rooted on the multilateral system. This multilateral system has, among others, the WTO. As I said before, the IRA is the biggest protectionist measure that the US has launched in 1913. And it is certainly in many parts of the IRA, it is something against the rules of the WTO. I am not blaming anyone I am just saying that white is white. So certainly we can follow them. And also to undermine still more this multilateral order, or we can try to look for something that could not be a race to who is the one who gives better and bigger subsidies, because then we go in a completely geopolitical and economic landscape than the one in which we have been working until now. And is not clear how it is going to go. President von der Leyen went to Washington, certainly, it was excellent relations. But what we have in the table now is the will to continue discussing.

Veronika Vrecionová (ECR). – Pane předsedající, vážený pane vysoký představiteli, Spojené státy a Kanada jsou našimi největšími a nejbližšími spojenci a partnery, a to ve všech oblastech: společná obrana, bezpečnost, ekonomika, kultura, inovace. V současné době ruské imperiální agrese a stále více konfrontačního chování Číny musíme jako Západ držet daleko více při sobě. A hlavně, nesmíme připustit jakékoli, byť jen náznaky obchodních sporů nebo snad dokonce obchodní války. Já se jenom vrátím k tomu, co už tady padlo několikrát. Bohužel obchodní smlouvu se Spojenými státy nemáme. Považuji to za chybu, ale to už se stalo. Chystáme se tedy ty obchodní vztahy řešit alespoň menšími sektorovými dohodami? Vy jste mluvil o dvou dohodách. Já myslím, že to je strašně málo. Chystáme nějaké další? V podstatě mluvíme o tom, co můžeme dále dělat. Ale jakákoli konfrontace se Spojenými státy není v našem zájmu. A

jaká bude naše další reakce na IRU (*Inflation Reduction Act*)?

Josep Borrell Fontelles, *Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy*. – Nobody is looking for a confrontation with the US. Nobody is looking for that. President von der Leyen went to the US, certainly not looking for confrontation, but looking for understanding and agreement. So do not worry, this is not the case. We are not looking for a confrontation with the US in any field.

But, if the transatlantic relations are in a very good shape, it is for two reasons. First, because we share the same interests and values, or at least, they are very well aligned in many issues. We share the same political analysis of Russia's war; we both want Ukraine to regain its full sovereignty.

But our relationship works well because our partnership is balanced. And the more balanced it will be, the better it will work. And I think that the US understands that perfectly. I think that the US are very much interested in the European Union to assume their strategic responsibilities, and that a stronger Europe will make a stronger transatlantic relationship. Our relationship works well because it is balanced, and the more balanced it will be, the better it will work.

Marc Botenga (The Left). – Monsieur le Président, Monsieur le Ministre des affaires étrangères européen, voici une question. Vous savez que la crédibilité de l'Union européenne dans le monde dépend non seulement de la façon dont nous traitons d'autres pays, mais surtout de quelles interactions nous avons avec nos alliés.

Vous avez été un grand défenseur, justement, du fait de ne pas laisser impunis les crimes de guerre russes en Ukraine. Mais aujourd'hui, nous sommes 20 ans après la guerre américaine contre l'Iraq, une guerre criminelle, en violation du droit international, qui a fait environ un demi-million de morts, et toujours aucun responsable gouvernemental américain n'a été tenu pour responsable.

Alors, dans nos relations transatlantiques et pour la crédibilité de l'Union européenne, pour ne pas avoir une Union européenne qui a deux poids et deux mesures, comme nous le reprochent souvent l'Amérique latine, l'Afrique, etc., allez-vous mettre cette question sur la table, et comment?

Josep Borrell Fontelles, *vicepresidenta de la Comisión / alto representante de la Unión para Asuntos Exteriores y Política de Seguridad*. – Sí, evidentemente, la crítica que se nos hace de utilizar dos pesos y dos medidas me la encuentro todos los días.

Sí, ustedes defienden la integridad territorial de Ucrania, pero ¿qué hacen para defender la integridad territorial de los territorios palestinos ocupados por Israel, por ejemplo? Eso me lo preguntan todos los días. Hace poco tiempo —la semana pasada, creo—, estuve en la India, en Nueva Delhi, en la reunión del G20 y muchos de nuestros socios internacionales dicen que ellos defienden la paz, pero la defienden de una forma coherente, consistente, y que nosotros lo hacemos de forma selectiva y no dejan de citar ejemplos. Y usted ha citado el ejemplo de la guerra de Irak, que fue sin duda una de las primeras veces en las que se hizo el uso de la fuerza fuera del marco de las Naciones Unidas. Por eso muchos Estados europeos no siguieron a los Estados Unidos en esa guerra.

De lo que usted me plantea ahora, pues, francamente, no tengo nada nuevo que decirle. Que yo sepa, no hay nada sobre la mesa. Pero sí me hago eco de esa crítica, a la que creo que tenemos que ser sensibles. Hemos de ser coherentes y — como decía uno de nuestros socios— hay que defender las cosas de forma consistente y coherente.

Georgios Kyrtos (Renew). – Mr Borrell, unfortunately you are obliged to have a global outlook and try to answer questions concerning different regions of the world. What about Latin America? It is of strategic importance to the United States of America and, of course, to the European Union. We have a lot of issues, developments in Mexico, in Brazil, in Argentina. So could you please summarise to us the points of convergence with the strategy and the policies of Washington and some points of divergence?

Josep Borrell Fontelles, *vicepresidenta de la Comisión / alto representante de la Unión para Asuntos Exteriores y Política de Seguridad*. – Cuando se habla de la relación trasatlántica, todo el mundo entiende que es la relación entre Europa y Estados Unidos, pero esa es solo la relación trasatlántica norte. Hay otra relación trasatlántica, porque América Latina también está del otro lado del Atlántico. O sea que deberíamos hablar de dos relaciones trasatlánticas: la norte y la sur. Para nosotros, la sur, la relación con el subcontinente latinoamericano, debería tener mucha más importancia de la que tiene.

Históricamente, Estados Unidos y Europa han visto América Latina de manera muy distinta: Estados Unidos con la Doctrina Monroe —esta es mi área de influencia, este es mi *backyard*, aquí no se mete nadie y tengo un cierto derecho, en castellano diríamos «de una manera muy castiza»— y Europa es una vieja potencia colonial en América Latina, en particular, en algunos países y, en particular, el que yo conozco mejor. Por lo tanto, nuestra relación no se parece en nada. En América Latina reprochan todavía a Estados Unidos su apoyo a las dictaduras militares en el Cono Sur: la Operación Cóndor, Chile, Argentina, Brasil. Lo recuerdo muy bien.

Hoy el paisaje político latinoamericano ha cambiado. Ha aparecido una nueva izquierda. La nueva izquierda en Colombia, en Chile, una segunda edición de la izquierda de Lula en Brasil, todavía la permanencia de la izquierda peronista en Argentina y el macizo andino. Todo eso dibuja un escenario en el que nosotros tenemos que buscar nuestro camino y comprometernos más con América Latina, independientemente de lo que haga Estados Unidos, que ha hecho mucho, pero seguramente desde una óptica diferente.

Александър Александров Йорданов (PPE). – Г-н Председател, трансатлантическите отношения, г-н Борел, трябва да гарантират регионална и глобална сигурност. Инструмент на такава сигурност е членството на държавите в НАТО. В тази връзка е моят въпрос. Ние желаем да приемаме нови държави в Европейския съюз, но не трябва ли преди това тези държави да станат членове на НАТО? Досега всички държави от бившия комунистически блок, които бяха приети в Европейския съюз, преди това ставаха членове на НАТО. И въпросът ми е конкретно за Република Сърбия, която в момента е държавата, формираща руско влияние в региона на Западните Балкани и чиято политика дестабилизира и съседни държави като Северна Македония, Косово, Босна и Херцеговина. Членството в НАТО като инструмент за сигурност в трансатлантическите отношения.

Josep Borrell Fontelles, *vicepresidente de la Comisión / alto representante de la Unión para Asuntos Exteriores y Política de Seguridad.* – Ustedes perdonen, pero bajo el nombre de relación trasatlántica están ustedes poniendo cualquier cosa que se les ocurra. O sea, ahora resulta que la relación trasatlántica determina la integración de Serbia en la...

Vamos a ver, señor presidente, yo vengo aquí con mucho gusto a contestar sobre un tema concreto, pero si me preguntan por cualquier cosa y luego me dicen «esto tiene que ver con la relación trasatlántica», pues les diré «no, no tiene que ver con la relación trasatlántica y no tengo ni idea de cuál es la perspectiva de Serbia a entrar en la OTAN».

Katarína Roth Neveďalová (S&D). – Vážený pán predsedajúci, ja sa chcem spýtať na transatlantické vzťahy, pán Borrell. My sme mali s Američanmi vždy veľmi dobrú spoluprácu, čo sa týka humanitárnej pomoci a podpory krajín, ktoré boli najzraniteľnejšie, ktoré mali rôzne problémy. Dnes diskutujeme napríklad o kritických surovinách, ktoré sú potrebné pre nás aj pre Američanov aj pre ďalšie krajiny, napríklad pre Čínu, na výrobu a vývoj rôznych produktov. Ja sa chcem spýtať, kde sa nachádza momentálne diskusia so Spojenými štátmi v tejto otázke? Ktoré regióny považujeme možno za také dôležité pre nás? Ale aj v súvislosti nielen s tým, akú humanitárnu pomoc podporujeme a ako podporujeme ľudí v týchto regiónoch, ale takisto aj ako chránime týchto ľudí? A keďže sme priatelia, ale zároveň aj konkurenti, tak ako vlastne pomáhame týmto krajinám možno aj bojovať s klimatickými zmenami? Pretože veľmi často tieto využívané zdroje, ktoré využívame a ťažíme, spôsobujú rôzne problémy v oblasti environmentálnej.

Josep Borrell Fontelles, *vicepresidente de la Comisión / alto representante de la Unión para Asuntos Exteriores y Política de Seguridad.* – Debo reconocer que no entiendo la pregunta. ¿O sea que cómo ayudamos a quién para qué? ¿Cómo ayudo a qué países?

Por favor, señorías, si ustedes quieren que les conteste con un poco de seriedad, háganme unas preguntas que yo les pueda contestar. ¿Cómo ayudamos a qué países a hacer frente al cambio climático? ¿A qué países se refiere usted?

Reinhard Bütikofer (Verts/ALE). – Mr Borrell, the cooperation on China is a core issue in transatlantic relations. Recent media excitement has focused on some lack of clarity as to where the EU stands. President von der Leyen has been accused of being overly hawkish. Some people even felt the need to say we should not be a vassal of the United States, while President Michel has been dubbed as the person who tries to avoid confrontation.

Now, where should the EU stand with regard to transatlantic relations on China? And I have three specific questions. President Biden has said yes to all three. What are you saying? Should there be outbound investment screening? Should there be sanctions if China delivers arms to Russia? And should there be a deterrence policy to avoid an attack on Taiwan?

Josep Borrell Fontelles, *Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy*. – This is about our relationship with China, not with the US. Our position with China on arms to Ukraine, our position on China versus Taiwan, which was the other one? Screening of investments? This is our position on China. Do you want a debate on China? Call for it! Call for it! But don't hide between the transatlantic relations to discuss about China.

President. – Mr Bütikofer said at the beginning that China is a part of the transatlantic relation, because we need a common position with the West vis-à-vis China. I accept that ...

Ich entschuldige mich dafür, dass viele Kolleginnen und Kollegen heute das Thema der Fragestunde stark erweitert haben. Da bin ich auch mehrfach eingeschritten und Sie auch. Aber bei diesem Thema ist es nicht eine Ausflucht, sondern es ist ein Zusammenhang mit unseren transatlantischen Beziehungen und dem Bezug zu China.

Hilde Vautmans (Renew). – Wel, ik wil eigenlijk mijn collega Bütikofer bijtreden, want ik moet eerlijk zeggen, mijnheer Borrell, het gaat wel degelijk over trans-Atlantische relaties en ik grijp dit ook aan – net zoals collega Bütikofer – om dit aan te halen.

Mevrouw Ursula von der Leyen was in de Verenigde Staten. We lezen nu dat er een conflict is in houding tussen mevrouw Von der Leyen en Charles Michel met betrekking tot de visie van China. Wij hebben hier breed voor een uitstekend verslag van mijn hand over China gestemd, waarin we zeiden: “Voor China-beleid moeten we samenspreken met gelijkwaardige partners.”

Nu stel ik u de vraag, mijnheer Borrell:

Was er gegevensuitwisseling? Hebben de Verenigde Staten, als goede partner, met ons, Europa, gegevens uitgewisseld als zou China wapens leveren aan Rusland in het conflict dat er daar bestaat? Dat is een vraag over trans-Atlantische relaties.

En te: U bent eigenlijk toch wel gedeeld tussen Raad en Commissie? Wat is uw standpunt nu? Volgt u mevrouw Von der Leyen of volgt u Charles Michel met betrekking tot het China-beleid? Laat u zich beïnvloeden door de houding van de Verenigde Staten richting China? Dat is wel duidelijk een vraag over trans-Atlantische relaties.

Josep Borrell Fontelles, *Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy*. – Look, I am not aware that there is a difference between the President of the Commission and the President of the Council, is there? Where is this information coming from? Do you read the press?

(In reaction to off-mic comment by Hilde Vautmans) Let's be serious. Please. Let's be serious.

The common foreign policy of the European Union is being driven by the European Union Council because foreign policy belongs to the Member States, not to the Commission. I am charged with building a common foreign policy, putting together the different approaches of the different Member States to China. So the foreign policy of the European Union with respect to China is being built under the political guidance of the European Union Council.

Trade policy is a competence of the community pillar of the European Union. But trade policy doesn't dictate foreign policy. Trade policy is part of foreign policy. Trade policy doesn't drive foreign policy. It is foreign policy that drives trade policy. Does that answer your question?

Der Präsident. – Wir beenden die Frage...

(Zwischenruf)

Frau Kollegin, bitte! Wir beenden die Fragestunde mit dem Hohen Vertreter und Vize-Präsidenten der Kommission.

Die Lebhaftigkeit und die Vielfalt der Fragen zeigt, wie intensiv nicht nur die transatlantischen Beziehungen, sondern die geopolitische Entwicklung Teil der politischen Debatte in Europa geworden ist. Ich halte das für gut.

In Zukunft würde ich die Kolleginnen und Kollegen bitten, bei ihrer Fragestellung das Thema der Fragestunde primär im Visier zu haben.

15. Id-deterjorament tad-demokrazija f'Israel u l-konsegwenzi ghat-territorji okkupati (dibattitu)

Der Präsident. – Als nächster Punkt der Tagesordnung folgt die Aussprache über die Erklärung des Vizepräsidenten der Kommission und Hohen Vertreters der Union für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik über die Verschlechterung der Demokratie in Israel und Folgen für die besetzten Gebiete (2023/2593(RSP)).

Josep Borrell Fontelles, Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. – Mr President, honourable Members of the European Parliament, thank you for this opportunity to address you today on the increasingly important issues. Everybody is following closely the developments in the Middle East in the past weeks, both in Israel and in the occupied Palestinian territories.

First I would like to start by underlying both the European Union's and my own personal engagement with both parties. I've been in contact with both Israeli Foreign Minister Cohen – even this morning – and the Palestinian Prime Minister. We invited the Prime Minister to Brussels, where we had a very good exchange at the last Foreign Affairs Council in January. This has been coupled with public messaging. You have seen a number of my statements – not *my* statements – the last one was an a statement of 27 Member States. Sometimes people blame me for the statements of the 27 Member States. It's not me, it's the 27 Member States. I am representing the Council, and the Council is the 27 Member States. This was issued last Wednesday. And when we face a difficult situation on the ground with increasing violence and extremism I think it's crucial that the European Union is united and speaks with one voice, not my voice, the voice of the 27, all together. And we managed to reach an agreement of the 27. And this is the first time it happened for many years, that we had the statement of the 27.

And I spoke this morning on the phone with the Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen, who was not very happy about this debate. He was concerned. He was asking why the European Parliament is interfering in the internal affairs of Israel. He was once again blaming me. Well, sorry, I am coming to the Parliament. The Parliament calls me to discuss something, and I have to come. Which I did. It's not me who put this title, 'Deterioration of democracy in Israel and consequences on the occupied territories', it's the political groups, and this Parliament is able to discuss about everything they consider important. And that's what I try to explain to the Israeli minister in a very friendly way: 'Look, it's normal that the parliamentarians are concerned about the growing spiral of violence in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories and the need for all sides to de-escalate the situation'. I mentioned this agreement that we reached with the 27 Member States where, of course, we condemn terrorism; of course we fully recognise Israel's right to defend itself; and we certainly never draw a comparison between operations by the Israeli military and the actions of terrorists. But we have to call for the proportional use of force. No, we don't want any kind of funding activities that could encourage incitement.

Of course we are a strong believer in the two-state solution. And there is no, we believe, viable alternative to that. And with our international partners, we will continue to work for a peaceful solution to the conflict. And I am using this Parliament to say – and I suppose you agree – that the European Union has to engage on looking for peace in the Middle East, and that the Middle East peace process is something that matters for us, and we are engaged on that. Maybe someone doesn't like it, but we do it because we believe that is our contribution to the security in the region and to our security too. So I hope that today will be a good discussion to show to Minister Cohen that the Parliament is ready to discuss what is happening in the Middle East and how we can contribute to the peace process. And this is not at all to have an anti-Israeli position. Not at all.

Second, we have known Israel for its vibrant democracy. That's true. So vibrant that we have seen five elections in the past three years. Very vibrant. Five elections in three years is quite a dynamic electoral process. And the new government is keen to pursue a judicial reform. And that's what we want to discuss today: a judicial reform which has led to a heated internal political debate. And everybody knows, because everybody watches TV and reads newspapers, that many Israelis have been demonstrating in the streets. And both the government and opposition are using fierce language. A compromise seems difficult, but as far as I know, talks are ongoing, especially thanks to the efforts of President Herzog. And I don't want to prejudge the outcome of this debate. I am not part of this debate. I am just saying that this debate is taking place. And I can't remember you what the President Herzog himself has said. And we are a close observer because Israel is a key partner. Our values are based on our democratic and open society and the rule of law. And we expect this to continue.

And if we have concerns, if you have concerns, you will not hesitate to express them and convey them as you do with any part of the world. For example, the Knesset is discussing a bill that could re-establish the death penalty. We know that we are strongly and we are in principle opposed to the death penalty. And for sure today, I'm sure that many members will engage on this clearly.

And third, with full respect to the internal political dynamics in Israel, this Chamber is fully empowered to discuss these dynamics and to understand what happens there with respect to our perception of our values and interest in the region. Nothing is strange on that. This cannot be seen as an interference, but a way of showing our interest and our appreciation for the Israeli democracy.

And then you present in the title of the debate also the consequences on the Palestinian territories, the occupied Palestinian territories. And I am not inventing the new world if I say that the situation there is grave. And that violence has reached levels unseen since 2005, with an appalling number of victims, including children. Things cannot go on like this. And I made a call with our statement and also with an article published in the Middle East press, asking both sides to act urgently and responsibly. They need to do whatever they can to allow for a change of course.

And we have been clear and I will be clear once again: settlements are illegal under international law. Is that being anti-Israeli saying that? No: settlements are illegal under international law. And the expansion must stop, as well as demolition and evictions of Palestinians from their homes. The Israeli Government must seriously counter the violence of settler extremism and hold perpetrators accountable. And military operations must be proportionate and in line with international humanitarian law. It's difficult not to agree on that.

But the Palestinian Authority must act too. They must redouble their efforts in terms of security cooperation and work to prevent acts of terror that have claimed many Israeli lives. It is equally important that the Palestinians work towards reconciliation in order to reunite the Palestinian territories under one single legitimate authority. Palestinian factions should engage constructively in reconciliation talks. Palestinian people deserve the right to vote in national democratic elections to renew the legitimacy of their leadership. This is important also in view of future peace talks.

The international community must act as well to help bring about a renewed perspective for peace. And we need renewed international efforts to help both Israelis and Palestinians to think through their options. And in order to contribute to that, on 13 February I met with the Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Faisal, and with Arab League Secretary-General Aboul Gheit, and we agreed to work together towards a viable solution in order to revive and build on the Arab Peace Initiative, also by adding a European peace contribution to it. And in these efforts we will be working closely with other Arab and international partners.

We have also supported the work of the US, including on the recent Aqaba Joint Communiqué. And all parties should now respect the agreements that they reached in Aqaba in good faith. And we must help to create the conditions where it will be advantageous for Israelis and Palestinians to go back to the negotiating table and talk. And nothing will make me more happy than to be able to contribute from the European Union to prepare this process. I'm sure everybody in this Chamber agrees that the European Union should do all we can in order to contribute to a peaceful settlement of the conflict in the Middle East and peace between Israel and Palestine. This and nothing else is what is moving us, and in particular me.

Michael Gahler, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – Mr President, dear colleagues, our support for Israel as a functioning, vibrant democracy in the Middle East is, to a large extent, dependent on this very fact – that it remains a functioning democracy, where the separation of powers between the executive, parliament and the courts prevails. The legislation that is currently passing the Knesset seeks, among other issues, to enable the Knesset to overrule Supreme Court decisions. Such legislation must be a no go in a functioning democracy.

But there is hope and protest. Israeli President Yitzhak Herzog last Thursday said that the government should abandon proposed legislation to overhaul the country's judiciary, in favour of a model with broad national support. I also put my trust in Israel's vibrant civil society. Hundreds of thousands of citizens are demonstrating every day against this onslaught on a liberal democracy, and they will not let it happen.

Israel, with its founding legacy, must remain on moral high ground. The prime minister has to guarantee that hate speech against political opponents and extremist positions expressed by cabinet ministers do not further encourage a circle of violence, such as the radical settlers attacking Palestinians in Huwara. He is also responsible not to implement those parts of the coalition agreement where the signatories claim, 'Israel has a natural right over all of the land, and a fundamental purpose of the new government will be to promote Israeli sovereignty over the West Bank'.

We want to defend Israel's legitimate right to exist as the Jewish state, but we cannot defend what is illegitimate.

Pedro Marques, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – Mr President, this is a significant moment of unity in this chamber, and I want to highlight that after the words of my colleague, Mr Gahler, because with the aim to free itself from the strings of the judiciary, the government of Israel and its coalition are trying to approve legislation that is not acceptable in a democratic country as we know them. It's certainly not acceptable and not accepted in Israel, too, because Israeli citizens are taking to the streets week after week on ever bigger mass demonstrations to protect against the judiciary reform already referred previously by Michael Gahler, claiming, correctly, that it constitutes an assault to the Israeli democracy. This reform diminishes the judiciary as a whole, making it easy for the political power to overrule decisions from the Supreme Court. And as it was also referred, legislative proposals are being discussed to reinstate even the death penalty. This government is paving the way for a de facto annexation of the occupied territories. So let me end, Mr President, with a sentence, there is no room for ambiguity. We are not anti-Israeli, for we are by the side of the hundreds of thousands, of the millions of Israelis that are fighting for democracy in Israel in the streets these days.

Nicola Beer, *im Namen der Renew-Fraktion*. – Herr Präsident! Die Europäische Union und Israel verbindet eine tiefe Freundschaft. Freundschaft bedeutet aber auch, besorgniserregende Entwicklungen anzusprechen – und ich bin besorgt. Ich bin besorgt über die neue Gewaltspirale in den palästinensischen Gebieten. Ich bin besorgt über die geplante Justizreform der neuen israelischen Regierung, die zum Ende der Gewaltenteilung und der Unabhängigkeit der Justiz führen könnte.

Die Demonstrationen in Israel und die Äußerung von Präsident Herzog zeigen aber auch, dass Israel eine lebendige, eine wehrhafte Demokratie ist, die um bessere Lösungen ringt. Wir als Europäisches Parlament, als demokratischer Partner sollten uns als vertrauensvoller Partner anbieten und unterstützen. Im Diskurs miteinander zu sein, sich offen zu äußern, insbesondere als Freund, sehe ich als konstruktiver an, als das übliche *blame game* beider Seiten.

Ich baue auf mutige Politikerinnen und Politiker in Regierung und Opposition, die in der Lage sind, sowohl einen gesellschaftlichen Konsens in Israel herbeizuführen als auch später – quasi in der Fortführung der Abraham Accords – die Gewalt in den palästinensischen Gebieten zu überwinden.

Jordi Solé, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – In just a few short weeks, we have seen what the most extremist government in Israel's seven-decade history is capable of: eroding democracy by undermining the independence of the judiciary. Mr Borrell, the EU must unequivocally stand with those who defend a solid democracy with proper checks and balances in Israel. And you should make clear that if these reforms go ahead, this will ultimately have consequences for relations between the EU and Israel. But as we look at what is going on in the streets of Israel and in the Knesset, we need also to be looking at what is happening in the occupied territories. And there we see more of the same. Perhaps with greater intensity. We see growing violence, expansion plans for illegal settlements, a de facto annexation turning into a covert, de jure annexation, daily discrimination against Palestinians, demolitions... It is necessary that it also gets international attention and condemnation and that the EU finally gets vocal and consistent, opposing occupation policies from the current government, as well as former ones which seek to make a just and lasting peace an impossibility.

Joachim Stanisław Brudziński, w imieniu grupy ECR. – Panie Przewodniczący! Według oceny delegatury Unii Europejskiej w Tel Awiwie rośnie zagrożenie eskalacją przemocy na Zachodnim Brzegu. Newralgiczny okres nadchodzącego ramadanu i nakładających się na niego świąt żydowskich wraz z ostrą retoryką radykalnych polityków wchodzących w skład koalicji rządowej w Izraelu, w tym odpowiedzialnych za różne aspekty bezpieczeństwa, w połączeniu z poczuciem bezkarności osadników, jeszcze bardziej zwiększają ryzyko kolejnych aktów przemocy. Do tego dochodzi bardzo słabe panowanie nad sytuacją na Zachodnim Brzegu ze strony władz Autonomii Palestyńskiej oraz duża liczba obecnych tam gotowych do akcji jednostek małych ugrupowań rozproszonych i pozostających poza czyjąkolwiek kontrolą, takich jak Hamas czy Palestyński Islamski Dżihad.

W ostatnim czasie doszło do wielu nadużyć ze strony osadników, ale i izraelskich służb na Zachodnim Brzegu, do jednych z najbardziej wstrząsających należą wydarzenia w Huwarze. W ocenie wielu komentatorów, wydarzenia w Huwarze pokazują coraz większą zuchwałość osadników, u których poczucie bezkarności może być podsyćane świadomością obecności w rządzie izraelskim ich zwolenników. Ja chciałbym się upomnieć, Szanowni Państwo, o palestyńskich chrześcijan. Nadchodzą święta Wielkanocy. Mówimy o konflikcie palestyńsko-izraelskim, a zapominamy o chrześcijanach, którzy od wieków są prześladowani zarówno przez jednych, jak i drugich ekstremistów.

Anna Bonfrisco, a nome del gruppo ID. – Signor Presidente, Alto rappresentante Borrell, onorevoli colleghi, i cittadini di Israele oggi sono orgogliosi del loro Paese, che quest'anno celebra 75 anni di indipendenza, e credono nella giustizia della sua causa, ma allo stesso tempo sono esausti dalle lotte intestine e dalle sue conseguenze sulla vita politica e sociale.

Queste sono parole del Presidente Herzog e lo ringraziamo per questo monito valido per tutte le democrazie liberali e anche per aver celebrato con noi la Giornata della Memoria. Israele conosce i pericoli derivanti dal virus della polarizzazione politica, un virus che può erodere la fiducia dei cittadini nelle istituzioni e arrivare a paralizzare la nazione.

Ma è importante ribadire che Israele è un faro di democrazia. È uno Stato speciale per come è costruito e per come opera. È uno Stato innovativo per natura e desideroso di contribuire allo sviluppo del genere umano, nonostante si trovi collocati nell'area più difficile del mondo. Intorno a sé ha nemici, intolleranza, disprezzo, terrorismo e Stati caratterizzati da una minore volontà di sviluppo e di democrazia. Ma Israele si sa difendere da tutto ciò.

I will now switch to English and, given the importance of our debate today, I would like to conclude with a quotation from Chaim Weizmann, the first President of Israel: «The future of the State of Israel rests on three foundations: fraternal love, an effort to build and peace to all, near and far.»

Martina Michels, im Namen der Fraktion The Left. – Herr Präsident, Herr Borrell, Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Israels Regierungskoalition mit rechtsextremen Parteien ist dabei, die demokratische Verfasstheit des Landes niederzureißen. Dabei geht es nicht nur um das Justizreformpaket, das selbst der Staatspräsident Herzog als bedrückend und schädlich für die Demokratie bezeichnet und gegen das Tausende seit Wochen auf die Straße gehen. Es geht auch um die Einführung der Todesstrafe, um die Übertragung von Zuständigkeiten für die besetzten Gebiete auf das neue Büro für Siedlungstätigkeiten im besetzten Westjordanland. Es geht um eine inzwischen ungezügelter Siedlungspolitik und die Beschleunigung von Annexionstendenzen.

Das sind mitnichten interne Angelegenheiten. Diese Politik ist auch keine Entschuldigung für Terroranschläge, aber sie wird nicht dazu beitragen, die Spirale von Hass und Gewalt zu durchbrechen. Herr Borrell, Israel und die EU verbindet vieles, vor allem auch die gemeinsamen Werte von Demokratie und Menschenrechten. Wir müssen endlich klar dazu stehen, die Kräfte in der israelischen Gesellschaft, die diese Werte und Wege verteidigen, zu unterstützen, notfalls gegen ihre eigene Regierung.

Kinga Gál (NI). – Tisztelt Elnök Úr! Főképviselő Úr! Képviselőtársaim! Izrael egy stabil, demokratikusan megválasztott kormánnyal rendelkezik, amellyel szembeni támadások most ismét azt bizonyítják, hogy a baloldali erők képtelenek elfogadni, ha egy választáson nekik nem tetsző eredmény születik. A baloldal ugyanúgy választások miatt, politikai alapon támadja most Izraelt, ahogy Magyarországot is teszi. Ideje lenne, hogy végre tiszteletben tartsák a választók többségének akaratát, és a demokratikus választások végeredményét. Az Ábrahám-megállapodások megkötése hosszú évtizedek után a tartós béke záloga lehet Izrael és az arab országok között. Az izraeli kormányfő elismerést érdemel a közel-keleti térség stabilitásáért tett erőfeszítéséért.

Ez Európa biztonsága szempontjából is kulcsfontosságú, ennek hiánya ugyanis a terrorfenyegettség és az illegális migrációs hullámok erősödését eredményezi. Európának elemi érdeke, hogy támogassa a közel-keleti békefolyamatot. Izrael önvédelemhez való jogát tiszteletben kell tartani. Elítélendő minden izraeli állampolgárral szemben elkövetett terrortámadás. Megbékélés kell végre.

Antonio López-Istúriz White (PPE). – Señor presidente, miles de personas se manifiestan pacíficamente en Israel defendiendo el Estado de Derecho. Esto mismo ha ocurrido hace poco en España también, por maniobras de mi Gobierno —¿no?— en cuestiones judiciales. Lo que demuestra es que es un país democrático, como cualquiera aquí.

Pero las reformas judiciales propuestas en Israel están pasando ahora mismo por un intenso proceso legislativo y político, un proceso que aún desconocemos. Creo que perdemos cierta credibilidad, señor Borrell, como actores estratégicos si nos apresuramos a debatir una ley en proceso de creación en un país democrático, no como los que lo rodean, de los que hablamos poco muchas veces.

Por supuesto, comparto las preocupaciones sobre estas reformas propuestas tal y como están ahora. Es más, no las comparto. Pero debemos recordar que una de las ventajas de la democracia —por si alguno se ha olvidado— es la negociación y la participación de distintos actores en los procesos legislativos. Debemos confiar en el sistema democrático israelí, que reflejará la voluntad de los votantes y también de las diversas opiniones sobre este asunto tan sensible como es el Estado de Derecho. Los ciudadanos, los políticos y la sociedad israelí, y lo ha mencionado, señor Borrell, y lo han mencionado otros, el presidente de Israel, el presidente Herzog, van a intervenir en este proceso, lógicamente.

A diferencia de otros países, Israel goza de una excelente salud democrática. Solo en el caso de que sus mecanismos de pesos y contrapesos fallen, tendremos la autoridad y, por supuesto, el momento para criticar lo que allí se decida.

(El orador acepta responder a una intervención realizada con arreglo al procedimiento de la «tarjeta azul»)

Ana Miranda (Verts/ALE), intervención de «tarjeta azul». – Señor López-Istúriz, como usted es el presidente de la Delegación para las Relaciones con Israel, yo le he preguntado recientemente, en la reunión de la Delegación, si tenía conocimiento de lo que me sucedió entrando en el aeropuerto de Tel Aviv. Usted quedó en hacer alguna gestión ante el Gobierno de Israel; simplemente, deseaba preguntar si lo ha hecho o si tiene alguna información para que retiren el veto a la prohibición de entrada como diputada de esta Cámara. Gracias si me responde.

Antonio López-Istúriz White (PPE), respuesta de «tarjeta azul». – Efectivamente se ha contactado sobre esto y, sobre todo, con el gabinete de la presidenta, que —como sabe usted y se lo han dicho, se lo han comentado— está siguiendo el caso.

Sobre este caso particular, haré una declaración al respecto —me alegro de poder decírselo ahora en público— en la próxima reunión de la delegación de Israel, que creo que es dentro de una o dos semanas.

En breve tendrá la respuesta acerca de todo lo que hemos recuperado.

Evin Incir (S&D). – Mr President, colleagues, history will judge us not based on our thoughts, but merely on our actions. The Israeli democracy is right now at stake, it is in danger. And the international community, this includes the EU, has an obligation to act in defence of the people. Democracy, rule of law and human rights are not up for negotiation. It is about respect for international law. So to the colleague that was speaking previously, we need to, together, ensure the respect for international law.

In the biggest demonstration in Israeli history, over half a million citizens have taken to the streets to protest against the extreme right wing government and their attempt to throw the country into an authoritarian one. The judicial reforms and the government illiberal policies are perpetrated against the Israeli people as well as the Palestinian people. It is used as a tool to expand settlements and annex the West Bank.

For years already, the EU has demanded a stop to and compensation for Israeli demolition and confiscation of EU-funded structures and projects. For decades, the EU has demanded an end to the occupation and of the expansion of illegal settlements in Palestine. Enough already! My question to the High Representative and Vice-President Josep Borrell is what appropriate measures will the Commission take?

VORSITZ: RAINER WIELAND

Vizepräsident

Bernard Guetta (Renew). – Monsieur le Président, c'est si triste que l'on en viendrait presque à ironiser. Ironiquement parlant, on pourrait se dire que voilà, c'est fait. Israël s'intègre enfin au Proche-Orient, puisque sa majorité parlementaire n'aspire plus qu'à reproduire le modèle politique des régimes qui l'entourent. Mais non! L'ironie n'est hélas pas de mise, car cet État que notre Union soutient parce qu'il est la seule démocratie de la région, pourrait aujourd'hui prendre le chemin des démocraties illibérales, celles où l'on continue de voter pendant que les contre-pouvoirs sont attaqués et détruits.

La situation est si grave que deux Israéliens sur trois, de droite et de gauche, luttent pour la survie de leur démocratie. Alors, comme partout, nous devons soutenir l'état de droit, dire de quel côté nous sommes et ne pas hésiter, s'il le fallait, à utiliser toutes nos armes, politiques bien sûr, mais également économiques.

Katrin Langensiepen (Verts/ALE). – Mr President, since weeks, thousands of Israelis have been demonstrating against the judicial reforms. The new Netanyahu government plan is not a judicial reform: it's a revolution. A revolution in a very bad, dangerous direction.

And what's the plan? It seeks full power of the appointment of the nine-member committee that selects the judges of the Supreme Court. It wants to give the Knesset the ability to override court decisions by a simple majority, give ministers authority to appoint legal advisers in the ministry as opposed to the Attorney General doing so.

Human rights are in danger. Women's rights are in danger. Rights of minorities will be in danger. I am very worried about the rights of the citizens in Israel and the neighbour states it has consequences for. We are consequently on the side of the democrats in Israel. We are solidary with the demonstrators on the streets in Israel. We are the partners of Israel and not of a crude group of old grey, conservative fascist men.

Manu Pineda (The Left). – Señor presidente, señor Borrell, el régimen israelí ha intensificado su espiral de violencia contra el pueblo palestino. En lo que va de año, y sin contar lo que está pasando en el gueto de Gaza, han sido asesinadas 83 personas palestinas y han sido destruidas 144 viviendas. Han autorizado nueve asentamientos y anunciado la construcción, solo en Cisjordania, de más de 10 000 viviendas para colonos ilegales.

Este mismo mes se ha aprobado un proyecto de ley que instaura la pena de muerte para los presos palestinos. ¿Y qué hace la Unión Europea ante este atropello? Pues lo de siempre: declaraciones en las que manifiesta su profunda preocupación mientras que usted, señor Borrell, reactiva el Consejo de Asociación con Israel y la presidenta Metsola anuncia que estrecha relaciones con el Parlamento israelí e invita con honor al presidente de un régimen colonial que practica la limpieza étnica y el *apartheid* contra el pueblo nativo del territorio que ocupa.

Señor Borrell, hay que acabar ya con el Acuerdo de Asociación con Israel y excluir a este régimen criminal de todos los programas financiados por la Unión Europea.

Fabio Massimo Castaldo (NI). – Mr President, the recent developments have shown a global alarming trend towards the normalisation of far-right and ultra-nationalist ideologies, with the potential to further erode the democratic principles on which the EU and the EU partnership are founded.

Israel makes no exception. As it is well known, the Pegasus spyware developed and distributed by an Israeli company is being widely used to target human rights defenders, journalists and political opponents across the world, including in our Union. This is an aspect that should be firmly taken into account in all our cooperation, especially when they are set up, and as it happened with the Israeli police force, including on cybercrimes, to ensure adequate controls and conditionalities, because the use of such spyware to silence dissidents and stifle free speech is a threat to democracy and must be firmly condemned.

As representatives of the European Union we must use our voice to call for greater accountability and transparency in the sale and the use of such technology. We must stand in solidarity with those who fight for human rights and democratic values, because only by working together can we ensure a future where all people can live in freedom, dignity and justice.

Željana Zovko (PPE). – Mr President, High Commissioner, Israel has been a democracy in the last 75 years. Actually they are having many elections, they had three elections in last four years and they have quite a heated debate. And as we gather today to discuss the recent protest in Israel, my sincere hope is that the Israeli society will come together to find a compromise on this debate.

I would like to take a moment as well to address the ongoing escalating wave of violence not seen in the last 15 years. With the greatest sadness, we are continuing to witness the loss of innocent lives in both Israel and Palestine. We need an active diplomacy and it's quite urgent, and dialogue to end this conflict. I commend the effort of the US, Jordan and Egypt in trying to de-escalate the situation through the Aqaba Communique of 26 February 2023. The EU can also play an important role as an honest broker in this process. Countries in the region and the conflicting parties should continue to work towards de-escalation to achieve long-lasting peace and prevent more unnecessary deaths. Please. That's the task for the EU and we can really play a constructive role in this.

Brando Benifei (S&D). – Signor Presidente, Alto rappresentante, onorevoli colleghi, il Governo Netanyahu, insediatosi a fine 2022, detiene purtroppo già due record: è l'esecutivo più a destra della storia di Israele e ha scatenato proteste antigovernative, le più grandi di sempre. Centinaia di migliaia di persone scendono in strada in questi giorni per rifiutare una riforma della giustizia che vuole concentrare poteri nelle mani dell'Esecutivo e depotenziare la Corte Suprema.

Con questa riforma il governo potrebbe nominare molto più facilmente i giudici della Corte, verrebbe eliminato il potere di veto sulle leggi del governo e la maggioranza sarebbe in grado di bloccare le sentenze della Corte stessa.

Questo è un esempio di un disegno nazionalista autoritario da parte di un governo che minaccia lo stato della democrazia israeliana, i suoi meccanismi di pesi e contrappesi, nonché le prospettive di pace con il popolo palestinese, mentre prosegue una spirale di violenza senza precedenti.

L'Unione europea non può voltarsi dall'altra parte: deve impegnarsi per la democrazia e per la pace anche in quella regione.

María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos (Renew). – Señor presidente, el Gobierno de Israel, en el que participan partidos de extrema derecha, ultranacionalistas y ultra religiosos, avanzaban, por declaraciones de algunos de sus líderes —que hoy son ministros—, un gobierno antiliberal, pro anexión, racista y homófobo. Desgraciadamente, lo que está sucediendo es la prueba de lo primero.

La reforma judicial es realmente un golpe de Estado antidemocrático. Estamos aquí, debatiendo, porque no es una cuestión interna de Israel. Los más afectados por esta reforma van a ser los palestinos y aquellas minorías más vulnerables.

La política de anexión de territorios ocupados y discriminación de los derechos de los palestinos se lleva años produciendo. La vulneración del derecho internacional, también. Desde luego, esta reforma, si se acaba con las garantías judiciales, no hará más que profundizarlo. Los derechos de israelíes y palestinos están siendo amenazados. El mismo ministro de Interior, que pedía una represión dura contra los manifestantes israelíes, es aquel que ampara la actuación violenta de los colonos.

Es tiempo, alto representante, de actuaciones. No... *(el presidente retira la palabra a la oradora).*

Margrete Auken (Verts/ALE). – Hr. formand! Det lovkompleks, der er på vej i Israel, er en katastrofe for Israels demokrati. Men det var i forvejen hullet med love, der klart diskriminerer Israels palæstinensiske borgere for slet ikke at tale om dem i det besatte Palæstina. Gennem 55 år er deres liv gået fra slemt til stadig værre. I 2022 blev 146 civile dræbt, heraf 39 børn. De fleste af IDF straffrit. Land blev stjålet af bosættere, huse revet ned i voldsomt omfang, børn og voksne fængslet i måneds, ja årevis. Med den ny regering forsvinder den sidste rest af retsbeskyttelse. Annekteringen af Palæstina foregår nu fuldt lovligt og med fuld fart. Folkeretten er for Israel en by i Rusland, væk. Hr. Borrell, relevans, tale er vigtig, men endnu vigtigere er relevant handling, nu. Desmond Tutu anså også Israel for en apartheidstat. Hans svar til dem, der iklæder sig neutralitetens kappe var; hvis du er neutral i uretfærdige situationer, har du valgt undertrykkerens side.

Marc Botenga (The Left). – Monsieur le président, Monsieur le Ministre des affaires étrangères de l'Europe, oui, effectivement, l'Union européenne se fait critiquer partout dans le monde pour ses deux poids deux mesures. D'une part parce qu'on ne critique jamais, par exemple, les crimes de guerre américains, mais effectivement aussi sur Israël et pour l'association de l'Union européenne avec Israël.

Alors là, j'ai du mal à comprendre et j'ai du mal à comprendre parce qu'effectivement nous avons un gouvernement israélien aujourd'hui qui déclare, qui avoue ouvertement violer le droit international, qui veut annexer les territoires palestiniens. On voit un ministre qui appelle à effacer et raser un village comme Huwara. Et cela s'ajoute effectivement aux bulldozers qui détruisent les maisons palestiniennes, aux assassinats d'enfants, etc.

Moi je me dis que si un autre État avait fait la moitié du quart de ce que fait Israël, nous aurions déjà appelé à des sanctions. Nous n'aurions certainement pas conclu un accord d'association avec cet État. Mais ici, pour Israël, déjà vous avez l'air de vous excuser d'une déclaration un peu forte. Alors, aujourd'hui, soyons cohérents, prenons des sanctions ou suspendons pour le moins l'accord d'association. On ne peut pas rester associé à un tel gouvernement quand même!

Marcel de Graaff (NI). – Voorzitter, in Israël is Benjamin Netanyahu opnieuw minister-president geworden en prompt beginnen de protesten, zoals ook toen Donald Trump president werd, zoals ook in Georgië, toen het parlement zich keerde tegen buitenlandse beïnvloeding, zoals ook toen zogenaamd het Capitool bestormd werd. Het is de beproefde techniek van links om tegen betaling protesten te organiseren of te kapen, stemmen te ronselen, rechtszaken aan te spannen en regeringen omver te werpen. Ook deze protesten in Israël zijn door een linkse elite georganiseerd via vehikels zoals de *Movement for Quality Government* om hun weerzinwekkende ideologische agenda uit te rollen. De EU zelf heeft in het kader van haar thematische programma voor maatschappelijke organisaties miljoenen ter beschikking gesteld om de Israëlische regering via deze maatschappelijke tussenpersonen onder druk te zetten. Ik roep de Commissie op onmiddellijk te stoppen met deze aanval op de democratie in andere landen.

David Lega (PPE). – Mr President, I am known to be a friend of Israel, but in this context, I would like to highlight this: true friends are honest with each other, and true friends can also discuss uncomfortable issues. And while I stand by Israel, the Middle East's only democracy, and its indisputable right to defend its territory and people, I do have an uncomfortable issue to address.

The draft legislation on the planned judicial reform is worrisome. We don't know how the final reform will look, and that is important to keep in mind. Only a draft has been presented so far and at this stage, Israel's democratic allies, among them the US, have expressed concerns, but more importantly, many, many, many, many Israelis have expressed their discontent. And as Israel is a genuine democracy, people are by all means allowed to protest and enjoy the rights to freedom of expression and opinion. The regional comparison is noteworthy. Israel is the only liberal democracy in the Middle East. Israel is the only country where people are allowed to protest and express dissenting opinions, as the Israelis are doing right now. So I do hope that the government of Israel will listen to the concerns of their transatlantic democratic friends. But I know for a fact that the government of Israel are listening to their people, as in all genuine democracies.

I look forward to continuing and deepening the relations between the EU and Israel, including by discussing uncomfortable issues like this one, because that's what friends do.

Nacho Sánchez Amor (S&D). – Señor presidente, señor Borrell, si la leyenda famosa urbana de la rana en agua hirviendo fuera cierta, este sería un buen momento para utilizarla.

Hemos dejado ir muy lejos a Israel en materia de libertades y derecho internacional sin una redacción adecuada. Y ahora nos encontramos con una reforma judicial que su propio presidente, tan citado hoy aquí, considera inaceptable, depredadora y que desmantela los cimientos democráticos. Yo me pregunto qué estaríamos diciendo si este fuera un proyecto, por ejemplo, de Erdoğan. ¿Estaríamos poniendo tantos paños calientes?

Afortunadamente, ha habido una reacción de la sociedad civil y ahí queda alguna esperanza para el futuro del país. Por eso, no tenemos que confundir nunca esa sociedad civil de Israel, que está en las calles protestando, con su Gobierno.

Habría que hablar un poco también de las consecuencias, no solo para la población palestina, sino para toda la región. Israel, supuestamente, era la única democracia de Oriente Medio. Nunca lo fue en realidad para la población palestina de los territorios ocupados, y ahora corre el riesgo de dejar de serlo también para la propia sociedad israelí.

Ilana Cicurel (Renew). – Monsieur le Président, j'ai souvent rappelé dans cet hémicycle la nécessité de préserver la complexité du conflit israélo-palestinien, combattu l'idée inique consistant à parler d'apartheid dans un pays où nombre de citoyens arabes sont médecins, professeurs, policiers, députés, juges, y compris à la Cour suprême.

Aujourd'hui, face à la tentative de mise au pas du système judiciaire, je veux m'adresser au premier ministre d'Israël, comme députée européenne représentant des puissances amies, l'Europe et la France, et comme femme politique viscéralement attachée à la démocratie et au destin d'Israël. Ne fermez pas les yeux devant la mobilisation la plus massive de l'histoire d'Israël. Ne perdez pas vos plus grands alliés en restant sourd à leurs appels à la raison. Ne trahissez pas les principes fondateurs de l'État d'Israël et le message biblique dont il est porteur et qui a contribué à l'idée européenne de démocratie en posant dans la Torah elle-même le principe de séparation des pouvoirs et l'obligation d'ériger des tribunaux pour limiter les dérives du pouvoir politique.

Il est encore temps de renoncer à ce projet dangereux pour la démocratie israélienne, qui a toujours su, et c'est remarquable, maintenir l'État de droit malgré l'état de guerre. Le président Herzog vous montre la voie.

Ana Miranda (Verts/ALE). – Mr President, all my support and solidarity with the protests in Israel, in Palestine and around the world; all my support to the Israeli and Palestinian civil-society organisations, in particular human rights defenders to continue their vital work. Israel respects nothing, nor to the Members of the European Parliament like me, who was on an official mission, and Israel arbitrarily decide not to let me enter to go to Palestine.

We are deeply concerned about the judiciary reform proposed by Israel. The EU cannot remain silent. The judicial reform is the result of the coalition agreement that will be used as a tool to expand settlements and annex the West Bank.

The EU needs to recognise that annexation of the West Bank is taking place. The transfer of power from the stable administration to the Finance and Defence Minister is more annexation of the West Bank by Israel.

Mr Borrell, if the EU is committed to the two-state solution, it should strongly push back against this annexation, against the occupation.

(The President cut off the speaker)

Juan Ignacio Zoido Álvarez (PPE). – Señor presidente, señor alto representante, resulta muy curioso ver cómo aquellos que más alzan la voz hoy al hablar sobre la independencia judicial son precisamente quienes desde hace años ya han dictado sentencia contra Israel. Como en tantas otras ocasiones, estamos teniendo un debate con carácter preventivo. Antes incluso de que la reforma haya finalizado su proceso de debate en el seno de la sociedad de Israel, algunos diputados de esta casa ya han sacado sus conclusiones.

Al igual que varios sectores de la sociedad de Israel, también nosotros compartimos su preocupación sobre el riesgo de tensión de los equilibrios constitucionales de Israel. Pero también somos conscientes de que la mayoría de israelíes creen que es necesaria una reforma judicial. El verdadero reto para ello ahora es elegir, con los mayores consensos posibles, qué reforma es la adecuada para Israel. Pero, al margen de cómo discurra este proceso legislativo, hablar ya de un deterioro de la democracia, o incluso de iliberalismo, resulta exagerado y alejado cuando todavía estamos hablando sobre un proyecto.

El Estado de Derecho, la independencia judicial y la calidad democrática en Israel hasta ahora están fuera de toda duda, y así lo acreditan numerosas instancias internacionales. Por tanto, respetemos los tiempos y los procedimientos democráticos. Esperemos a la versión final de la reforma y dejemos de desacreditar, sin hechos definitivos, la salud institucional de un socio tan estratégico como Israel.

César Luena (S&D). – Señor presidente, alto representante y vicepresidente de la Comisión, yo creo que es muy importante hacer declaraciones, aunque aquí se ha dicho «solo —solo— son declaraciones», pero yo creo que es algo muy importante; es verdad, que he escuchado decir al señor Borrell, en la última parte de su intervención, que había que hacer todo lo que esté en manos de la Unión Europea.

Creo que aquí la clave está en detener los asentamientos —7 000, nada más y nada menos—. Estos asentamientos, que verdaderamente son un ejemplo de *apartheid* y de segregación racial. Hemos estado hace dos semanas, señor Borrell, allí: segregación racial.

Yo le hago dos propuestas. En primer lugar, creo que las empresas europeas que trabajan en los asentamientos deberían informar a la Comisión del resultado final; es decir, de dónde trabajan, al final, para qué se utiliza.

Y, en segundo lugar, deberíamos advertir al Gobierno de Israel que, si construye estos 7 000 asentamientos ilegales, tendrá consecuencias. Y creo que las consecuencias son que debe estudiarse un régimen de sanciones —pero primero tenemos que advertir al Gobierno de Israel de esa posibilidad—.

Barry Andrews (Renew). – Mr President, Mr Borrell, the override clause would degrade any claim Israel might have on being a liberal democracy. I applaud the people of Israel for calling out this legislation, but the new government has asserted Jewish people's 'exclusive and inalienable right to all parts of the land of Israel'. And vandalising the delicately constructed separation of powers is a precondition for expansion of settlements and ultimately annexation. Not only should we call out this injustice, but we should back up our words by action.

A case in point is the forthcoming due diligence legislation. Airbnb generates profits from rental of properties in illegal settlements in the West Bank. A meaningful human rights due diligence would prevent this type of commercial activity in the occupied territories under the present circumstances.

So I support the thousands of protesting Israelis, I support the right of Palestinians to self-determination and the two-state solution.

Anna-Michelle Asimakopoulou (PPE). – Mr President, High Representative, there can be no doubt as to the level of feeling that the proposed judicial reforms have unleashed in Israel. Emotions are very high, and this is obviously a very polarising issue for the country.

But colleagues, we as outside observers should tread very carefully before jumping to any conclusions. Labelling a country's democracy as 'deteriorating' is, after all, a very serious charge. But as experience shows to many in this house will always jump at the opportunity to criticise Israel. Of course, we have concerns and of course, we are entitled to voice these concerns, but let us not prejudge any particular outcome. Israel has been a functioning – and yes, Mr Borrell – vibrant democracy for 75 years and after five recent elections, it has a democratically elected government and a Knesset.

Dear colleagues, as a friend of Israel, I need to believe for the good of Europe as well, that at the end of the day, Israel will remain a fully functioning democracy.

Maria Arena (S&D). – Monsieur le Président, Monsieur le Haut représentant, vous avez posé la question de savoir s'il s'agissait d'ingérence de la part du Parlement de parler de la situation d'Israël. Nous ne parlons pas ici de la situation d'Israël. Nous parlons d'un accord de partenariat entre l'Union européenne et Israël et il est de notre devoir, en tant que Parlement, de savoir ce qu'il y a dans cet accord de partenariat et en quoi cet accord de partenariat est respecté.

Cet accord de partenariat est basé sur le processus de paix, sur le maintien de la démocratie et sur les valeurs communes. Nous voyons aujourd'hui que la volonté de ce gouvernement israélien de droite et d'extrême droite est en totale rupture avec ce qu'il y a dans cet accord de partenariat. Et donc il nous appartient, en tant que Parlement européen, de donner des indications sur ce qu'il faut faire.

On le sait, la réforme du système judiciaire est une atteinte à la démocratie et un laissez-passer pour l'annexion. Ce n'est pas ce qu'il y a dans notre accord de partenariat avec Israël. Comment allons-nous y répondre? Plusieurs choses. La première, vous l'avez dite, par la diplomatie, le dialogue et je pense qu'il faut continuer. Mais il y a aussi le gel du conseil d'association, les sanctions que nous pouvons utiliser à l'égard de ces colons qui ont fait cette mission punitive...

(Le Président retire la parole à l'oratrice)

Lukas Mandl (PPE). – Mr President, I feel that I want to ask the question today how many Members of the European Commission are left? There are two of them today, so twice as much as it is usual in this Chamber. Well, the issue is maybe not the most important issue for the EU.

The State of Israel will celebrate in a few weeks 75 years of its existence and to be honest, I feel strong sympathy with Israel, for many good reasons. They are our partner; the only rule of law based democratic state in the Middle East, the only Jewish state on earth. We have an Association Agreement with Israel which is outdated and I can only ask the High Representative to negotiate a new one.

But you don't have to feel strong sympathy with Israel just to treat Israel with fairness like each and every other rule of law based democratic state on earth. And this is not happening if we from outside try to insinuate this or that about Israel.

So, since I only have one minute of speaking time, I strongly ask to treat Israel as every other democratic rule of law based state on earth.

Matthias Ecke (S&D). – Herr Präsident, Hoher Vertreter! Israel ist ein traditioneller Freund und Verbündeter der EU. Als einzige liberale Demokratie im Nahen Osten betrachten wir Israel als Teil unserer europäischen Wertefamilie. Zu den Prinzipien des demokratischen Rechtsstaats gehört die Unabhängigkeit der Justiz. Dass diese immer wieder aufs Neue verteidigt werden muss, das wissen wir hier in der EU nur zu gut.

Hunderttausende Israelis sehen ihren Rechtsstaat bedroht. Landesweit richten sich beeindruckende Proteste gegen die geplante Justizreform der aktuellen Regierung. Sie will die Rechte des Obersten Gerichtshofs dramatisch aushöhlen. Ein Umbau dieses Ausmaßes greift den Rechtsstaatscharakter Israels an. Die EU darf hier nicht schweigen.

Die komplexe politische Situation gerade der besetzten Gebiete, deren Status die neue Regierung in fundamentaler Weise verändern will, erfordert unabhängige Gerichte, die handlungsfähig und wirkmächtig sind. Daher warnt der israelische Präsident Isaac Herzog zu Recht vor einer Zerreißprobe seines Landes und fordert die Überarbeitung der Justizreform.

Herr Borrell, unterstützen Sie Präsident Herzog zum Wohle Israels, seines Rechtsstaats und seiner Demokratie.

Spontane Wortmeldungen

Milan Zver (PPE). – Gospod predsednik!

Sam imam močne pomisleke glede današnje razprave o domnevnem slabšanju stanja demokracije v Izraelu.

Dozdeva se mi, da v tem zboru spet igramo vlogo nekakšnega vrhovnega razzodnika, s čimer si ne bomo izboljšali ugleda v mednarodnih odnosih. Mislim, da je Izrael na tapeti te hiše že tretjič v nekaj mesecih. Ta mlada država ima 75 letno demokratično tradicijo, ki deli vrednote z Evropsko unijo.

V živahnih demokracijah pač prihaja redno do protestov in ti so nekaj normalnega. Toda sodna reforma je notranji izraelski politični in demokratični proces, ki zagotovo ne potrebuje zunanje intervencije.

Naj pa vas vseeno spomnim, da so teroristi v četrtek zvečer resno ranili tri mlade moške v Tel Avivu. Tega seveda niso storili zaradi sodne reforme, ampak zaradi nenehnega spodbujanja sovraštva med etnijami v regiji.

Ta dogodek ima veliko večje posledice za varnostno situacijo in življenje izraelskih državljanov kot neka sodna reforma, ki se je komaj začela.

Milan Brglez (S&D). – Gospod predsednik!

Skrajno desničarska vlada je privedla do poslabšanja stanja demokracije v Izraelu. To dokazuje tako na eni strani jasno podrejanje sodne veje oblasti, ki ji nasprotuje ljudje, kot zaostrovanje razmer do Palestine.

Jasno izraženi in nedvoumni nameni vlade, da razširi nelegalno poseljevanje ter priključi zasedena ozemlja, so privedli do porasta nasilja nad in napadov na Palestince in Palestinke tako s strani izraelske vojske kot nelegalnih naseljencev.

Pri tem je treba opozoriti, da so neutemeljena, nesorazmerna uporaba sile, agresija nad civilnim prebivalstvom ter nelegalno prisvajanje palestinskih ozemelj, hude kršitve mednarodnega prava.

Zato pozdravljam resolucijo Generalne skupščine Združenih narodov iz decembra lani, ki od Meddržavnega sodišča zahteva svetovalno mnenje o pravnem statusu izraelske dolgotrajne okupacije ter pravnih posledicah izraelskih zlorab Palestinev.

Obenem pa pozivam, da tudi Evropska unija naredi vse, kar je mogoče, tako na pragu multikulturalizma kot oživitve procesa dveh držav.

Billy Kelleher (Renew). – Mr President, Israeli judicial reforms that are proposed are regrettable, but regardless of the democratic makeup of the state itself, Israel has consistently crushed and systematically dismantled the Palestinian State. And when people talk about the rule of law in Israel, let's be honest, there is no rule of law. It has consistently flouted international law, Mr Borrell – and we have done nothing, nothing to condemn. We haven't as much as sanctioned them in any way. We have occupied territories where we import products from. We have sent no signals to Israel that we condemn what they are doing.

So, when I talk about democracy, we should insist that there is no further occupation of the Palestinian State; that they shall go back to the original borders, as was proposed in the two-state solution.

And Mr Borrell, there is no two-state solution viable now because Israel is systematically dismantling the Palestinian State as we speak, and we are shamefully sitting on our hands all the time.

Grace O'Sullivan (Verts/ALE). – Mr President, Vice-President Borrell, I recently returned from the occupied Palestinian territories. There I witnessed Israel directly extracting fossil fuels out from under Palestinian land.

Despite your regular condemnations of Israel's disregard for international law, the EU has rewarded Israel with a multi-million-euro gas deal. And my question to you, Mr Borrell, is why is one occupier's oil and gas more acceptable than another's?

João Pimenta Lopes (The Left). – Senhor Presidente, agrava-se brutalmente o aumento da repressão israelita sobre o povo palestino, anteendo uma escalada da política de expulsão forçada de palestinos das suas casas e terras às mãos do atual Governo israelita, que integra forças de natureza fascista, que persegue, de forma ainda mais ostensiva, os planos de há muito de Israel.

As reiteradas proclamações da União Europeia em defesa da solução de dois Estados contrastam, e muito, com a conivência, plasmada em múltiplas formas de apoio e cooperação e dualidade de critérios, com a política de Israel, que há muito inviabiliza essa solução, violando, da forma mais grosseira, relevantes resoluções da ONU e sucessivos acordos firmados com as autoridades palestinianas.

É preciso ir além de declarações, Senhor Borrell. É preciso assumir uma posição de inequívoca defesa da imediata concretização do direito do povo palestino a um Estado soberano e independente, com as fronteiras de 1967, capital em Jerusalém Oriental, com a efetivação do direito ao retorno dos refugiados, no cumprimento das relevantes resoluções da ONU. Toda a solidariedade para com o povo palestino.

(Ende der spontanen Wortmeldungen)

Josep Borrell Fontelles, *vicepresidente de la Comisión / alto representante de la Unión para Asuntos Exteriores y Política de Seguridad.* – Señor presidente, señoras y señores diputados, no voy a concluir el debate. El debate queda inconcluso. Este era un debate entre los parlamentarios. Estoy seguro de que quien lo haya seguido desde aquí en Estrasburgo o desde Tel Aviv o Ramala, habrán podido ver los diferentes puntos de vista y el interés con que los parlamentarios europeos siguen los acontecimientos en Israel. Eso no implica ni injerencia ni la voluntad de dar lecciones a nadie, pero sí de demostrar preocupación e interés. Dejemos que los israelíes, que tienen una democracia vibrante, resuelvan su problema. Los esfuerzos de mediación del presidente Herzog son realmente notables. No voy a repetir aquí lo que él mismo ha dicho, que está publicado en todos los medios de comunicación y que es, sin duda, una autoridad bien superior a la mía para opinar sobre lo que ocurre en Israel.

Lo que está claro es que la situación empeora desde el punto de vista de los niveles de violencia y de conflicto entre Israel y los territorios palestinos ocupados; que hay que seguir trabajando para dar seguridad a Israel, la libertad a los palestinos y paz y estabilidad a toda la región.

Quede claro que intentar resolver el conflicto entre Israel y Palestina es una prioridad para nosotros. Por eso debo rechazar las manifestaciones de miembros del Gobierno de Israel que nos invitaban a no preocuparnos por este problema porque no era nuestro problema; que nos ocuparemos más bien de resolver el de Chipre que, sí, ciertamente, también está pendiente de resolución.

Pero, sí, también nos preocuparemos por intentar contribuir con nuestros esfuerzos al retorno al diálogo entre israelíes y palestinos, entre Israel y Palestina. Lo cual quiere decir hablar con las dos partes. Con Israel, a través del diálogo que hemos relanzado a nivel ministerial. Porque los acuerdos de asociación no son con un Gobierno, son con un país, son con un Estado. Y no lo podemos suspender simplemente porque cambie la mayoría política. Los acuerdos son con Israel. Hoy hay un Gobierno, mañana habrá otro, como antes hubo otro. Es importante que mantengamos abiertos los canales de comunicación tanto con Israel como con Palestina.

Tienen ustedes razón: la comunidad internacional ha hecho muchas declaraciones y emprendido pocas acciones. Intentemos nosotros contribuir, en la medida de lo posible, a una acción constructiva que permita, como les digo, garantizar la seguridad de Israel, el bienestar y la libertad de los palestinos, y la paz y la seguridad para todos en la región. A esto seguiremos dedicando nuestros esfuerzos desde la Comisión, desde el Consejo, contando también con su apoyo político.

Der Präsident. – Herr Hoher Vertreter und Vizepräsident der Kommission, ich will nochmal präzise sein: Sie haben gesprochen anlässlich der Beendigung der heutigen Aussprache im Plenum.

Reinhard Bütikofer (Verts/ALE). – Herr Präsident! In der vorausgegangenen Debatte ist Israel zweimal des Faschismus bezichtigt worden. Ich finde, solche Worte sollten im Europäischen Parlament nicht fallen, und wenn sie fallen, sollten sie gerügt werden.

Der Präsident. – Vielen Dank, Herr Kollege Bütikofer. Ich werde Ihre Stellungnahme der Präsidentin zur Kenntnis geben.

Die Aussprache ist geschlossen.

Schriftliche Erklärungen (Artikel 171 GO)

Maria Grapini (S&D), în scris. – Pacea în Orientul Mijlociu este esențială și cred că UE trebuie să acționeze cu diplomatie. Israelul este o democrație și este singura în zonă. Israel este un partener esențial al UE și de care UE are nevoie. Cred că trebuie să recunoaștem dreptul de a se apăra a Israelului și să condamnăm atacurile teroriste din Palestina. Reforma în justiție este o competență națională și este dreptul israelienilor de a demonstra, dacă sunt nemulțumiți. Pentru UE este important să se folosească calea democratică atât în reformele interne din Israel, cât și în relația Israelului cu Palestina. Este nevoie ca și în Palestina să fie alegeri democratice la care să participe toată populația palestiniană, doar așa se va găsi un limbaj comun diplomatic între Israel și Palestina. Apreciez declarația echilibrată a Înalțului Reprezentant, Josep Borrell și consider că mai ales, în contextul actual, pacea în Orientul Mijlociu este primordială.

Matjaž Nemec (S&D), pisno. – To, kar se dogaja na Bližnjem vzhodu nas zelo skrbi. Najbolj desna vlada v Izraelu do sedaj ne izbira sredstev. Država pluje v temačne vode. Zahodni breg pa je že dalj časa ujet v valu nasilja.

Pretekli konec tedna so Izrael preplavili rekordni protesti. Na ulice so odšli zaradi reforme pravosodja in da bi obvarovali demokracijo. V izraelskem parlamentu je prvo branje preстал zakon, ki bi smrtno kazen prvič v državi uvedel zgolj za Palestince. Najbolj pa nas skrbi poskus vlade uveljavitve režima, podobnega apartheidu na palestinskih ozemljih na Zahodnem bregu. Vlada želi pristojnosti nad upravljanjem z naselbinami iz vojaške uprave prenesti na civilnega ministra. Minister bi tako de facto postal guverner Zahodnega brega. S tem vlada grobo krši mednarodno pravo in tudi načela Združenih narodov ter se očitno zelo konkretno pripravlja na popolno priključitev okupiranih palestinskih ozemljih Izraelu.

Evropa in svet se morata zbuditi. Takšni koraki Izraela imajo za cilj aneksijo. Z njimi pa bodo dokončno pokopani načrti dveh držav. Palestinske države ne bo več možno vzpostaviti na Zahodnem bregu. Priznanje Palestine mora biti zato naš skupen odgovor. Evropa mora ukrepati. Iskreno moramo premisliti o odnosih z Izraelom in v primeru, da ta ne spremeni smeri, zamrzniti sporazum z EU.

16. Atti delegati (Artikolu 111(6) tar-Regoli ta' Proċedura)(azzjonijiet mehuda)

Der Präsident. – Gegen die vom ECON-Ausschuss vorgelegte Empfehlung für einen Beschluss, keine Einwände gegen einen delegierten Rechtsakt zu erheben, die bei der Eröffnung der gestrigen Sitzung bekannt gegeben wurde, wurden innerhalb der vorgegebenen Frist von 24 Stunden keine Einwände erhoben.

Gemäß Artikel 111 Absatz 6 der Geschäftsordnung gilt die Empfehlung somit als angenommen. Sie wird mit dem angenommen Text veröffentlicht.

17. Is-sitwazzjoni fil-Georgia (dibattitu)

Der Präsident. – Als nächster Punkt der Tagesordnung folgt die Aussprache über die Erklärung des Vizepräsidenten der Kommission und Hohen Vertreters der Union für die Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik zur Lage in Georgien (2023/2594(RSP)).

Für den Vizepräsidenten der Kommission und Hohen Vertreter der Union für die Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik spricht Herr Kommissar Várhelyi.

Olivér Várhelyi, *on behalf of the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.* – Mr President, honourable Members of Parliament, over the past week, thousands of Georgians exercised their right to peaceful demonstration against the adoption of a law on transparency of foreign influence in first reading by the Georgian Parliament. Across the country, women and men took to the streets, holding European flags to recall their attachment to democracy, our shared European values, and to Georgia's path towards the European Union.

After these demonstrations, the ruling party announced last Thursday their decision to withdraw the law, which was voted down by the parliament the following day. The withdrawal of both drafts is an encouraging and positive sign.

Honourable Members, Georgians have a future in the EU. The European perspective granted last June set out relations on an even closer course under the EU enlargement policy framework, building upon the long-standing cooperation anchored in the Association Agreement.

The European path sets the bar high as regards standards in Georgia that Georgia needs to meet, and the values it has to maintain. It brings increased scrutiny and monitoring and a need to implement reforms. It also provides a wider set of EU tools to accompany Georgia in this process.

The Georgian people, in their vast majority, have expressed their resolve to join the EU. The government has sent similar messages. Now it is time for action on the ground. We acknowledge important steps made by Georgia in the reform process. Now, work on reforms and priorities set by the Commission must continue. Strengthening the independence of the state institutions, upholding the highest standards of human rights and the rule of law are key priorities.

Let me recall that on 2 February, the Commission services have provided further policy guidance on the EU *acquis*-related reforms in their analytical report, completing our opinion from June last year on the country's application for the EU membership.

A comprehensive assessment of Georgia's progress in meeting accession criteria will be carried out for the first time as part of the Autumn 2023 enlargement package, and therefore you should anticipate an even fuller picture.

Honourable Members, this Parliament adopted last month a resolution on the health situation of Mr Mikheil Saakashvili. We conducted an EU *démarche* with the Minister of Justice on 27 February, and our message was very clear: it is the legal responsibility of the Georgian authorities to fully guarantee Mr Saakashvili's rights, both as a detainee and as a defendant, in line with Georgia's international commitments. The EU is ready to assist partners on this matter, including as regards efforts to ensure medical assistance.

Let me conclude by stressing that the EU remains a close friend and partner to Georgia and its people. This is a crucial moment for the whole country to unite and to work resolutely for the common strategic goal of EU membership and European values.

Sandra Kalniete, *on behalf of the PPE Group.* – Mr President, Commissioner, dear colleagues, the highly disturbing events in Georgia must not be viewed in isolation. Just as Russia wages a war of aggression against Ukraine and tries to destabilise Moldova, the Kremlin is desperate to retain Georgia and its sphere of influence. I applaud the courage shown by the protesters in Georgia. Europe sees your bravery and will not turn its back on you. Your courage has stopped the passage of the Kremlin-inspired foreign agents act.

However, we should not be naive. The fight does not end here. These events are an important reminder that we will never have lasting peace and security in Europe as long as these grey zones remain. The place of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia is firmly in the European Union. The Georgian people must continue pressing for critical reforms that will bring Georgia towards EU candidate status. Only the Georgian people can hold its leadership accountable. Only the Georgian people can challenge the might of the oligarchs.

In conclusion, as an MEP from Latvia, I remember how difficult the accession process is. Allow me to remind you. Windows of opportunity can only arrive once or twice in a generation and do not stay open for long. I appeal to the Georgian people not to waste your window of opportunity.

Sven Mikser, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – Mr President, the degree of support in Georgian society for the country's European aspirations has been so high that it has been very easy for years for us to support Georgia's aspirations. No serious political party has been able to fully ignore the degree of support that Georgians have expressed with regard to the country's European future. Even those in power have always felt it necessary to pay lip service to those aspirations, even when their actions have spoken a different language. We've seen problems in the area of the rule of law, the independence of judiciary, media, freedom and political polarisation. I think the attempt by the Georgian Government and governing party to adopt the so-called Foreign Agents Law was just one example of a long list of problems in the area of rule of law in the country.

What is concerning is that recently, even though the draft law was dropped, even the words do not support these aspirations. The ridiculous accusations against the European Parliament and the European Union will ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Petras Auštrevičius, *on behalf of the Renew Group*. – Mr President, Commissioner, dear colleagues, I would like to start by congratulating the people of Georgia who, by their active stance, have stopped the government's intention to adopt a Russian-style foreign agent law. I also reiterate our solidarity and appreciation to the civil society in Georgia.

Fulfilling the European will of the Georgian people, the Georgian authorities must fully implement the 12 recommendations of the European Commission, bearing in mind that the health and life of the poisoned and imprisoned Mikheil Saakashvili is an integral part of the EU requirements. Europe will not open the door to any form of political revanchism.

I regret that the EU flags were burning in Tbilisi today. It is a sad day for all Georgia's friends in the European Union. Nevertheless, I believe that the historical wisdom of the people of Georgia who remember the horrors of totalitarianism will take over.

Viola von Cramon-Taubadel, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – Mr President, Commissioner, dear colleagues, all masks are finally off. The government of Georgia is determined to sabotage the country's European path. Thankfully, the people of Georgia are not taking it. There is no way back to the Russian swamp. There's no way back to the curtailed freedoms and autocracy. There's only one way forward: to Georgia's European future.

The people of Georgia are so unlike their government. Everyone took to the streets to make their voices heard in Tbilisi, in Brussels and especially in Moscow. Those in the streets of Tbilisi, Batumi or Kutaisi spoke on behalf of over 80% of Georgians. You cannot wash away the European identity with water cannons. Burning the EU flag will not burn Europe from the Georgian hearts. Violence is futile against those who fight for freedom.

The Constitution of Georgia is sacred, and its Article 78 demands the government ensures the full integration of Georgia into the EU and into NATO. Yet the government has put the interests of one oligarch and the Kremlin above this constitution. When those in power betray their people, those people will demonstrate their power.

It is time to take a cue from Georgians and fight for the European future. The people of Georgia deserve to be in the EU, even if their current government does not.

Anna Fotyga, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Mr President, Commissioner, a full-scale invasion of Ukraine means a geopolitical shift in our neighbourhood. Georgian people understand it very well. It is a turning point for all of us in the region. Therefore I pay tribute to their courage in protesting about the appalling foreign agent law.

I would like to mention that keeping the third president of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili, in prison as Putin's hostage, means a deteriorating future for Georgia. Hopefully the Georgian Government understands it similarly to people's protests recently in Tbilisi and elsewhere.

Anna Bonfrisco, *a nome del gruppo ID*. – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, una Georgia membro della NATO renderà gli alleati dell'Unione europea più forti e sicuri. Questo perché le due istituzioni internazionali sono complementari attraverso un partenariato strategico indissolubile.

La partecipazione all'Alleanza si baserà sempre sull'impegno della Georgia verso i valori fondanti della NATO e quelli dell'Unione europea: Stato di diritto, democrazia, diritti umani, pluralismo, società civile, apertura, trasparenza e il rispetto del diritto internazionale.

Da quando ha riconquistato l'indipendenza, il popolo georgiano ha scelto chiaramente e coerentemente di far parte della comunità democratica euro-atlantica.

Partendo proprio dalla violazione della sovranità e dell'integrità territoriale della Georgia come dell'Ucraina, come possiamo noi realizzare un sistema più forte di sicurezza collettiva per noi e i nostri vicini, caro Commissario?

Oggi noi vediamo nei cittadini della Georgia fratelli europei e dobbiamo aiutarli in tutti i modi.

Mick Wallace, *on behalf of the The Left Group*. – Mr President, Commissioner, Georgia – like many other former Eastern Bloc countries – has not fared well under the thumb of predatory financial capitalism, crushing economic reforms and a hollowing out of the State. The NGO sector has stepped in to fill that void, and an entire middle class now is dependent on this sector and foreign funding.

The initial upset about this law was about people's incomes being put in danger. Not that it was pro- or anti-Russian, or western. The NGO sector rallied and got the proposal retracted while apparently charging the Georgian State with taking a dark authoritarian turn for looking at laws similar to what exists in Russia, in Australia, in the US since 1938, and may be coming to the EU sometime soon.

That we have had condemnation of the law from the EU and others who either have or would happily implement similar measures is the height of hypocrisy. That this has been seized upon to inflame tensions in Georgia, which could potentially reignite the frozen conflict on its borders, is very disappointing.

Marcel de Graaff (NI). – Voorzitter, deze zaal toonde zich tot op het bot geschokt over de omkoping van leden van dit Parlement door Qatar. Het Parlement eiste onmiddellijke maatregelen. Ngo's die banden hadden met Qatar moesten worden geweerd, want dit Parlement wil terecht buitenlandse beïnvloeding voorkomen. Ondertussen geeft de EU zelf miljoenen euro's aan maatschappelijke organisaties via *de EU roadmap for engagement with civil society in Georgia*, om daar de politieke en culturele koers te beïnvloeden. En nu het Georgische parlement wetten wil aannemen om buitenlandse beïnvloeding te voorkomen, is dit Parlement tot op het bot geschokt. Want nu komt zogenaamd de democratie in Georgië in gevaar. De hypocrisie is misselijk makend. Ik zeg aan Georgië: doe er alles aan om de EU buiten de deur te houden, want anders wordt Georgië nog slechts een vazalstaat zonder identiteit en zonder soevereiniteit.

Andrzej Halicki (PPE). – Szanowni Państwo! Historia i geografia nie znają próżni, szczególnie dzisiaj, kiedy mamy w Europie wojnę. Nie można lawirować między Rosją a Unią Europejską i doskonale rozumieją to Gruzini, którzy wyszli masowo na ulice. Widzimy was, jesteście z wami, widzimy te flagi europejskie, podniesione wysoko, które dzielnie trzymacie nawet wtedy, kiedy bije was policja i polewają zimną wodą. I z tego miejsca apel do gruzińskiego rządu. To przyszłość jest w waszych rękach. To wy jesteście odpowiedzialni za przyszłość i bezpieczeństwo Gruzji. Porzućcie rosyjską retorykę, rosyjskie prawo, bo Gruzja jest w Europie. Tego chcą Gruzini. W waszych rękach jest przyszłość narodu, ale też zdrowie prezydenta Saakaszwilego. Polski rząd pragnie go leczyć. Co wam przeszkadza? Czego się boicie, że nie dopuszczacie międzynarodowych lekarzy? Zdecydujcie się, bo gruziński naród zasługuje na bezpieczeństwo i bezpieczny rozwój. Gruzja jest w Europie i wasza odpowiedzialność dziś leży u was, na waszym stole i nie dziwcie się, że nie będziecie partnerami dla Europy, kiedy nazywacie ją obcą agenturą.

Marina Kaljurand (S&D). – Mr President, as the Chair of the South Caucasus delegation, I have two messages to the Georgian people. First, we Members of the European Parliament know and respect the choice of closer European and transatlantic integration. You have been very clear and consistent in expressing your European aspiration. We support you and we stand with you on European path. Second, we will never, I repeat, never drag you into any war. We remember the war of 2008 and human lives lost. We will never recognise occupation of Georgia. We will always support Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We wish Georgian people peace, security and prosperity.

Our message to the Georgian politicians is very clear. War in Ukraine opened a window of opportunity for Georgia. Do not waste it. Remember that today Ukrainians are fighting and dying for their future, but also for your future. Attacks on Ukraine and President Zelenskyy by Georgian officials are disappointing and unacceptable. The window of opportunity will not remain open forever. Do what your people expect from you.

Katalin Cseh (Renew). – Mr President, colleagues, Commissioner, the foreign agent law cooked up in Vladimir Putin's Russia is malicious, cynical and oppressive. Its sole purpose is to discredit civil society and to crush dissent.

So, no wonder that autocrats all around the world can't seem to have enough of it. It is copied in Nicaragua, Belarus and Egypt and, sadly, also in the EU. Viktor Orbán's government passed an exact replica of this law and it took the European Court to strike it down. Because, as Josep Borrell communicated it to the Georgian leaders, it is incompatible with EU values. So, we very strongly welcome its withdrawal.

Our Parliament has a very clear message to the pro-European forces in Georgia: we see you and we stand with you and we admire your determination to join our European family. The image of a protester in Tbilisi waving an EU flag while facing the water cannons is such a powerful symbol, colleagues. It shows how much the European project means for people in accession countries.

We should work every day to live up to this and to have a much broader strategy to counter Russian influence, because we cannot fight Putin without fighting the Putinisation of our neighbourhood.

Markéta Gregorová (Verts/ALE). – Mr President, dear colleagues, I have to say that after four years intensely working on getting Georgia closer to us, knowing it is also something that the citizens want, I am at a loss with the situation now.

It seems that whatever we do, it's a reason for Prime Minister Garibashvili to accuse us of foul play or for other representatives of the government to personally attack each of us. Now, after doing the right thing and reconsidering this version of the Foreign Agents Law, there is no humility; on the contrary: horrible claims about how the opposition would kill a person just to cause chaos, and that we are the foreign agents interfering. I'd like to remind the Georgian Government of one thing: we are not here against your will. You have an association agreement, the DCFTA. You are eager to get candidate status. You do everything to get closer to us. But at each step, you throw a stone at us. So if you want to get closer to the EU just to be able to throw stones from a short distance, I don't think we have an agreement. Pick a side, or we will stop being a choice.

Adam Bielan (ECR). – Mr President, Commissioner, 15 years after an attempted coup, Georgia still faces serious political security and economic interferences from the Kremlin. I welcome the withdrawal of the recent Kremlin-inspired law on foreign agents and the bravery of the Georgian people protesting against it.

In parallel, during the last plenary session, this Parliament adopted with a large majority a resolution calling for the release of former Georgian President Saakashvili and his immediate transport abroad for specialist treatment. I welcome that this resolution, together with the calls from the Polish Government, have borne fruit and that Polish doctors will soon be able to examine the former Georgian president's health. The EU and its Member States should keep supporting democratic aspirations of the Georgian people and maintain the high dynamic of the EU enlargement process.

Andrius Kubilius (PPE). – Mr President, dear colleagues, we know very well how strongly the Georgian people want to join the EU. But today, Georgia as a State has a problem on the way to achieve such a strategic goal. And that problem has the name of Bidzina Ivanishvili.

Unfortunately, formal and informal authorities in Georgia are united in their tactics to deliberately create new and new problems on that path of integration. That is why Mikheil Saakashvili and Nika Gvaramia are kept in prison. And that is why we recently witnessed a story with 'foreign agents' law.

The initiative of foreign agents law was a deliberate political provocation of the Georgian authorities against the people of Georgia. Such a behaviour of authorities is absolutely opposite to what the EU is demanding from Georgia – to depolarise political life. It is good that Georgian people in the streets managed to defend their road towards integration, but we should not be naive. This is not the last political anti-European provocation of the authorities.

The Prime Minister of Georgia, Mr Garibashvili, yesterday made an important statement. Quote: 'The European Parliament would better take care of itself. 100 MEPs are involved in a corruption scandal. Their desire was and is to involve Georgia in the war and to destroy it together with Ukraine.'

The Kremlin should envy for such type of propaganda. But it does not lead to the candidate status. Despite that, we shall continue to stand together with Georgian people!

Nacho Sánchez Amor (S&D). – Señor presidente, miren, señorías, yo me niego a esta falsa dicotomía de tener que elegir entre el expresidente en prisión —al cual muchos de los que están aquí sentados le recomendaron no volver al país, y lo hizo entrando ilegalmente en medio de una campaña—, el señor Saakashvili, y un Gobierno cuya deriva autoritaria es cada vez más obvia. Pero parece que estamos de acuerdo en dar apoyo a la sociedad civil, y al menos a partir de ahí —me refiero a la sociedad civil prodemocrática y proeuropea— podemos construir un consenso.

Reitero que fue un error no poner a Georgia en las mismas condiciones que los otros países, a los que ofrecimos la candidatura, porque eso alimentó la narrativa antieuropea de Georgian Dream. Abrimos un enorme espacio para que lo llenara esa narrativa antieuropea, y no sirvió, desde luego, para acabar con la polarización que tanto decíamos que nos preocupaba.

Ahora tenemos que reconstruir nuestras palancas de influencia sobre el país en una situación infinitamente peor que la de hace unos meses, pero es nuestra obligación hacerlo. Y yo les convoco a todos a ese apoyo a la sociedad civil, sin confundirnos con falsas dicotomías.

Georgios Kyrtzos (Renew). – Mr President, the release of former President Saakashvili from prison, given his fragile health, should become a prerequisite for developing our relations with Georgia. I wonder why the president of Georgia, Ms Salome Zourabichvili, who is also a French citizen that used to work as a diplomat in France, and the country's powerbroker, pro-Russian oligarch Ivanishvili, also a French citizen who has been decorated by France, refused to assist in freeing Saakashvili. There cannot be a European path for Georgia with Saakashvili, who claims that he was poisoned by Russian secret agents slowly dying in prison. Georgia's government stands on the way of the country's European ambitions, supported by the vast majority of the people.

Reinhard Bütikofer (Verts/ALE). – Mr President, Commissioner, ironically speaking, I must say, I admire Mick Wallace because he again demonstrated that he will sure as hell always position himself on the side of reactionaries, authoritarians and oppressors. But the Georgian citizens have opted for another choice because they know that the so-called Georgian dream has turned into a Georgian nightmare. The Georgian government is paying lip service at best to European values and the European path. We should not let Georgian citizens alone in their fight for the European perspective. That is why we should consider measures beyond what's been on the table. Will we continue unabated with the development cooperation without conditionality? Will we refuse to consider sanctions? We shouldn't. And we should fight for the freedom of Saakashvili.

Vladimír Bilčík (PPE). – Mr President, Commissioner, colleagues, almost 20 years ago the Georgians took to the streets in their peaceful revolution and inspired colour revolutions in other countries. But some 15 years ago, Russia attacked Georgia and today Moscow illegally occupies 20% of Georgian territory.

The people of Georgia are tough fighters for freedom and democracy. They have spoken repeatedly in elections, in the streets, about their democratic and European ambitions.

As we stand by them today, it is high time that the leaders of Georgia also stand by their own people. Georgia applied for EU membership just 10 days after Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine. Georgians know all too well what the Russian attack and Russian propaganda and disinformation look like. We support all brave people of Georgia who are ready to fight for Europe and against the Russian meddling. The people of Georgia have proved worthy of EU candidate status years ago. It is long overdue that their leaders follow suit.

Der Präsident. – Ich muss mich bei dem Kollegen Wallace entschuldigen. Er wollte eigentlich eine Frage stellen, und ich habe gedacht, ich würde von den Diensten darauf hingewiesen, dass Herr Bütikofer schon über der Redezeit war. Deshalb ist der Moment jetzt leider durch mich verpasst worden.

Tonino Picula (S&D). – Mr President, Commissioner, colleagues, the only positive element about the political situation in Georgia is that the law on the transparency of foreign influence is withdrawn. Copying wrong solutions is never a good practice. Citizens did the right thing by standing up to it. It's good that their pressure had a positive outcome.

The similarities with the original law in Russia are as evident as the Russian interference in Georgia. It's unfortunate that the Georgian Government is threatening the EU perspective of the country. It gives the argument to all those who advocated the unjust separation of Georgia from Ukraine and Moldova last year. Instead of working to fulfil the list of conditions to advance on the EU integration path like other two countries, the Georgian leaders are doing the opposite. There can be only European progress with European commitment and values. The dream of the Georgian people is Europe.

Jordi Cañas (Renew). – Señor presidente, cuando hablamos de Georgia inevitablemente nos viene a la cabeza su etimología —el «georgos» griego: el agricultor, el que siembra, el labriego— y la metáfora de San Jorge y el dragón. Los georgianos sembraron la semilla de la libertad hace veinte años y ahora están amenazados por un dragón. En latín: «Hic sunt dracones». Hay dragones cerca de Georgia. Es un dragón que paulatinamente está erosionando su democracia, con un patrón que reconocemos y que hemos visto en esta ley que ha aprobado el Gobierno —o ha intentado aprobar—.

Por lo tanto, tenemos que ayudar a los georgianos. Porque los georgianos no son santos, son ciudadanos que buscan y luchan por su libertad. Luchan frente a un dragón. No volvamos a hacer lo que hicimos en 2008, que es dejarlos solos frente a aquellos que atentaron y violaron su integridad territorial. No les dejemos solos frente a aquellos que, ahora, con un *proxy* político, intentan erosionar y laminar el derecho que tienen a recoger la semilla de su libertad, que se llama Europa.

SĒDI VADA: ROBERTS ZĪLE

Priekšsēdētājas vietnieks

Riho Terras (PPE). – Mr President, over the last days, we have witnessed a strong sense of protest among Georgian people against the so-called foreign agents law. Yes, we do know that the ruling Georgian team decided to pull back this draft of law, but it remains very clear that the intent of this legislative act was to silence opposition and media. The Georgian Government, controlled by the oligarchy Ivanishvili, has turned away from the cause of democracy step by step. Leaders of the opposition have suffered from the repressions by the judicial system controlled by the government. We recently heard accusations made by the Prime Minister Garibashvili against Ukrainian President Zelenskyy for supporting the coup in Georgia. Also accusations were made against this particular house for dragging Georgia into the war with Russia. Of course, these accusations are ridiculous and have no basis whatsoever. But we must continue supporting the democratic processes in Georgia, even if the sitting prime minister does not like us and does not like it.

Thijs Reuten (S&D). – Mr President, Commissioner, colleagues, let's call this exactly what it is: a pro-Russian government parroting Russian propaganda to defend a Russian law. The Georgian people won this round, but the threat is far from over.

Prime Minister Garibashvili says he wants EU candidacy. Wonderful! So do the Georgians, so do I. But make no mistake, Prime Minister: if you kill your former president, No EU candidacy. If you pass any foreign agent law: no candidacy. If you destroy democracy: no candidacy. Pro-democracy protesters are not extremists, Satanists or liberal fascists just because they check your power grab. And absolutely nobody wants Georgia to absurdly open a second front.

So stop these desperate Putinesque demonisations and make real progress on the 12 recommendations – no cosmetic fixes. And if not, Georgia's courageous people will hold you to account.

Svenja Hahn (Renew). – Mr President, as a person born in the western part of the European Union, I only know a close European Union. And I must say I am so humbled and inspired when I see people taking to the streets fighting for their country to take the European path.

But it is their government letting them down over and over again, it is the ruling party breaking commitments on uniting the country, backing out of international agreements and not doing the slightest bit to work for the reforms to make their way into the EU candidate.

Their free media is suppressed. The political opposition is being oppressed. Former President Saakashvili is being left to die in prison. An opposition leader has been detained and beaten in prison last week, and the Russia-inspired foreign agents law is just the latest tip of the Russia-inspired anti-democratic iceberg. It would massively limit NGOs. It would limit civil society. It is only thanks to those brave people taking to the streets that this law is off the table for now.

So our message today must be very clear: to the Government of Georgia, the international world is watching your actions very closely. And to the people of Georgia, this House stands by you in solidarity when you stand up for your freedom, for your European future. We are with you.

Liudas Mažylis (PPE). – Pirmininke, komisare, kolegos, Kremlius vykdo karą, be kita ko, ir hibridinį. Neabejoju, kad ir ši įtampa tarp Sakartvelo ir Europos Sąjungos yra sukelta dirbtinai. Ji neatneša jokio konstruktyvaus rezultato nei vienai pusei. Sakartvelas, nepaisant visų dabartinių iššūkių, nori būti Europos Sąjungos dalimi, gyventojai remia ir narystę NATO. Pasiūlytas kontraversiškas įstatymo projektas sustabdytas, o dialogas tarp valdžios ir piliečių vyksta, tiesa, labai sunkia kaina, bet vyksta, o tolimesnė eskalacija būtų naudinga tik Rusijai. Mes, Europos Sąjunga, privalome suteikti Sakartvelui daugiau, negu abstrakčią europinę perspektyvą. Jau dabar yra reikalinga teikti daugiau finansinės ir techninės pagalbos – tai padės atremti naujas destabilizacijos, o kartu ir propagandos, bangas. O kaip kovoti su užsienio agentų įtaka – turiu omenyje būtent Rusijos šnipus – ne kartą svarstėme ir šiuose rūmuose, tad tuo vertėtų veiksmingai užsiimti ne tik Sakartvele, bet ir kiekvienoje iš dabartinės Europos Sąjungos valstybių.

(Kalbėtojas nesutiko išklausti Mick Wallace replikos pagal mėlynosios kortelės procedūrą)

Mick Wallace (The Left), blue-card speech. – Mr President, I wanted to make the point that Deputy Bütikofer made an inaccurate statement about me: he accused me of supporting every authoritarian regime going. I'd like to inform the gentleman that I don't support any government anywhere. I've yet to see a government I like, authoritarian or otherwise. For him to actually take that position actually shows a serious lack of balance. I thought he was a smarter guy than that.

I am not taking any sides on Georgia either. But I do believe that things work out better when we let the people of the country decide the future for themselves. Let the people of Georgia ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Carina Ohlsson (S&D). – Herr talman! Det är en seger för det georgiska folket att det kritiserade lagförslaget om utländska agenter har dragits tillbaka. Att systematiskt attackera och undergräva civilsamhällets organisationer är ett beprövat grepp av Kreml och all världens diktaturer. Enligt Georgiens president Salomé Zurbisjvili såg lagförslaget väldigt mycket ut som rysk politik.

Hotet mot demokrati och mänskliga rättigheter i Georgien är på inget vis avvärjt. Över 80 procent av det georgiska folket vill gå med i EU. Den georgiska regeringen måste nu lyssna till det georgiska folket. Alla politiska ledare i landet har ett ansvar att förvalta. Människors längtan efter frihet och värdighet, bort från Rysslands auktoritära klor, måste stödjas mera ihärdigt av EU.

Det finns nu ett möjlighetens fönster, och då blir det en fråga till kommissionen: Hur kan kommissionen hjälpa till att strategiskt arbeta för att också uppnå detta och kandidatstatus?

Izaskun Bilbao Barandica (Renew). – Señor presidente, los disturbios vividos en las últimas semanas en Georgia son un paso más de los muchos que viene dando su ciudadanía para acercarse a los valores de la Unión Europea.

Nosotros, en línea con la moción aprobada en el Senado de España el pasado 2 de noviembre a iniciativa de mi partido, pedimos que se reconozca y atienda esta trayectoria, mantenida pese a la amenaza rusa. Georgia, cuando cumpla las prioridades indicadas al efecto, debe ser oficialmente candidato a la adhesión a la Unión.

Desde la perspectiva emocional, para una vasca, apoyamos así a un pueblo con el que nos unen lazos profundos de amistad. Desde la perspectiva de los valores europeos, lanzar un mensaje de esta importancia en aquella zona es una manifestación de apoyo y aliento a una ciudadanía que quiere mantener su libertad y que se siente mayoritariamente europea. Pero es, además, una inversión geoestratégica y un nuevo mensaje para el régimen de Putin. La criminal invasión de Ucrania, el neoimperialismo están cosechando un resultado completamente opuesto al pretendido.

Catch-the-eye procedure

Łukasz Kohut (S&D). – Panie Przewodniczący! Zdjęcie symbol człowiek z europejską flagą zaatakowany fizycznie w Tbilisi. Proeuropejscy demonstranci zrani wodą i szykanowani, pomawiani, że rzekomo są zagranicznymi agentami. Bzdury. Gruzini chcą do Unii Europejskiej, chcą wolności i dobrobytu, chcą naszych europejskich wartości. Dla nich, podobnie jak dla Ukraińców, unijna flaga to jest symbol. Te dwa narody na Wschodzie łączy to, że za tę flagę i za te wartości nadstawiają karku. Wspieranie Gruzji jest w interesie naszego bezpieczeństwa, ale jest to także kwestia przywoitości, podobnie jak wzmocnienie i budowanie silniejszej Unii Europejskiej.

Od ośmiu lat polska i węgierska telewizja publiczna demonizują integrację europejską. Polska PiS i Węgry Fideszu robią to samo, co Kreml w warstwie informacyjnej, straszą Unią Europejską, straszą Niemcami, bądź Sorosem. Unia Europejska musi być mocniejsza, musi być bardziej zintegrowana i musi być otwarta na Ukrainę, Gruzję czy Mołdawię.

President. – I just would like to remind colleagues that when you are speaking you cannot show some photos or something like that so I would appreciate it if you would take that into account in future.

Vlad Gheorghe (Renew). – Mr President, the people of Georgia are fighting for European values and their weapons are the European flags. Their fight is non-violent, but they are very certain about their future. On the other hand, the Commissioner for Neighbourhood is silent: he doesn't fight for the Georgian people's right to be European. I would like to know what does he intend to do to show support for the Georgians who – I say again – are Europeans? I know the Commissioner's opinion about the Members of this House. I would like to remind him that Orbán has useful idiots, but somewhere else, they are not here. He needs to look for them somewhere else.

And also, one last message: this House stands together with the Georgian people for the right to be European. It's time that the Commissioner does the same.

Joachim Stanisław Brudziński (ECR). – Panie Przewodniczący! Może na początek, słusznie Pan zwrócił uwagę jednemu z moich przedmówców, że Regulamin tej Izby nie dopuszcza, aby podczas wystąpień pokazywać zdjęcia. Niestety Regulamin nie przewiduje też zakazów wypowiedzi niemądrych, żeby nie powiedzieć ostrzej, ludzi, którzy są dotknięci swoistego rodzaju ojkofobią, czyli wstrętem do własnego narodu czy do własnego rządu.

Szanowni Państwo, nikt nie potrzebował tej ustawy. Ona wzięła się znikąd, mogła powstać tylko na życzenie Moskwy. Ta ustawa musi być cofnięta. To słowa Pani Prezydent Zurabiszwili, które skierowała do swoich współobywateli 7 marca za pośrednictwem telełączy, ponieważ przebywała wtedy w Nowym Jorku. Rzeczywiście ustawa została cofnięta, lecz wpływy Moskwy przestały obowiązywać w Gruzji. Jest swoistego rodzaju chichotem historii, że kraj, który w 2008 roku został dotknięty napaścią ze strony putinowskich siepaczy, dzisiaj tak naprawdę ustami swoich polityków realizuje politykę Moskwy. Nie można jedną nogą być w Moskwie, a drugiej wyciągać do Europy. Dzisiaj jesteśmy murem za narodem gruzińskim, ale musimy powiedzieć jasno: kraj, który dopuszcza się *de facto* morderstwa na swoim byłym prezydencie, nigdy miejsca w Europie mieć nie będzie.

Clare Daly (The Left). – Mr President, I have to say, I think this debate is really very unhelpful. While the odd person has come in and argued for calm and dialogue and diplomacy, most people here, quite frankly, have been happily stirring the pot with no apparent care for the consequences. Nobody but nobody in here should be doing that. Everybody on all sides should leave Georgia be.

Since 1991, the Georgian people have been put through the wringer of neoliberal shock therapy, political instability and vicious political polarisation. A third of the people in Georgia under 50 are considering emigrating. Some 61% of them say that no political party represents them. It is one of the most unequal countries in Europe and Central Asia: that's what we should be focusing on. That's what matters to the people of Georgia. And yet people come in here trying to inflame things. You're giving out about the Georgian Foreign Agents Act when the Commission comes out and leaks its own version of exactly the same thing and you've nothing to say about this.

This type of thing is madness. Previously, the EU argued for dialogue and de-escalation, I ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

(End of catch-the-eye procedure)

Olivér Várhelyi, on behalf of the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. – Mr President, honourable Members, I think that this debate has demonstrated that we all share the wish to see Georgia succeed in its reforms and on its European path. And we all need to help this to be delivered for the people of Georgia, because this is the aim of the people of Georgia and this is also the key to any EU accession process – to deliver on the 12 priorities because those 12 priorities are setting out the most important tasks in front of the country. And now we need Georgia to deliver, to work hard on these reforms, and it is the only way for the country to advance on its chosen European path.

To the question of how we support this work and how we help them to deliver, of course, we are standing by financially; we are standing by with experts. But make no mistake: this can only be delivered by the Government of Georgia and by the Parliament of Georgia, because again, this is all for the Georgian people.

President. – The debate is closed.

18. L-isfidi li r-Repubblika tal-Moldova trid tiffaccja (dibattitu)

Sēdes vadītājs. – Nākamais darba kārtības punkts ir debates par Komisijas priekšsēdētājas vietnieka / Savienības augstā pārstāvja ārlietās un drošības politikas jautājumos paziņojumu par problēmām, ar kurām saskaras Moldovas Republika (2023/2595(RSP)).

Olivér Várhelyi, on behalf of the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. – Mr President, honourable Members of the European Parliament, today's debate is a very timely one as Russia and its proxies are actively working to destabilise the pro-reform government of Moldova.

Since the start of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, Moldova has been facing the consequences of Russia's brutal aggression just tens of kilometres away from its borders. It has been confronted with a growing number of challenges, such as loss of key markets, soaring inflation, violating of its airspace and staged protests. Nevertheless, Moldova has shown remarkable solidarity with the refugees fleeing Ukraine.

What is happening now? According to the Moldovan authorities, the probability of direct military aggression against Moldova is currently low. Moreover, the de facto authorities in the Transnistria region want to avoid being drawn into Russia's war of aggression. But vigilance is necessary due to the presence of Russian troops and ammunition in the Transnistria region.

Over the last months, there have been increasing Russian attempts to destabilise Moldova with hybrid actions. The president of Moldova, Maia Sandu, has warned about plans to attempt a change of power through violent means. Russia's lies about Ukraine massing troops to attack Moldova's pro-Russian separatist region of Transnistria were swiftly denied by Chişinău.

At the same time, high energy prices and high inflation have increased the burden on the population, worsening their living conditions. Russia has used, again, energy supplies as a political weapon. But the Moldovan Government, with the EU's support, has managed to tackle these unprecedented challenges.

It is remarkable that despite all the pressures, Moldova now is an EU candidate country and it continues working on reforms that aim to bring the country closer to the EU. And in that regard, on 2 February this year, Commission services provided further policy guidance on EU acquis-related reforms in our analytical report. This is to complement our opinion of last year on the country's application for EU membership to be followed by a comprehensive assessment of Moldova's progress in meeting the EU accession criteria later on this year in the autumn.

Honourable Members, let me stress that Moldova remains on top of the EU's political agenda with our unwavering support to the country's security, territorial integrity and sovereignty. Over the last 12 months, the EU has put together a comprehensive support package worth more than EUR 1 billion to strengthen Moldova's resilience.

Moreover, the Economic and Investment Plan for our Eastern partners has a significant potential, which needs to be fully tapped to support Moldova's reform agenda. The five flagship initiatives we agreed together aim to unlock EUR 1.6 billion of investments for Moldova. We are supporting the modernisation of Moldova's defence sector with the support of the European Peace Facility by providing EUR 47 million. We will effectively double Moldova's national defence budget.

High Representative Vice-President Borrell has proposed to EU Member States to maintain a substantial level of financial assistance to Moldova also this year. Additionally, EU experts are supporting Moldova on cybersecurity, addressing hybrid threats and countering disinformation. The EU also launched a hub to address internal security and border management challenges.

And we are looking at further ways to support Moldova. High Representative Vice-President Borrell is taking forward the work on preparing a possible EU-civilian CSDP mission to further strengthen Moldova's security and resilience. The deployment of such a mission would provide yet another important political signal of EU support in the current difficult circumstances. The Commission and the EEAS' services, together with the Member States, are also exploring a possible new sanctions regime targeting individuals who seek to destabilise this country.

Despite all the challenges that Moldova is facing, in June, it will host the second summit of the European Political Community. I want to reassure you that the EU stands in solidarity with the people of Moldova, even in these challenging times and the future of Moldova and its citizens is within the European Union.

Siegfried Mureşan, în numele grupului PPE. – Domnule preşedinte, stimate comisar, stimaţi colegi, pentru a putea trăi în siguranţă şi în securitate în interiorul graniţelor Uniunii Europene, este esenţial să fim înconjuraţi în vecinătatea noastră imediată de state care sunt sigure şi stabile.

Republica Moldova este vecin al Uniunii Europene şi Republica Moldova este vecin al Ucrainei. De aceea, o Republică Moldova pro-europeană este bună pentru cetăţenii Republicii Moldova, dar este importantă şi pentru Uniunea Europeană, şi pentru Ucraina.

Ştim între timp că cetăţenii Republicii Moldova îşi doresc integrare europeană, ştim că actualele autorităţi de la Chişinău, preşedintă, guvern, majoritate parlamentară, îşi doresc integrare europeană, ştim şi cine nu îşi doreşte acest lucru: Federaţia Rusă şi oligarhii care au fost obişnuiţi să controleze mediul de afaceri, scena politică şi mass media în Republica Moldova în ultimii ani.

De aceea, ce trebuie să facem? Trebuie să ajutăm Republica Moldova în continuare. În primul rând, trebuie să ajutăm Republica Moldova financiar pentru ca autoritățile să poată ajuta cetățenii Republicii Moldova și întreprinderile din Republica Moldova să treacă cu bine peste această perioadă. Trebuie să spunem Republicii Moldova, după implementarea celor nouă reforme pe care le-am solicitat, ce urmează? Și eu spun: de îndată ce aceste nouă reforme sunt implementate, trebuie să începem negocierile de aderare la Uniunea Europeană în cursul acestui an, trebuie să liberalizăm comerțul cu Republica Moldova, pentru ca Republica Moldova să poată, la fel ca Ucraina, exporta cât mai mult spre noi, să se poată dezvolta economic și chiar înainte ca aderarea să devină posibilă, fiindcă aderarea este un proces ce va dura câțiva ani, trebuie să integrăm Republica Moldova în piața internă europeană. Asta va aduce beneficii pentru oameni.

Tot ce facem pentru Ucraina trebuie să facem și pentru Republica Moldova în perioada următoare.

Tonino Picula, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – Mr President, the European Parliament will remain a strong supporter of all of the reform processes in Moldova. With a change of political context following the Russian invasion of Ukraine and pro-European orientation of the country, Moldovan efforts should be acknowledged in many ways. We should do more.

We cannot forget that part of Moldovan territory has been under Russian occupation for a long time. Citizens of Moldova have been enduring this Kremlin-fuelled separatism which has cost them dearly. It would be irresponsible and naive to think that Russia has now focused exclusively on Ukraine. On the contrary, we need to be very careful in our immediate neighbourhood. That is why it is highly disturbing to witness these attempts to destabilise political leadership in the country: a well-known scenario set by corrupt pro-Kremlin oligarchs and their parties seeks to misuse the dire economic situation to divert the country from its European Union path. It's a hybrid warfare of cynicism developed by the Kremlin to destroy our European House, our values and our democracy. The defenders of democracy and our values are nowadays our neighbours, and we should not overlook this, but give them strong support.

Dragoș Tudorache, *în numele grupului Renew*. – Domnule președinte, domnule comisar, dragi colegi, președintele Maia Sandu și cetățenii Moldovei au ales un drum. Au ales un model de societate clădită pe reguli democratice, pe drepturi și libertăți individuale, pe o economie deschisă.

Acest model este în deplin contrast cu viziunea lui Putin despre cum funcționează o țară. În lumea lui Putin, există privilegiați și supuși, există puterea brută ca singura sursă a adevărului și legitimității. În lumea lui Putin, oligarhii primesc acces la resurse, li se tolerează furtul și îmbogățirea pe spatele restului societății în schimbul loialității oarbe.

Succesul modelului ales de Republica Moldova și de președintele Sandu sau succesul modelului Ucrainei și al președintelui Zelenski nu fac decât să nege modelul lui Putin. Despre asta e războiul din Ucraina și despre asta e atacul hibrid neconținut la care e supusă Republica Moldova și conducerea sa politică.

Oligarhii moldoveni afiliați lui Putin conduc acum acest atac, plătesc mercenari ai protestelor, manipulează opiniile celor vulnerabili, și toate acestea pentru a sabota democrația și parcursul european pentru care moldovenii fac atâtea sacrificii.

Noi, Parlamentul European, trebuie să ne asigurăm că sprijinim Moldova în continuare și dacă domnul Borrell ar fi aici, i-aș fi cerut să adauge oligarhii Moldovei, Șor, Platon, Plahotniuc pe lista sancțiunilor Uniunii Europene.

Viola von Cramon-Taubadel, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – Mr President, the Kremlin's playbook is as rigged as it is predictable. If you cannot win the hearts and minds of the people in a neighbouring country, threaten them with a war. If blackmail fails, destabilise the country from within. The ploy disclosed by the Moldavian Government has Putin's fingerprints all over it. It is an old KGB trick to take advantage of social hardships of the people. Send in groups of trained titushkies and orchestrate an overthrow of a democratic government. Because there's nothing Putin is afraid of more than a democratic, pro-Western government next door. High energy prices have hit the people of Moldova hard and that discontent is more than relatable. This is why the EU stands with them and their government in words and in deeds. The multi-million euro support that the EU provided must be followed by credible steps, including abolishing roaming tariffs and accelerating the membership path, so that the people of Moldova can benefit from all freedoms that other Europeans enjoy as soon as possible.

Anna Fotyga, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Mr President, Commissioner, despite difficulties, provocations, challenges, the hybrid warfare parts of the toolbox – as mentioned before – are already implemented by the Russian Federation on the territory of Moldova, the country, led by courageous President Maia Sandu, keeps firm on the European and transatlantic path.

We have to stand by Moldovan society and also by Moldovan authorities, who are our neighbours and who try everything possible to come closer to EU membership. We have to support them and open negotiations as soon as possible, possibly this year.

I would like us to implement all financial and technical measures necessary to assist this country, in particular to send a civilian CSDP mission there to assist Moldova.

Emmanuel Maurel, *au nom du groupe The Left*. – Monsieur le Président, il est évident que le Parlement européen doit apporter son soutien plein et entier à la Moldavie, qui est confrontée aux conséquences concrètes de la guerre en Ukraine, des conséquences qui sont d'abord humanitaires. Le peuple moldave a dû accueillir des dizaines de milliers de réfugiés. Des conséquences politiques aussi, on l'a dit, des troubles, des manifestations plus ou moins manipulées, des tentatives de déstabilisation, des événements qui se multiplient, les paroles menaçantes aussi de M. Lavrov, qui voyait en la Moldavie une nouvelle Ukraine, la déclaration d'indépendance de Tiraspol. Bref, on connaît ces difficultés. Et puis s'ajoute une crise économique intense, avec un déficit de la balance commerciale très important et un pouvoir d'achat qui est complètement plombé par la facture énergétique.

Donc il faut réitérer notre soutien, évidemment, à l'intégrité territoriale de la Moldavie. Il faut aussi consolider notre assistance macrofinancière. Je trouve cela bien qu'il y ait des subventions, je trouve qu'il y a encore trop de prêts. Et quand on voit la situation à laquelle le peuple moldave est confronté, je pense qu'il ne faut pas mégoter. Il faut soutenir pleinement et entièrement un pays qui est confronté à une crise très grave.

David McAllister (PPE). – Herr Präsident, sehr geehrter Herr Kommissar! In den letzten Monaten ist die Republik Moldau zunehmend zum Ziel russischer Einflussnahme geworden. Die wirtschaftliche Lage ist angespannt, das sicherheitspolitische Umfeld ist fragil. Moskau schränkt die Energieversorgung ein und versucht, die proeuropäische Regierung durch orchestrierte Proteste zu destabilisieren.

Das Ziel ist klar und das haben bereits viele Vorrednerinnen und Vorredner angesprochen. Der reformorientierte korrupsionsbekämpfende und EU-freundliche Kurs soll untergraben werden. Der Regierung von Präsidentin Maia Sandu ist es trotz dieser widrigsten Umstände gelungen, ein ambitioniertes Reformprogramm voranzutreiben. Der im Juni 2022 erteilte Beitrittskandidatenstatus ist unser Versprechen an die langfristige europäische Perspektive der Republik Moldau.

Die Europäische Union muss und wird die Regierung in Chişinău in dieser schwierigen Lage weiterhin entschlossen und konsequent unterstützen. Es geht darum, die staatlichen Strukturen zu stabilisieren. Es geht darum, die wirtschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen zu verbessern, und es geht darum, die Resilienz gegenüber russischer Desinformation zu stärken.

In diesem Zusammenhang, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen, unterstütze ich ausdrücklich die Pläne, zügig eine zivile GSVP-Mission in das Land zu entsenden, um die moldauischen Strukturen im Krisenmanagement zu stärken. Das nächste Treffen der Europäischen Politischen Gemeinschaft findet am 1. Juni in Chişinău statt. Das wird ein wichtiger Anlass sein, der Republik Moldau die Unterstützung aller europäischen Partner zu zeigen.

Carmen Avram (S&D). – Domnule preşedinte, situaţia din Republica Moldova e îngrijorătoare. Am văzut amprenta răului recent, când am fost la Chişinău, şi o văd din ce în ce mai des la ştiri.

Partenerul nostru are nevoie urgent de sprijin substanţial de la Bruxelles. Sămânţa conflictului e semănată în Moldova după tiparul bine-cunoscut: se întetesc acţiunile de destabilizare, grupările pro-ruse se reactivează, înscenările din Transnistria sunt tot mai străvezii. Kremlinul se grăbeşte. Noi trebuie să fim mai rapizi decât el.

Dar Moldova trebuie ajutată şi să-şi găsească echilibrul politic intern. Respectul faţă de valorile europene nu are şi nu poate avea culoare politică. În momente cruciale, când ai nevoie de toţi aliaţii, a diviza, învinuind nemeritat şi ostraci-zând o parte din electoratul autentic pro-european doar pentru că vine din opoziţie, de la stânga spectrului politic, e contraproductiv şi poate deveni distructiv. Doar dacă îţi ții prietenii aproape, îţi poți alunga în irelevanță duşmanii.

Pentru Moldova sunt vitale acum și solidaritatea Uniunii Europene, și energia, și banii, și reformele, și toleranța. Împreună îi vor asigura supraviețuirea democrației și integrarea europeană pe care și-o dorește.

Dacian Cioloș (Renew). – Domnule preşedinte, dragi colegi, sunteți oameni politici, unii ați avut funcții în guvernul din statul dumneavoastră și știți ce provocări există chiar pe timp de pace și în țări prospere.

Acum imaginați-vă că gestionați politic o țară de mici dimensiuni, aflată de zeci de ani sub influența Rusiei, care are o graniță cu Ucraina în război și soldați ruși aflați ilegal pe teritoriul său.

De aceea aș fi vrut să îl aud pe vicepreședintele Borrell astăzi, felicitând, împreună cu noi, atât președinta Maia Sandu, cât și Guvernul Republicii Moldova, pentru că fac față acestei presiuni cu provocări imense din partea Rusiei lui Putin, dar și să înțelegem că Moldova are nevoie acum de sprijinul Uniunii Europene și în fapte, nu doar în declarații. Un sprijin economic, un sprijin financiar, ca să poată să demonstreze cetățenilor Republicii Moldova că un guvern democratic, un guvern susținut de Uniunea Europeană poate să facă față și situației și crizelor economice.

Pentru ca provocările lui Putin să nu aibă succes, trebuie ca Uniunea Europeană să ajute Republica Moldova să facă față crizelor prin care trece, atât cele de securitate, dar și cele legate de economie și de traiul cetățenilor moldoveni.

Cristian Terheș (ECR). – Domnule preşedinte, stimate domnule comisar, dragi colegi, Republica Moldova este până azi victima Pactului samavolnic Ribbentrop-Molotov, în urma căruia Europa a fost împărțită în 1939 între Hitler și Stalin.

În urma acestui pact, Stalin a ocupat Basarabia din România, pe care a încorporat-o în Uniunea Sovietică sub numele de Republica Sovietică Moldova. Rusia, fie că era țaristă, sovietică sau post-sovietică, a făcut tot posibilul pentru a ține teritoriul Republicii Moldova sub propria sferă de influență malignă.

Pe lângă menținerea conflictului înghețat din Transnistria, Rusia subminează azi Moldova economic, politic și cultural. Republica Moldova trebuie ajutată prin toate mijloacele să iasă din ghearele Rusiei imperialiste, care de sute de ani caută să obțină robie și sărăcie.

Moldova a primit recent statutul de candidat la Uniunea Europeană, dar acest lucru trebuie completat cu sprijin efectiv de securitate acordat acesteia, astfel încât frontul din Ucraina să nu se întindă până la Chişinău.

De asemenea, este imperativ semnarea urgentă de către Uniunea Europeană a unui acord de roaming cu Moldova. Un astfel de acord de roaming nu este un efort mare pentru UE, dar va însemna totul pentru cetățenii Republicii Moldova, care vor putea comunica mult mai ușor cu frații și familiile lor din Uniunea Europeană.

Andrzej Halicki (PPE). – Szanowni Państwo! Panie Komisarzu! Rosja próbuje zdestabilizować Mołdawię. Próbuje wywołać zamieszki, używa dezinformacji. Ale to się nie uda, panie Putin. Mołdawianie wybrali. Wybrali i działają konsekwentnie. Wybrali prezydent Sandu, wybrali rząd, wybrali proeuropejski kierunek rozwoju i swoją przyszłość w Europie. Co my mamy zrobić? Co my mamy robić jako parlamentarzyści, jako instytucje europejskie? Oczywiście codzienną pracą być w Kiszyniowie i współpracować z tym rządem, bo reformy są niezbędne, ale niezbędna jest także ta finansowa pomoc, o której Pan Komisarz mówił. Programy, pomoc mikrofinansowa, ale też większe wsparcie dla Mołdawii, bo rzeczywiście ten kryzys energetyczny jest odczuwalny. Potrzebna jest pomoc dla rządu, by mógł dotować ceny energii, by pomóc tym najbardziej potrzebującym grupom społecznym. I to jest nasz obowiązek. Chciałbym też zaapelować o jedną decyzję, decyzję polityczną. Musimy być gotowi rozpocząć w tym roku proces akcesyjny, bo ta nadzieja Mołdawianom też jest potrzebna. Miejsce Mołdawii jest w Europie.

Juozas Olekas (S&D). – Mr President, dear Commissioner, dear colleagues, the situation in Moldova is indeed worrying. Last week's anti-Western pro-Russian demonstrations took place on the streets of Chișinău, with the majority of the demonstrators shipped to the capital by buses. I hope Moldovan law enforcement agents will determine how much it was a genuine expression of the anger about the economic situation and how much it was a deliberate campaign by Russia to destabilise the situation in the country. But one thing is clear: if in the future we want a peaceful and prosperous Europe, then the EU and our Western partners need to get more involved in Moldova now.

We need to provide greater support to the Moldovan people to deal with the economic hardship induced by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. We need to provide human expertise and, if necessary, military resources to give Moldova a means to defend its sovereignty and its pro-European path. And we need to confirm that Moldova is welcome to join the EU as soon as it fulfils the accession criteria. And we should be ready to start accession negotiations with Moldova this year.

Vlad-Marius Botoș (Renew). – Domnule președinte, dragi colegi, ne confruntăm cu o situație tensionată în Republica Moldova, chiar la granițele Uniunii Europene, domnule comisar, unde se încearcă destabilizarea țării la scurt timp după ce moldovenii au ales o cale democratică europeană, iar Uniunea Europeană i-a oferit Moldovei statutul de țară candidat.

Mijloacele moderne, precum internetul și libertatea cuvântului, sunt folosite abuziv de forțele pro-ruse, care doresc readucerea acestei stat sub influența Rusiei și a lui Putin, reinstaurarea unui regim autoritar.

Republica Moldova are nevoie de sprijinul nostru, atât la nivel declarativ, dar mai ales practic, date fiind posibilitățile de apărare reduse, experiența limitată pe drumul democratic și o economie deja greu încercată, de pandemie, de războiul din Ucraina, de dependența energetică, de zona separatistă Transnistria.

Nu putem sta nepăsători la tentativele Rusiei și a lui Putin de a destabiliza democrațiile europene, una câte una, la propagarea dezinformărilor și manipulărilor. Nu putem lăsa să se extindă incertitudinea pe continentul nostru.

Veronika Vrecionová (ECR). – Pane předsedající, situace v Moldavsku nám ukazuje, jak bylo neprozíravé ze strany EU soustředit se pouze na sebe a na své vlastní problémy a opomíjet své okolí. Odmítání další integrace, byť explicitně nezmníněné, vedlo k frustraci obyvatel zemí, které o členství v EU dlouhodobě usilují. Tato frustrace rozněhuje protievropské nálady a často znamená příklon části společnosti k Rusku. Vidíme to například v Srbsku a Moldavsko je na tom podobně. Malý vnitrozemský stát těsně za hranicí EU, na jehož území probíhá dlouholetý zamrzlý konflikt s proruskou částí. Musíme dát Moldavsku jasnou vizi rychlého vstupu do EU a musíme to myslet vážně, protože více šancí pro udržení demokratických zemí kolem našich hranic nedostaneme. Demokratické principy a udržení společných hodnot jsou daleko cennější než 100% transpozice veškeré evropské legislativy.

Andrius Kubilius (PPE). – Mr President, it is very clear that Kremlin is afraid of success of democracies in Ukraine and Moldova, because those successes can inspire Russian people to seek the same democratic development in Russia itself. That is why autocracy of Kremlin started military aggression against Ukraine and continuous hybrid aggression against Moldova.

Kremlin is using oligarch Prigozhin, who is spending dirty money to hire mercenaries of Wagner group to attack Bakhmut in Ukraine. Kremlin also is using pro-Kremlin oligarch Ilan Shor in Moldova, who is openly spending dirty money to hire protesters against Maia Sandu's government in Chişinău in order to destroy that government.

We know how to help Ukraine, which is facing Kremlin military aggression: weapons, weapons and weapons. In order to help Moldova against Kremlin hybrid aggression, we need to use our most powerful geopolitical weapons: to start membership negotiations this year and implement ambitious integration, integration, integration.

Kremlin needs to know that they will be defeated in both cases: in Ukraine and in Moldova.

(The speaker agreed to respond to a blue-card speech)

Margarida Marques (S&D), *intervenção «cartão azul».* – Senhor Presidente, eu gostava de colocar uma questão ao orador.

Há duas semanas, estive na Moldávia, numa missão da Comissão dos Orçamentos, e tivemos a oportunidade de discutir com o governo da Moldávia os passos que o país está a dar para se tornar um Estado de direito, com a independência dos diferentes poderes, designadamente a reforma do sistema judicial, e está a ser dado um conjunto de passos no sentido de a Moldávia, no final do ano, poder integrar o acervo comunitário.

A minha questão é a seguinte: como é que vê o apoio à Moldávia, designadamente do lado do orçamento da União Europeia?

Andrius Kubilius (PPE), *blue-card reply.* – Well, first of all I know that the Government of Moldova is doing great reforms in order to become not only a candidate country but to start negotiations and to become a member of EU. That is not only in the interests of Moldova, but also of us. And that is why we need to give all the support which is needed. And since Moldova really is facing different challenges, including energy and budgetary ones. And as we have heard from the Commissioner, the Commission is supporting in such a way which is really very much needed for Moldova. So I see all the possibilities to have success of Moldova, both for Moldovan people and for us.

Thijs Reuten (S&D). – Mr President, Commissioner, dear colleagues, Moldova has my greatest admiration because, let's face it, with Russia breathing down Chişinău's neck, choosing the EU was incredibly courageous. And today our Union needs to show that very same courage to halt Russia's hybrid war, because this alliance of Kremlin agents and exiled oligarchs who cruelly prey on the most vulnerable to foment insurrection must be stopped.

Council, Commission: help Moldova, not this summer, but now. Give Chişinău all technical support it needs for rapid EU reforms and help them to communicate their choices clearly.

Second, shore up security cooperation swiftly. A civilian CSDP mission would be excellent, but this summer might be too little too late.

And third, fight even harder against energy poverty and obscene inflation, and sanction Shor and Plahotniuc. We will not let the Moldovan people be robbed of their European future.

Ангел Джамбазки (ECR). – Г-н Председател, колеги, разбира се, че ситуацията в Молдова е напрегната и тревожна, и разбира се, че причината за това е и влиянието на Кремъл и на проруските агенти, които се опитват да отвлекат вниманието от своите провали в Украйна. Разбира се, мястото на Молдова и Украйна е в Европейския съюз. Обаче има нещо, което аз не разбирам и това е защо е нужно точно сега, когато на молдовската общественост е нужно единство, властите в Молдова да се опитват да продължават да отнемат автономията на българската общност там. Не знам дали знаете – в Молдова има между 100 000 и 300 000 българи, които живеят там от 1776 г. И те досега са били лоялни граждани на тази държава. Защо е необходимо тази автономия да се раздробява, защо е необходимо тези хора да се превръщат във врагове? Защо е необходимо на тези хора да се отнемат граждански и политически права? Това е нещо, на което трябва да се сложи край. И тук сте отговорни и вие, г-н Комисар, вие блестящо защитихте правата на българите в Македония. Надявам се и сега като лъв да се борите за правата на българите в Молдова, защото пътят на Молдова е към Европейския съюз. Но това минава през зачитането на правата и на законните интереси на всички общности и на всички малцинства там.

Eugen Tomac (PPE). – Domnule președinte, domnule comisar, stimați colegi, recent, la Conferința pentru Securitate de la München, președinta Maia Sandu spunea că cea mai mare provocare pentru Republica Moldova o reprezintă propaganda Federației Ruse, pe care o aplică împotriva Republicii Moldova.

Vă întreb, domnule comisar, care este strategia Comisiei pentru a susține Republica Moldova în fața acestor instrumente extrem de agresive pe care le utilizează Kremlinul astăzi în teren, când vedem că, cu foarte multă agresivitate, prin propagandă, manipulare, dezinformare, Republica Moldova încearcă să fie destabilizată de către cei care și-au dat mâna, și aici mă refer la politicieni corupți, la forțe politice pro-ruse, la fugari care nu mai sunt în Republica Moldova, dar care finanțează campanii întregi de denigrare și de destabilizare a guvernării pro-europene de la Chișinău.

Așteptăm acțiuni pentru că este nevoie de solidaritate, acum mai mult ca niciodată.

Catch-the-Eye Procedure

Victor Negrescu (S&D). – Domnule președinte, Republica Moldova are nevoie de sprijinul nostru, în contextul în care stabilitatea sa este pusă în pericol.

În ultimele săptămâni, autoritățile de la Chișinău s-au confruntat cu presiuni și cu situații fără precedent și au descoperit implicarea directă a Federației Ruse în încercarea de a destabiliza țara, prin organizarea unor proteste violente.

Astfel de incidente dovedesc faptul că Uniunea Europeană trebuie să treacă de la teorie la practică. În momentul de față, țara mea, România, asistă Republica Moldova, oferindu-i de la sprijin financiar până la resurse energetice, resurse de care are nevoie, în timp ce promisiunile donatorilor întârzie să apară.

De aceea, fac apel la Comisia Europeană și la statele membre să ofere acces rapid la fondurile de preaderare pentru Republica Moldova, integrând și expertiza existentă în regiune pentru a ne asigura că aceste resurse sunt folosite adecvat și în interesul cetățenilor.

Scopul este de a menține calea europeană a Republicii Moldova și a asigura reziliența democratică a țării, așa că nu trebuie să mai întârziem, trebuie să acționăm acum.

Vlad Gheorghe (Renew). – Domnule președinte, moldovenii sunt europeni și ce se întâmplă acum pe străzile din Chișinău este inventat în laboratoarele lui Putin, dar finanțat cu banii furați din băncile moldovenești. Cu miliardul furat de oligarhi, tot ei acum plătesc direct așa-ziși protestatari. Sunt lucruri dovedite, sunt lucruri înregistrate. Nu se mai îndoiește nimeni de chestia asta, așa că o spun și acum, cum am spus și anterior: tăiați-le banii! Dacă nu le mai lăsăm acces la bani în Uniunea Europeană, nu o să mai aibă cu ce să creeze aceste false proteste.

Este momentul ca Legea Magnițki în Uniunea Europeană să se aplice corupților și cred că exemplul corupților oligarhi din Republica Moldova, în special Ilan Șor, trebuie aplicat acum, nu mai putem să mai așteptăm. Cât o să așteptăm, cât o să-i lăsăm să-și plimbe banii murdari prin băncile europene înainte să le tăiem accesul la bani?

Clare Daly (The Left). – Mr President, Moldova is dealing with an extremely sensitive situation: a brutal war next door, intense polarisation internationally, a Russian military presence in Transnistria and international actors increasingly pressing states to pick sides.

Now Article 11 of the Constitution states, ‘the Republic proclaims its permanent neutrality’, and the overwhelming majority of Moldovans have consistently been against joining either NATO or the Russian-led CSTO. Like my own country, Ireland, Moldova doesn’t have a strong military, and its neutrality has been a crucial guarantee of security for its people. And I think now Moldovans are clearly worried about being pulled into the war and seeing it spread, and we should be taking the utmost caution not to pull at the threads of Moldovan neutrality.

I think it’s a disgrace that we’re forcing countries to take sides. Why can’t they have good relations with Russia and with the EU? It’s a disgrace that there’s been the revocation of broadcast licenses for the six Russian-language channels in Moldova: we have to respect all rights of all Moldovans.

Mick Wallace (The Left). – Mr President, Moldova has a constitutional commitment to the principle of neutrality. Moldova, like Georgia, has two frozen conflict zones, and its latest period of relative peace was hard won. Moldova's neutrality is the central element in the balance of power that has allowed for the current delicate arrangement of political, socio-economic and military positions and leverage to remain intact.

Moldova has been rocked by the war: inflation and refugee inflows. Undermining its neutrality now will not help. Unpopular reforms have been rammed through and tensions between the central government and the breakaway state of Transnistria are high. Moldova could well open up a new front in this war. Religious and ethnic tensions are already high.

Russia, Ukraine, NATO and the EU are all complicit in this, but the people of Moldova are the ones who will pay the price if their neutrality is trampled upon.

(Brīvā mikrofona uzstāšanās beigas)

Olívér Várhelyi, *on behalf of the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.* – Mr President, honourable Members, I think today's debate shows our continued interest and support for Moldova on its EU path. We commend the strong commitment of the Moldovan Government to continue delivering on its ambitious reform agenda despite all the challenges and overlapping crises triggered by Russia's war in Ukraine.

It is important not to lose focus on key reforms. Moldovan citizens expect progress, especially in the areas of the rule of law, justice and corruption. These reforms are equally important for strengthening Moldova's resilience. It is equally important, therefore, also to recover all the funds that have been lost in the banking crisis. And to find all the funds back that have been illegally put into private hands. I would therefore like to encourage you to pass the message on the need to continue reforms to your Moldovan counterparts during the upcoming EU-Moldova Parliamentary Association Committee, which is scheduled for next week.

We stand in full solidarity with Moldova. Anything that will improve Moldova's security will also improve our own security. Moldova belongs to the European family and we stand ready to continue supporting it on its EU path.

Sēdes vadītājs. – Debates ir slēgtas.

Balsošana notiks kādā no nākamajām sesijām.

Rakstiskas deklarācijas (171. pants)

Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE), *în scris.* – Vorbe despre lovituri de stat au auzit moldovenii nu doar o dată. Pentru o țărișoară ruptă în două de un râu, și care de peste 30 de ani trăiește în teroarea psihică a unui posibil război declanșat de chiar așa numiții „pacificatori ruși” staționați în mod abuziv pe teritoriul său, pentru o țară ca aceasta, cuvinte ca „lovitură de stat” nu sunt un capăt de lume. Le ia însă în serios. Și la fel facem și noi.

UE trebuie să le fie alături. Susțin demararea, chiar de anul acesta, a negocierilor de aderare cu Chișinăul. În plus, trebuie să îi ajutăm pe mai departe, atât financiar cât și tehnic.

Salut organizarea, în iunie anul acesta, la Chișinău, a celei de-a doua reuniuni a Comunității Politice Europene, iar în același timp, susțin propunerea Comisiei Europene de creștere a asistenței macrofinanciare pentru Republica Moldova cu 145 de milioane de euro.

În acest fel, suma totală alocată Republicii Moldova pentru asistență macrofinanciară va ajunge la 295 de milioane de euro, iar încet-încet, cu sprijin european și reforme acasă, Moldova va reuși să nu mai dețină titlul de cea mai săracă țară europeană.

19. Rapport ta' implimentazzjoni dwar il-Ftehim dwar il-hruġ tar-Renju Unit mill-UE – Il-Qafas ta' Windsor (dibattitu)

Sēdes vaditajs. – Nākamais darba kārtības punkts ir kopīgās debates par

— Pedro Silva Pereira ziņojumu Konstitucionālo jautājumu komitejas vārdā par īstenošanas ziņojumu par līgumu par Apvienotās Karalistes izstāšanos no ES (2020/2202(INI)) (A9-0052/2023) un

— Komisijas paziņojumu par Vindzoras regulējumu (2023/2596(RSP)).

Pedro Silva Pereira, rapporteur. – Mr President, Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič, dear colleagues, time flies. Believe it or not, almost seven years have passed since the Brexit referendum and more than three years have gone since the entry into force of the withdrawal agreement.

As rapporteur for the implementation of the Brexit agreement, I am glad to say that, fortunately, we are here not only to assess what happened in the last three years, where the story to tell is not always pleasant, but also to look into the future of the EU-UK relations in light of the recently announced Windsor framework, a new joint understanding about the terms for a more flexible but also more effective implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol.

This development is of utmost importance. The UK's continuous breach of its agreed legal commitments under the protocol was by far the most serious issue in the implementation of the withdrawal agreement. The lack of customs checks in the Irish Sea and the insufficient sharing of customs data with the EU obviously endangered the integrity of the EU single market.

It's worth recalling that the Northern Ireland Protocol was the agreed solution to prevent a physical border on the island of Ireland so that the Good Friday Agreement is fully safeguarded while protecting the integrity of the EU single market. A dialogue on a flexible but effective implementation of the protocol, as many times suggested by the European Commission, was always the right thing to do, not unilateral actions.

Besides the new customs data sharing arrangements, the key element of the Windsor framework is a distinction between a green lane in the Irish Sea with no border controls for goods entering Northern Ireland for final consumption there in Northern Ireland and the red lane with EU customs and sanitary and phytosanitary procedures for those goods entering Northern Ireland but at risk of entering the EU single market. Together with the so-called 'Stormont break', allowing for Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly to stop in exceptional circumstances future regulatory divergences introduced by the EU.

This joint understanding gives us reasons to believe that an important turn of a page can happen in the EU-UK relations. Moreover, we hope to see power-sharing returning to Northern Ireland so that we can all properly celebrate the 25 years of the Good Friday Agreement.

Therefore, as rapporteur for the implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement, I propose to the European Parliament that we warmly welcome the announced Windsor framework and, to that effect, I table a few amendments updating the report in respect of this important development. Furthermore, I would like to warmly congratulate Vice President Maroš Šefčovič and all his team for this remarkable political achievement.

One last word on citizens' rights, a top priority for this Parliament. We welcome the UK establishment of the EU settlement scheme, under which 7 million European citizens have asked for the recognition of their residence rights. 55% of those got the permanent settled status. But however, we note that 39% of the applicants – about 2.7 million – only got the so-called 'pre-settled status'. So we will monitor the situation to ensure that they get the permanent status as soon as they fulfil the legal requirements.

And, finally, we still ask the British Government to provide a document serving as physical proof of residence rights so people don't have to face practical difficulties in their daily life. So improvements are still needed for sure, but I believe that hope should be the right tone for today's debate.

Seán Kelly, *rapporteur for the opinion of the Committee on International Trade*. – Mr President, into the breach comes Kelly. I welcome the political agreement on the Windsor Framework and commend particularly Vice-President Šefčovič and his team on achieving this result, which is the product of much effort and patience. The new arrangements address the real-life concerns of citizens and businesses in Northern Ireland, while also ensuring that the EU single market is protected through a number of safeguards. It is a balanced agreement, grounded on an understanding of trust between the EU and the UK – trust which I hope we can continue to build on as we move forward. I support, in particular, the efforts made by the Commission to give Northern Irish politicians and stakeholders a voice in the governance of the Protocol, especially through the Stormont Brake. This is an important and welcome development.

Now the focus turns to making this agreement a reality. In the Parliament here, I think we will take the necessary steps to implement the new arrangements as swiftly and as effectively as possible. But we will also need political will and responsible leadership, especially from the DUP, in order to make the agreement effective. I hope that can be achieved.

As we approach the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, I sincerely hope to see the Windsor Framework implemented and to return to power-sharing in Northern Ireland. Stability and certainty will allow citizens and businesses to avail of the economic opportunities that the new agreement provides for Northern Ireland, and ensure that the next 25 years will be as much about prosperity as the last 25 years was about peace. It is time that we put these long and drawn-out discussions on the Protocol behind us. I hope now that we can move forward with a constructive and forward-looking EU-UK relationship. And again, thanks to all involved and especially, once again, Commissioner Šefčovič, who was outstanding all through this process.

Maroš Šefčovič, *Vice-President of the Commission*. – Mr President, honourable Members, first and foremost, thank you for your invitation to this joint debate on the implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement and the recent developments around the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland. I very much welcome the opportunity to discuss the important progress made in the relationship between the EU and the UK. I believe that this is very well captured in the report and in particular the amendments reflecting the recent important progress in our relationship that Mr Pedro Silva Pereira put forward today. And I want to thank him not only for this timely report, but also for our excellent cooperation over the years. And my gratitude and thanks goes to all honourable Members in the UK Coordination Group and the many bilateral meetings we have had, I would say with almost everyone in the room, when we've been discussing this very important relationship with the United Kingdom. Honourable Members, the United Kingdom, as we discussed in our previous meetings, is an important partner and a close political ally for the EU, with our excellent cooperation in support of our Ukrainian friends being a testimony to that. In our discussions, protecting the rights of citizens after Brexit was of the utmost importance and I was reminded of that by the discussions we had, be it in UKCG or in our bilateral meetings. And I really would like to reassure all honourable members that it remains a priority for us to ensure that beneficiaries of the withdrawal agreement continue to enjoy the same rights and benefits. But we also knew it was vital not only to fix the problems of today, but to set our bilateral relationship down the right path to overcome the issues of tomorrow. And for that, we needed to find solutions to the challenges that have emerged in the implementation of the protocol over the past two years. In recent months, we have had intensive talks with our UK counterparts in order to find these solutions, solutions for real-life concerns around the operation of the protocol affecting people and businesses on the ground. President von der Leyen and Prime Minister Sunak have been in regular touch throughout the process. I have also remained in regular and close contact with my counterpart, UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly, but also the State Secretary responsible for Northern Ireland, Chris Heaton-Harris, and the Commission and UK government teams spared no efforts to find joint solutions and I can tell you that they've been working very, very hard.

I am delighted to say that this hard work, determination and political will has delivered results. As you know, on 27 February, a new way forward – the Windsor Framework – was announced by President von der Leyen and Prime Minister Sunak. A way forward that consists of joint solutions that will address in a definitive manner the concerns and challenges we have experienced over the last two years. A way forward that protects the legitimate interests of both the EU and the UK. A way forward that addresses all areas concerned – food, medicines, Customs, VAT and excise, state aid, tariff rate quotas, Governance and stakeholders' engagement. These solutions respond to the concrete needs of people and businesses in Northern Ireland, but they also have been carefully crafted so as to ensure that the EU single Market is protected. In particular, the role of the European Court of Justice has not changed. It remains the sole and final arbiter of EU law. But there is now a strong political commitment to solve future challenges together before they turn into disputes. Vitaly, the time of unilateral action is behind us. We welcome the public commitment from the UK

Government that the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill is stopped from proceeding in the UK Parliament and will thus fall. The Windsor Framework allows us to turn the page and work with mutual trust on fully implementing our agreements because the solutions we have found together are co-owned and are therefore set to be fully implemented by both sides. Honourable Members, the Windsor Framework is an important achievement for both the UK and the EU. Its implementation is the key. On our side, we know that we can count on the support of this House to deliver on important legislative proposals that are a key part of the joint solutions. Your support, as always, will be crucial, and I know that, thanks to our collective work, we can look to the future with confidence.

As Mr Seán Kelly underlined, next month will see the celebration of the 21st anniversary of the Good Friday Belfast Agreement. Our work on the Windsor Framework will allow us to continue to protect the hard-earned peace gains emanating from that momentous accord. The Framework is there to benefit people in Northern Ireland and support all communities celebrating peace on the island of Ireland. And with the last 25 years being about peace, the next 25 years should be about peace and prosperity.

Peter Jahr, *Verfasser der Stellungnahme des mitberatenden Petitionsausschusses*. – Herr Präsident, Herr Vizepräsident Šefčovič, meine sehr verehrten Damen und Herren! Jeder EU-Bürger mit Wohnsitz im Vereinigten Königreich hat das Recht, eine Petition an das Europäische Parlament gemäß Artikel 227 des Vertrages über die Arbeitsweise der Europäischen Union zu richten. Auch Bürger des Vereinigten Königreichs, die ihren Wohnsitz in der Europäischen Union haben, behalten das Recht, Petitionen an das Parlament zu richten.

Der Petitionsausschuss des Parlaments hat 262 Petitionen im Zusammenhang mit dem Brexit und 25 im Zusammenhang mit mutmaßlichen Verstößen gegen das Austrittsabkommen erhalten. Welche Probleme haben sich hier offenbart? Zum einen die Anforderungen des *EU Settlement Schemes*; das heißt, dass EU-Bürger einen zweiten Antrag an das System stellen müssen, um das unbefristete Aufenthaltsrecht im Vereinigten Königreich zu erhalten, ist problematisch und setzt die Bürger einem größeren Risiko aus, wenn sie ihr Aufenthaltsrecht nicht ausüben können, und das innerhalb der gesetzlichen Fristen.

Das Vereinigte Königreich hat sich aus dem Programm Erasmus+ zurückgezogen und sich entschieden, nicht als Drittpartnerland am neuen Programm Erasmus+2021-2027 teilzunehmen, was zulasten von Forschung, Studium, Ausbildung und Austausch für junge Leute gehen würde. Da wäre es eine gute Sache, wenn die Teilnahme des Vereinigten Königreichs an EU-Programmen zugunsten junger Menschen in Großbritannien und der EU im Austausch für die erforderlichen finanziellen Verpflichtungen zugelassen werden würde. Es gibt also noch einiges zu tun! Packen wir es an, seien wir optimistisch und lösen wir die Probleme im Interesse der Menschen.

Danuta Maria Hübner, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – Mr President, Vice-President Šefčovič, colleagues, I agree with you, Vice-President, we are at the beginning of a new chapter in the EU-UK relations, this time hopefully based on trust.

With the Windsor framework, we have a set of practical solutions to the implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol. The deal will lower the cost of doing business and settle the flow of goods from Great Britain into Northern Ireland without breaching EU single market rules. It strikes a careful balance between facilitations for the UK and effective safeguards for the EU single market. It brings the Northern Irish economic, political and civil society stakeholders into the framework.

Now we must set in stone this agreement in principle as soon as possible, and the Commission urgently needs the mandate to adopt the framework at the next EU-UK joint Committee meeting. I hope that the agreement will open the path to solving other pending issues and that the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill will be promptly and fully withdrawn, as promised by the UK Government.

It is noteworthy that the Windsor framework does not address citizens' rights, which are subject to the withdrawal agreement and are covered by Pedro Silva Pereira's implementation report. As of December 2022, under the settlement scheme, 181 000 EU citizens were still waiting on a decision on their pre-settled status, most of them for more than six months, uncertain about their immigration status and the reunification of their families.

It is positive to hear that the UK Home Office will not appeal the UK High Court's December 2022 ruling, according to which the Home Office had wrongly interpreted the withdrawal agreement. I hope the Home Office will take all the necessary steps to swiftly apply the ruling, communicate it effectively to EU citizens and not deprive citizens of their rights under the withdrawal agreement.

Finally, I hope that the implementation of the UK's EU Retained Law Bill will not undermine the UK's obligations under the withdrawal agreement, including the protocol, and the TCA not damage the enforcement mechanism.

Thijs Reuten, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – Mr President, colleagues, first off, congratulations, Commissioner Šefčovič, for an agreement that fully respects the red lines set out by our Parliament. And I appreciate that Mr Sunak also seems to have broken with the past. For seven long years, his Tory predecessors milked Brexit for cynical political purposes to the very last drop, and floating more illegal 'Braverplans' won't help them now.

Suffice to say that with the UN Refugee Convention in hand, the Illegal Migration Bill truly is illegal. And this is exactly why the Tories will be trashed in the polls. UK citizens are sick and tired of this kind of fabricated outrage. They want leadership, and I sincerely hope that Mr Sunak will show such leadership by scrapping also the Retained EU Law Bill in its current form.

To be very clear, literally nobody in Brussels or in the rest of Europe wants a trade war, and I very much hope the same goes for London. But taking an axe to workers' rights, environmental standards and social protection risks ripping out the very heart of our trade and cooperation agreement.

To the people of Northern Ireland. I want to congratulate them on a very fair agreement. Maturity and flexibility led to this deal on both sides, and what was delivered is crystal clear evidence that good-faith negotiation always beats Boris bluster.

The DUP should understand this is the best deal you will ever get, and I urge you to take responsibility, support the Windsor framework and return to Stormont so we can jump-start our new relationship as partners, as friends to ensure prosperity and security in Europe for all our citizens.

Nathalie Loiseau, *au nom du groupe Renew*. – Monsieur le Président, Monsieur le Commissaire, cher Maroš, le premier ministre britannique Rishi Sunak a salué avec enthousiasme l'accord politique de Windsor sur l'Irlande du Nord. Je le comprends, même si son enthousiasme est peut-être un peu précocé. Il faut encore que l'accord soit soutenu par le Parlement britannique et que nous-mêmes votions sur plusieurs points importants. Mais enfin, je comprends Rishi Sunak, car cet accord est susceptible de mettre fin à des années d'incertitude pour la population d'Irlande du Nord depuis le Brexit, alors même qu'une majorité de cette population avait voté pour rester dans l'Union européenne.

Cet accord va le plus loin qu'il nous soit possible d'aller. Il va même très loin pour limiter les conséquences négatives du Brexit pour les populations d'Irlande du Nord. On comprend que Rishi Sunak soit content. Dans son enthousiasme, le premier ministre britannique s'est réjoui que l'Irlande du Nord ait la chance d'avoir accès à la fois au marché britannique et au marché unique européen. Rishi Sunak a raison, mais derrière son sourire, il y a un terrible aveu. Ce qu'il vante comme une chance extraordinaire, c'est ce dont disposait tout le Royaume-Uni quand il était membre de l'Union européenne. C'est ce qu'il a perdu en la quittant.

Terry Reintke, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – Mr President, dear colleagues, this Windsor framework is good news. It is good news for the people in Northern Ireland. It is good news for the people in the whole of the UK and it is good news for the people in the European Union.

And it shines a light on the value of trustful cooperation, something that was badly missing from the negotiations between the EU and the UK, at least from some people in the past. And in the aftermath of the announcement of the agreement, Rishi Sunak actually praised the unique position of Northern Ireland being part of the UK's and the EU's market.

And I can only congratulate him for the clarity and insightfulness of his words, because yes, indeed, being part of the EU single market makes you strong. It means more prosperity, it means less red tape and it means more freedom. And, if you ask me, if we are being honest, the whole of the UK should actually benefit from these advantages and not only Northern Ireland.

Colleagues, in a world where we see aggressive autocrats trying to take more power, it is important that democracies work together, and this agreement is a step into the right direction for that.

Geert Bourgeois, *namens de ECR-Fractie*. – Voorzitter, collega's, wij zijn heel tevreden dat er eindelijk een werkbaar akkoord is voor het Noord-Iers protocol – met een kleine caveat, weliswaar, voor de Stormont-noodrem. Alle dank gaat naar commissaris Šefčovič, die het hele proces lang geduldig, flexibel en pragmatisch handelde.

Collega's, dit akkoord kan een scharniermoment zijn. Ofwel gaat het met het Britse wetsontwerp tot schrapping van EU-regelgeving de verkeerde kant op, ofwel komen we met de pragmatische eerste minister Sunak tot een hernieuwde samenwerking in veel domeinen. Ik denk aan Horizon Europe. Ik denk aan energie, migratie, klimaat en defensie. Verder, een duurzame samenwerking voor een blauwe economie in en rond de Noordzee. En tot slot, collega's, mijn stokpaardje: een trilateraal partnerschap EU/VS/VK in de Handels- en Technologieraad.

Kortom, een nieuwe invulling van een oud bondgenootschap.

Gunnar Beck, *on behalf of the ID Group*. – Mr President, Brexit proved that Article 50 is more than a dead letter and that, whatever the difficulties, it is possible to leave the EU. The Windsor Agreement too is good news to Eurosceptics. It shows that playing hardball with the EU may yield dividends. The Windsor Framework limits the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice, it creates the unique situation where Northern Ireland is partially in and partially outside the single market, certain EU rules on VAT and excise duties will still apply, but subject to exceptions governed by UK fiscal rules, while EU state aid rules are scaled back and won't apply to UK subsidies to Northern Irish farmers.

If Belfast can have tailor-made exceptions to EU rules, why not EU Member States?

More importantly, the Northern Irish Assembly will be able to veto new EU rules on customs, goods and agriculture from applying in Northern Ireland. If Belfast acquires the right to veto new EU regulation, why not full EU Member States? The Windsor Agreement proves that *à la carte* association with the EU is possible. Countries may suit themselves but also reap the benefits of free trade and wider cooperation. All such sensible arrangements require is for the EU and the French and German Governments to abandon their inflexible obsession with the uniform application of EU law and their misguided vision of an EU empire, and instead to accept that the EU should return to what it should have always been: a confederation of independent states which acknowledge their common, as well as divergent, interests.

In 2015, when I was still an academic in Britain, I chose to support Brexit. I thought Britain broadly had a good deal within the EU, but I was also convinced that the EU, led by Merkel, would press ahead with ever closer union and further down the road to economic perdition. Exactly that has happened. The EU has become the stagflation zone of the developed world.

Sadly, in Britain, the situation seems just as dismal. EU enthusiasts blame Brexit. I disagree. In fact, after Brexit, the UK Government continued to follow EU policies. It deliberately exaggerated the health risks of the corona crisis. It fell prey to climate hysteria. It failed to curb both mass migration and the woke culture, which stifles rational thinking. The UK Government has made mistakes, but outside the EU these can be corrected. The Windsor Agreement and recent attempts to reform UK asylum law are a good start.

Chris MacManus, *on behalf of The Left Group*. – Mr President, Commissioner Šefčovič, colleagues, first we want to welcome this report and to thank Pedro for all his work.

In all the arguments about checks and controls in the Irish Sea, developments about human rights have got very little attention. I'm very pleased that the report stresses the importance of Article 2 on the non-diminution of rights. The language of hostility to human rights by British Government ministers is extremely unhelpful.

Be clear, the European Convention on Human Rights is the foundation of the Good Friday Agreement. If it does come to pass that Britain leaves the Convention, they will have to put in place a system whereby those rights continue to apply in the north of Ireland.

I also welcome recognition of the importance of engagement with the Belfast Assembly. The application of parts of EU law in the north of Ireland means that their elected representatives have an important role to play in shaping laws that apply to them.

The European Parliament has an important role in engaging in dialogue with Assembly Members and other stakeholders in the North. We must formalise a direct relationship between this Parliament and the Assembly. In all the discussions about Brexit and implementation of the protocol, our priority has been to uphold the Good Friday Agreement.

The Good Friday Agreement is the constitutional framework of the north of Ireland. It gives the same legitimacy to the idea of a united Ireland as it does to the continuation of the link with Britain. The future constitutional status of Ireland is for the people of Ireland, north and south, to decide. The Good Friday Agreement has brought 25 years of peace and progress. There was never any reason to link the restoration of the institutions to the Irish Protocol.

Now that an implementation agreement has been reached in Windsor, there is an onus on the British Government to move the DUP in the coming weeks, so to restore the assembly and executive without delay. The people of the north of Ireland deserve no less.

Ernó Schaller-Baross (NI). – Mr President, first of all, thank you, Commissioner, for your very constructive words. The United Kingdom did not leave Europe by Brexit, but only the European Union. ‘Europeanness’ is not measured by membership in an organisation, but by respecting national self-determination, culture, history and constitutional tradition – a field in which the United Kingdom has always excelled.

Further to that, it was not the UK who could not keep their EU membership. The EU was unable to keep a powerful country that remained realistic compared to federalist ideas. We are sad that we lost the UK as a member state, but we respect the democratic decision of its people.

Now the UK is a natural ally of the European Union and of the European nation states. The EU should conduct a pragmatic and respectful dialogue towards the UK that is finally worthy of Europe.

David McAllister (PPE). – Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, over the past two years of relations between the United Kingdom and the European Union were shaped by challenges that have indeed emerged in the implementation of the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Particularly at a time of serious geopolitical challenges, a stable and trustful cooperation is crucial. For this reason, like many other colleagues, I welcome the Windsor framework that was announced on 27 February. This is a welcome and long-awaited step in the right direction which should allow us to open a new chapter in our relationship.

Let me congratulate Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak. The agreement shows that practical and shared solutions to the challenges in the implementation of the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland can be found. It highlights that joint efforts to find bilateral solutions to mitigate the consequences of Brexit can ensure stability and predictability for people and businesses in Northern Ireland, while at the same time maintaining the integrity of our EU single market.

The Windsor framework also reflects the EU’s long-standing commitment to protect the Belfast Good Friday Agreement in all its parts. The timely implementation of the solutions identified in the Windsor framework is key now. As the European Parliament, we will deliver on the legislative procedures as quickly as possible.

Let me also thank Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič and his team for the great work and for the excellent cooperation with Parliament. You can count on our continued support.

Domènec Ruiz Devesa (S&D). – Señor presidente, gracias al vicepresidente Maroš Šefčovič, no solo por su presencia, sino por haber negociado el Marco de Windsor, que es una norma de interpretación del Protocolo que nos permite salir de la situación en la que nos encontrábamos. Por tanto, enhorabuena. Enhorabuena también, por supuesto, a mi querido colega Pedro Silva, el ponente del informe sobre la ejecución del Acuerdo de Retirada.

Yo creo que tenemos que tener en cuenta varios elementos. En primer lugar, tal vez, seguir muy de cerca la utilización en la práctica —si es que se utiliza, que esperemos que no— del llamado freno de Stormont, porque es verdad que, hasta que no lo veamos en la práctica, no podemos calcular exactamente qué consecuencias puede tener su activación.

También aprovechar el nuevo clima, porque al fin y al cabo este es el debate de las relaciones entre la Unión Europea y el Reino Unido, para recuperar algunos elementos de cooperación que en su día —Maroš, lo recordarás— propusimos en el acuerdo sobre la relación futura, que en aquel momento el primer ministro Boris Johnson decidió retirar, como la cooperación en política exterior y de seguridad y otros elementos importantes.

También en este sentido, tenemos que expresar nuestra preocupación con la propuesta de ley migratoria que ha hecho recientemente el actual primer ministro, respecto de la que ya Ylva Johansson ha declarado que es contraria, obviamente, al Derecho internacional, dada esa intención de denegar el derecho de asilo a las personas que lleguen por el canal de la Mancha al Reino Unido, y que tiene implicaciones también en lo que respecta a nuestra política migratoria.

Barry Andrews (Renew). – Mr President, Commissioner, colleagues. First of all, congratulations to Commissioner Šefčovič and his team and to all of the interlocutors on achieving the Windsor Framework. It's a great breakthrough.

I think the next stage is patience, unfortunately, and more patience. We've demonstrated – well, you've demonstrated – towering patience, I have to say, in the face of very difficult interlocutors from time to time. But we need more patience so that the political participants in Northern Ireland can take the time to have the discussions necessary in order to fully understand and clarify the implications of this new framework that is going to create a constitutional architecture in Northern Ireland that is new. So I think we should demonstrate patience – that's really important.

There is only one Windsor Framework, but there's already a number of interpretations of the Windsor Framework. So one of the things that I will be doing in the next few months is to bring MLAs to Brussels and Strasbourg, under the heading of common understandings, so that we can proceed from a position of strength to create a prosperous future for Northern Ireland.

VORSITZ: NICOLA BEER

Vizepräsidentin

François Alfonsi (Verts/ALE). – Madame la Présidente, le Brexit a été une mauvaise décision. Elle impacte négativement l'Union européenne, tout comme elle impacte négativement le Royaume-Uni. Et, au sein du Royaume-Uni, l'Écosse, le Pays de Galles et l'Irlande du Nord subissent les conséquences les plus graves de cette décision. Je rappelle que l'Écosse et l'Irlande du Nord ont voté très largement contre le Brexit et qu'elles en subissent les conséquences contre leur volonté.

Face à cette situation négative, l'accord de retrait et l'accord de coopération commerciale tels qu'ils ont été négociés sont les meilleurs garants pour en atténuer les conséquences. Sous la direction de l'ancien premier ministre Boris Johnson, le Royaume-Uni s'était engagé dans une voie très négative. La proposition de loi interprétative des accords passés, qui avait été déposée unilatéralement par le gouvernement britannique, était un très mauvais signal. L'Accord de Windsor, qui vient d'être négocié, prévoit le retrait de ce projet de loi qui dénaturait le protocole sur l'Irlande du Nord. C'était absolument nécessaire pour établir la confiance mutuelle dans les négociations.

Les évolutions positives depuis la prise de responsabilités du nouveau premier ministre Rishi Sunak permettent, si elles se confirment, de reprendre le fil du dialogue et de prendre en compte durablement les intérêts de l'Irlande. Le rapport de notre collègue Pedro Silva Pereira a suivi de près ces évolutions. Le texte final que notre groupe va voter demain situe bien les enjeux. Aller de l'avant, reconstruire une confiance durable avec les dirigeants britanniques. Et vigilance car, qu'on le veuille ou non, la relation entre l'Union européenne et le Royaume-Uni depuis le Brexit a durablement changé de nature.

Michiel Hoogeveen (ECR). – Voorzitter, het Windsor-raamwerk is een nieuw hoofdstuk in de relaties van de EU met het Verenigd Koninkrijk. Via de groene rijbaan kunnen goederen weer vrij over de Ierse Zee verhandeld worden en vermijden wij een harde grens. Noord-Ierland kan weer dezelfde belasting heffen als de rest van het Verenigd Koninkrijk en we zullen geen berichten meer zien over lege schappen.

De vraag die zich opwerpt is waarom het allemaal zo lang heeft geduurd. Waarom ging de EU nu wel akkoord, akkoord met een deal waarvan Von der Leyen zei dat deze nooit mogelijk zou zijn? Het laat zien dat zelfs de grootste EU-federalisten de uitslag van het referendum van 2016 eindelijk hebben geaccepteerd. Het VK is onze bondgenoot, niet een opstandige provincie. Want wie heeft er nou bezwaar tegen een betere relatie met onze naaste buur en belangrijkste handelspartner?

Laat dit de start zijn van een diepe samenwerking met het Verenigd Koninkrijk, van defensieaanbestedingen en wetenschappelijk onderzoek tot gelijkwaardigheid in financiële diensten. Een goede buur is beter dan een verre vriend.

Gilles Lebreton (ID). – Madame la Présidente, chers collègues, le droit des peuples à disposer d'eux-mêmes est un droit fondamental. On ne peut pas, sans contradiction, comme l'a fait l'Union européenne, en défendre le principe tout en interdisant au peuple britannique d'en bénéficier. Le peuple britannique a décidé en 2016, par référendum, de quitter l'Union européenne. C'est son choix souverain qu'il faut respecter.

Je regrette que, comme la Commission, le Parlement européen n'ait pas cessé depuis de stigmatiser le Royaume-Uni, comme il le fait encore dans le rapport Silva Pereira. Le paragraphe deux de ce rapport affirme par exemple avec une certaine acrimonie que, je cite: «Le Brexit s'est révélé préjudiciable pour toutes les parties concernées et plus encore pour le Royaume-Uni».

Or, j'estime que le Parlement européen n'a pas à juger de ce qui est bon ou non pour ce pays. C'est là l'affaire du peuple britannique. Soyons plutôt positif et allons de l'avant. Ce qui importe, c'est de voir si l'accord de retrait de 2020 a été convenablement appliqué. À cet égard, le pessimisme du rapport me semble déplacé pour deux raisons. D'abord parce qu'il met volontairement l'accent sur les difficultés d'application plutôt que sur les succès. Les difficultés d'application étaient inévitables. Il ne fallait pas espérer qu'on arrive à régler en deux ans tous les problèmes générés par un accord de retrait aussi complexe.

Ce qui compte, c'est que les succès sont incontestables. Le Royaume-Uni a par exemple bel et bien mis en place un statut de résident permanent pour certains ressortissants de l'Union, comme il s'y était engagé. Autre exemple de succès, l'Autorité de contrôle indépendante fonctionne et a même exercé un recours devant la justice britannique, qui a débouché sur une condamnation d'une mauvaise application de l'accord par le gouvernement du Royaume-Uni.

La deuxième raison pour laquelle le pessimisme du rapport est déplacé tient au cadre de Windsor, qui vient de démentir ses sombres analyses sur l'Irlande du Nord. Cet accord gagnant-gagnant préserve le marché commun de l'Union tout en répondant aux légitimes inquiétudes du Royaume-Uni de deux façons. D'abord, en créant des corridors verts qui lui permettront d'exporter de Grande-Bretagne des marchandises destinées uniquement à l'Irlande du Nord, avec des formalités administratives réduites. Ensuite, en instituant un frein d'urgence permettant au gouvernement britannique, à la demande du Parlement de Belfast, d'empêcher l'application en Irlande du Nord de certaines nouvelles dispositions de l'Union.

Un seul point me semble en définitive encore poser problème, il porte sur la compétence de la Cour de justice de l'Union, mal acceptée par le Royaume-Uni, qu'il serait sans doute préférable de remplacer par un tribunal arbitral spécialisé sur l'Irlande du Nord.

Željana Zovko (PPE). – Madam President, it's very strange, after so many years being a student in the UK and after Erasmus also, to discuss this famous agreement that has been reached, the Windsor Agreement. Well done, Commissioner Šefčovič, to you and your team, and I hope that we will continue on this path with the other files that we have on microstates, because everyone is looking to what we are doing with the UK.

After so many years, it's quite sad that we are also discussing the peace agreement, the Good Friday Agreement, and well done to all those who contributed so that we no longer have to fear a hard border. I lived in London during the years when this instability caused many fears, and I think this is the greatest achievement that President von der Leyen has achieved with Prime Minister Rishi Sunak. This is something that we should praise at the European Parliament after the sad fact that the UK has left us.

So, on behalf of the Cult Committee, we will be doing and assessing the damage that has left on all those who are not privileged and who were beneficiaries of Erasmus exchanges. And we need to build bridges in the future with the UK, with their students and also with our young people. These damages in the future can be enormous if we don't return to Erasmus. That's something to be discussed in the future.

Bernd Lange (S&D). – Madam President, the famous movie *Belfast* and the music of Van Morrison is really giving a wonderful impression of feeling about the situation in Northern Ireland. You know from this movie, but also from the discussion we had so far, how important it is to de-escalate. Thanks a lot, Maroš, for de-escalating, for your patience, for engagement, because a trade war is really not in the interest of anybody.

Van Morrison is singing, 'Don't look back to the days of yesterday. You cannot live in the past.' I hope that this agreement is really a door open more for the future. We will have the revision of the TCA in 2025. We will discuss the Erasmus accession of the United Kingdom. We have to discuss the financial services, the fish agreement and so on.

Perhaps it's really now a better way for the future, for better cooperation between the EU and the United Kingdom. Van Morrison is singing at the beginning of the movie, 'Coming down to joy.' Perhaps we can sing along with him one day.

Sandro Gozi (Renew). – Madame la Présidente, les engagements pris doivent être tous tenus, *pacta sunt servanda*. Sur ces points, jusqu'à aujourd'hui, cher Vice-président de la Commission européenne, nous avons été fort déçus par nos amis d'outre-Manche. Grâce à l'accord de Windsor, nous pouvons tourner la page sans la déchirer. Vous avez dit *way forward*? Très bien. C'est une très bonne nouvelle, notamment pour les citoyens britanniques, qui subissent de plein fouet tous les effets négatifs du Brexit. Un point d'attention cependant.

Cela doit être une bonne nouvelle aussi pour la plus grande réalisation européenne qui est le marché unique. L'Accord de Windsor, à travers ce qu'on appelle le *Stormont brake*, donne la possibilité à 30 députés d'Irlande du Nord de s'opposer à l'application dans leur province d'une loi européenne. Il s'agit d'une procédure exceptionnelle conçue sur le modèle de l'accord de paix de 98 et qui ne peut par conséquent créer aucun précédent dans le reste du marché unique.

C'est une autre preuve bien concrète de notre volonté d'établir une nouvelle relation avec nos amis britanniques, qui doit être toujours basée sur une confiance mutuelle.

Anna Cavazzini (Verts/ALE). – Madam President, the announcement of the Windsor framework was a relief, and I can only join the colleagues who congratulated Mr Šefčovič. Thank you very much for the past years of your very patient negotiations.

I think all of us remember the last two years of political attacks against the protocol by those who negotiated and signed it on the UK side, and we lost so much time and trust. What is now on the table, I think, is really an acceptable deal. People in Northern Ireland will be able to get their English bread or frozen sausages with minimum overhead for traders. Northern Irish manufacturers will be able to get machine parts or ingredients from Great Britain and sell finished products everywhere in the UK, but also in our internal market.

Of course, simplifications require protections. And I also say this as Chair of the Internal Market Committee. The EU access to customs data and our ability to suspend some of the simplifications in case they disfunction is crucial for protecting our single market. In that sense, the new arrangements are clear improvements compared to the current situations where little or no control happened at the entry doors of our single market.

Inma Rodríguez-Piñero (S&D). – Señora presidenta, quiero empezar expresando mi satisfacción y la de mi grupo por el acuerdo alcanzado. Gracias, vicepresidente Šeřčovič, por conseguir una vía de entendimiento, por cumplir con lo acordado y superar las tensiones y desafíos derivados de la implementación del Protocolo de Irlanda del Norte. Confiemos en que la magnífica historia de cooperación entre el Reino Unido y el resto de Europa no vuelva a truncarse y continúe en el futuro.

Una vez superado el bloqueo político inicial, debemos centrarnos en mantener la coherencia regulatoria, vital para la fortaleza del mercado único europeo y británico. Sabemos que el *Brexit* y el incumplimiento de los compromisos en nada han beneficiado a la economía y la política británicas, que han sufrido un gran deterioro y desprestigio, ni a los ciudadanos, que han padecido la pérdida de empleos y el desabastecimiento de productos, fenómenos acentuados por la COVID y la guerra.

En todos ellos hay que pensar para seguir desarrollando la buena relación, coordinación y cooperación que pretende el Marco de Windsor. Y en este sentido, le pido, señor vicepresidente, si es posible, que especifiquen el nuevo mecanismo de emergencia del freno de Stormont. El Reino Unido y la Unión Europea somos aliados y amigos, y en los tiempos que corren esto es muy valioso.

Samira Rafaela (Renew). – Madam President, so I think many of us would agree still that Brexit was a strategic, political and economic mistake. It was expected to have a negative impact on our trade, on our companies, on our jobs and on our people. But we need to move forward. And therefore the Windsor framework will give now economic security for a lot of people who were waiting for this security.

So I would like to applaud also the European Commission for doing so much and putting so much effort in it, because we need to make sure that we have effective trade and economic relationships now with the UK. We need to keep working together to make sure that we can face the new geopolitical challenges in the world. And we also need to make sure that we stick to the rules.

And this is exactly why we need a framework, this is exactly why we need an agreement. I am pretty sure that we can work on sustainable trade relations, that we can work on the creation of more jobs – green, fair, responsible. But we need to make sure that we stick to the rules and that we will keep having these dialogues to make sure that we can do this together effectively with the UK.

Beatrice Covassi (S&D). – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, saluto e ringrazio anch'io il Vicepresidente Maroš Šeřčovič. È un onore prendere la parola per la prima volta in quest'Aula, da questo luogo, la casa di tutti i cittadini europei

Voglio ricordare l'importanza di difendere il nostro bene più prezioso, essere parte del progetto europeo, unica garanzia di benessere e prosperità per le generazioni future. La triste parabola della Brexit ci insegna quanto possano essere gravi e negativi gli esiti di una politica irresponsabile basata su *fake news* e un'ideologia antieuropea.

I recenti accordi di Windsor sulle regole commerciali in Irlanda del Nord rilanciano i rapporti bilaterali, dopo anni di clima negativo che ho respirato anch'io da diplomatica dell'Unione europea a Londra. Si apre, ora, una nuova pagina, ma dobbiamo rimanere vigilanti sia sui diritti dei cittadini europei nel Regno Unito, sia sugli sviluppi legislativi come il progetto di legge *Retained EU law* che rischia di creare nuove regole divergenti e barriere commerciali.

Onorevoli colleghi io farò la mia parte in qualità di membro della nuova Assemblea parlamentare EU-UK. Lavoriamo insieme per favorire il dialogo e costruire ponti in una prospettiva che vogliamo continuare a sognare come comune.

Charles Goerens (Renew). – Madame la présidente, Monsieur le Commissaire, le rapport d'exécution est à la fois une évaluation de la manière dont se sont accommodés tant le Royaume-Uni que l'Union européenne de leur séparation, et une démonstration par l'absurde d'une situation dans laquelle nous ont manoeuvrés les populistes.

En clair, le rapport confirme la situation perdant-perdant créée par le Brexit. Le Parlement européen a eu raison dès le début d'opter pour une stratégie de limitation des dégâts. Néanmoins, l'absurdité atteint son paroxysme lorsque des citoyens européens ne pouvant présenter un visa de travail aux autorités sont immobilisés dans des centres de rétention. Quelle régression! À ce stade, des comportements analogues du côté de l'Union européenne ne sont pas signalés. Espérons qu'il en sera encore ainsi pour les années à venir.

Autre preuve de la régression, la perturbation des chaînes d'approvisionnement. Au moment où l'Occident devrait faire preuve de cohésion, nous sommes davantage occupés à colmater les brèches plutôt que de nous concentrer sur les défis communs. Un dernier mot sur le *Windsor Framework*, négocié après l'adoption de notre rapport par AFCO. Cet accord tient compte des impératifs de la *realpolitik* certes. Le *Stormont brake*, toutefois, devrait rester une exception absolue, ne pouvant en aucun cas créer un précédent susceptible de polluer les débats des accords ultérieurs.

Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield (Verts/ALE). – Madam President, 20 years ago, the Good Friday Agreement was signed. This major step will be commemorated with the importance it deserves.

Sadly, for more than a year now, the Assembly in Northern Ireland has not been sitting. In its absence, citizens in Northern Ireland have struggled to access health care and financial support for energy bills. Polling shows that those in favour of restoring the Assembly in Northern Ireland and those who support the Windsor framework are young people and women. But because of the institutions not fully functioning, young people and women are also among those seriously affected by the lack of access to basic care and by inflated energy prices.

What matters most to people in Northern Ireland, as everywhere else in Europe, is everyday issues. As often is the case, when identity politics are instrumentalized and take up all the political space, it comes at the cost of people's needs. This is not only about the relationship between the EU and the UK. We also must consider the rights of citizens in Northern Ireland. The EU has a responsibility to protect the Good Friday Agreement, to prioritize the rights of citizens and to contribute to maintaining peace and democracy on the island of Ireland.

Maroš Šefčovič, Vice-President of the Commission. – Madam President, first and foremost, allow me to express my gratitude for the support you express for the Windsor Framework, for all the kind words to the teams and to myself. I cannot underscore how important it was to feel the support of this House, to be absolutely clear that we have unified European support, of all the institutions, the Member States, the pursuit of the best possible solution in the negotiations with the UK, and to be able to contact you, to be in touch with you and also to share with you the negative and positive news, because we had them quite a lot over the last two years.

I think that today we are all referring to a very important achievement, represented in the Windsor Framework. But before I get to that, I would just like to respond to one of the first interventions we heard today, from Mr Jahr and Ms Hübner, because it concerns our citizens and I know their rights are important to you. I would like to assure you that they are very, very important for us as well. To make it clear: if it comes to the issue of pre-settled to settled status, it was rightly pointed out that the UK High Court has ruled that this formality was unlawful. And the Commission, as you know, has joined these proceedings next to the UK Independent Monitoring Authority. The good news is that the UK Home Office will not appeal this decision and will implement the ruling, as Ms Hübner just said. And I think this is the good news, but we know that there are still some issues which need our vigilant approach. They will have it, and I can assure you that, for us, the rights of citizens will always remain a priority.

Several honourable Members have been saying that this new way forward in the frame of the new Windsor Framework will allow us to open a new chapter in our EU-UK relationship and that this would be a relationship which will be based on mutual trust. This was expressed by Ms Reintke and Ms Loiseau. I believe that this relationship will be driven by cooperation, which is rightfully so important for two such important neighbours, partners, allies and trade partners as well. And I think that through this common approach and through that new way of resolving the issues, we are creating new opportunities and, I hope, a prosperous future also for Northern Ireland, because we've been working very hard on how we can even improve and make stronger the involvement of the Northern Ireland stakeholders in the dealings of the Protocol. I think that from the last year of getting familiar with the day-to-day issues, understanding better the demands, the problems, the issues which need to be solved, this has been very helpful for the last, very important chapters of these negotiations. I believe that through close cooperation with the UK Government, we found the right responses to these issues. And I believe that this new approach, the joint solution and this close cooperation, will also guide us when we discuss new areas for future cooperation. Mr Kelly, Mr Bourgeois, Mr Lange, Ms Covassi just highlighted some of the areas where close allies and good neighbours should go, and we would of course explore all of

them.

I would like to thank Ms Cavazzini for highlighting the importance of the Windsor Framework, but also for underscoring the importance of the single market and the fact that what we did was to look for new modern technology for data-sharing, for the possibility of remote checks, to really look for out-of-the-box solutions which would guarantee, on the one hand, the integrity of the single market and, on the other, would do it in an efficient way. I believe that we have achieved that.

To conclude, once again, I would like to thank all the colleagues in the House for their close cooperation, for their support. I would like to thank Mr Pereira for his report. Of course, our relationship with the United Kingdom is massive, so I am sure there will be a lot of issues to talk about. There will be a lot of discussions about the future cooperation, and I am very much looking forward to it. But thank you very much for all your supportive remarks.

Pedro Silva Pereira, rapporteur. – Madam President, I thank you and our colleagues for your support and the shadow rapporteurs for their cooperation. Despite the continuous resentment of some Eurosceptics here and radical Brexiteers on the other side of the channel, the positive tone of this debate shows that for this Parliament, time is come for cooperation, not confrontation.

Building on our common history and on our common values, we must be able to build with the UK a strong partnership to meet the common challenges we face from the war in Ukraine, the related challenges on defence, security and geopolitical issues, the energy crisis, the supply chain disruptions, climate change, migration, you name it.

The confrontation against the EU is not only dangerous for the stability in Northern Ireland, it is also simply absurd from the point of view of our common economic interests. So I hope that in the near future we can talk a little bit more about the Trade and Cooperation agreement and a bit less about the withdrawal agreement.

For that to happen, of course, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has to secure sufficient political support in the UK and probably also in Northern Ireland. But one thing is certain: this is a great opportunity, it cannot be wasted.

Die Präsidentin. – Die gemeinsame Aussprache ist geschlossen.

Die Abstimmung findet morgen, Mittwoch, 15. März 2023, statt.

Schriftliche Erklärungen (Artikel 171 GO)

Sara Cerdas (S&D), por escrito. – Três anos após a entrada em vigor do Acordo de Saída do Reino Unido, o Parlamento Europeu apresenta o primeiro balanço sobre a sua implementação, incluindo o recente acordo-quadro de Windsor.

Desde o Acordo de Saída que os direitos dos cidadãos sempre foram uma prioridade para o Parlamento Europeu. Este tem manifestado preocupação sobre a falta de apoio a pessoas vulneráveis com dificuldades em gerir os procedimentos digitais estabelecidos pelas autoridades do Reino Unido. Verifica-se que um número elevado de cidadãos da UE apenas obtiveram o chamado «estatuto pré-estabelecido», e que terão de candidatar-se novamente para regularizar o seu estatuto de residente permanente, o que pode conduzir a uma «perda automática e ilegal dos seus direitos». Esta situação afeta milhares de cidadãos provenientes de países como Portugal, em especial das regiões ultraperiféricas, que se fixaram no território britânico à procura de trabalho.

Melhorias importantes ainda precisam ser feitas para salvaguardar os direitos dos cidadãos, em especial para disponibilizar maior segurança jurídica aos cidadãos da UE e do Reino Unido e às suas famílias.

László Trócsányi (NI), *írásban*. – Már elmúlt három éve, hogy az Egyesült Királyság elhagyta az európai integrációt. A szigetország hiányát gyakran érezzük, azonban állampolgárai demokratikusan meghozott döntését fájdalommal tiszteletben tartjuk. A kilépés óta eltelt évek számos nehézséget hoztak magukkal. Nem csak egy tagállam elvesztése, de újabb és újabb kihívások tették próbára az Európai Uniót. A tárgyalt jelentés célja az említett három év tapasztalatainak áttekintése lenne. A reflexió lehetővé tenné, hogy levonjuk a következtetéseket az új együttműködés gyakorlati vonatkozásairól, illetve hogy megtaláljuk a módját annak, hogy miképp tudunk ebben a nehéz helyzetben is a korábbi feszültségek ellenére szorosabban együttműködni.

Sajnálatos, hogy a jelentéstevő szándéka jelentősen eltér az Egyesült Királyság és az Európai Unió közötti jó kapcsolatok ápolásától. Miközben a Bizottság konstruktív tárgyalásos megállapodásra jutott az Egyesült Királyság kormányával, az Európai Parlament pártpolitikai okokból kárhoztatja a szigetországot. Ahelyett, hogy a Parlament örömmel üdvözlölné az északír jegyzőkönyvvel kapcsolatos elvi politikai megállapodás megszületését és az Unió és az Egyesült Királyság közötti feszültségek tárgyalásos úton való rendezését, a Parlament kritikákat fogalmaz meg az Egyesült Királysággal szemben és akadályozza a nézeteltérések békés rendezését. Az Európai Parlament – mint általában – tanári szerepben szeretne tündökölni ahelyett, hogy ebben az esetben a hallgatás lehetőségéhez folyamodott volna.

Tom Vandenkendelaere (PPE), *schriftelijk*. – Onder voorbehoud van verwachte bevestiging door de Raad, maakt het akkoord dat onlangs werd bereikt tussen de Europese Commissie en de Britse regering – het zogenaamde Windsor-kader – de volledige uitvoering van het terugtrekkingsakkoord en de handels- en samenwerkingsovereenkomst mogelijk. We juichen dit akkoord toe. Het opent vele perspectieven voor de nieuwe betrekkingen tussen de EU en het VK. De handels- en samenwerkingsovereenkomst heeft immers veel potentieel, dat in het belang van beide partners zo goed mogelijk moet worden aangesproken, weliswaar met inachtneming van twee rode lijnen die door de Commissie werden verwoord: de overeenkomst mag zelf niet worden veranderd en er kunnen geen nieuwe initiatieven worden genomen die niet reeds voorzien zijn in de overeenkomst.

Ik ben erg ingenomen met de uitzondering die in toepassing van deze laatste regel wordt gemaakt voor een bijkomende structurele samenwerking op het gebied van buitenlands beleid, met inbegrip van veiligheids- en defensiebeleid. Het belang hiervan heb ik al meermaals beklemtoond, en dat daar nu de nodige bedding voor wordt gecreëerd, verdient alle aandacht en ondersteuning. In het licht van de huidige geopolitieke context en van de uitdagingen en dreigingen waar we op wereldschaal mee worden geconfronteerd, spreekt dit initiatief duidelijk genoeg voor zichzelf.

20. Ir-relazzjonijiet UE-Armenja (dibattitu)

Die Präsidentin. – Als nächster Punkt der Tagesordnung folgt die Aussprache über den Bericht von Andrey Kovatchev im Namen des Ausschusses für auswärtige Angelegenheiten über die Beziehungen zwischen der EU und Armenien (2021/2230(INI)) (A9-0036/2023).

Andrey Kovatchev, *rapporteur*. – Madam President, dear colleagues, Commissioner, tomorrow in the context of the ongoing three-month long blockade of the Lachin corridor, we will vote in the European Parliament on the report on EU-Armenia relations. I have proposed amendments to reflect the cutting of this vital connection with Armenia, which is worsening the humanitarian crisis for the population of Nagorno-Karabakh.

I urge Azerbaijan to take all possible measures to ensure unrestricted movement of persons, vehicles and cargo along the Lachin corridor in both directions. This is the decision also taken by the International Court of Justice on 22 February this year.

In addition to this first comment, the report we are going to vote on tomorrow transmits a number of important messages. We reiterate the principles of the United Nations Charter and the OSCE Helsinki Final Act, namely the non-use of force, the territorial integrity and the equal rights of self-determination of people. Only the full respect of all these principles can lead to a peaceful resolution of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

I am very sad to see that the Minsk Group failure to lead for a reliable solution. We stick for decades to the format and we must finally admit its failure. Two of the main principles of this basic principle were violated. Force was used and there was no will to respect the self-determination of people.

We cannot consider Russia as a fair facilitator, but only as a regime that wants to keep and increase Armenia's dependence on it for as long as possible. In the report, we call on Armenia to consider diversifying its security partnership and move away from its reliance on Russia, where Putin's regime has demonstrated it cannot be a trusted partner.

I welcome the establishment of the EU mission in Armenia after a successful EU monitoring capacity between 20 October and 19 December 2022. To make full use of the strong EU engagement, I would like to urge Azerbaijan to allow the EU mission access to its side of the border as well. This is an important confidence-building step between the two countries. A key element is a reliable international guarantee for the future of the Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh, in the area of security, social life, religious freedom, education, among others.

The other important aspects for a peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan are: the process of border delimitation and demarcation; the signature of a peace treaty; the establishment of a transport link between Lachin and the western regions of Azerbaijan; the release of all remaining Armenian prisoners, both military and civilians; the prevention of any future destruction of cultural heritage; and the agreement to refrain from using hate speech and violent rhetoric, especially at the highest level of state and government.

It is important also to mention and welcome the steps towards normalisation of relations between Armenia and Turkey, including through the act of solidarity of Armenia in relation to the tragic earthquake which hit Turkey and Syria on 6 February. In the text of the report, we also welcome the entry into force of the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement and encourage Armenia to continue working towards its full implementation.

We also note the progress made by Armenia in reforming the judiciary, carrying out constitutional and police reform, as well as working together with the EU on a wide range of fields of cooperation with Europol, the European Migration Network, Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, Creative Europe. We call for the completion of the process of visa liberalisation between the EU and Armenia in order to support people-to-people contacts, closer bilateral ties and reform processes.

The section on human rights and fundamental freedoms includes provision of gender equality, combating violence against women and protection of LGBTIQ community. I would like also to raise another point related to members of the opposition parties in Armenia. It is always questionable when members of the opposition are denied the possibility to participate in meetings of the European parties to which they are affiliated.

Let me finish by thanking my colleagues for the great cooperation on this report, and I look forward to a fruitful discussion today.

Olívér Várhelyi, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, honourable Members of this House, let me thank the rapporteur, Mr Kovatchev, and all the Members who have contributed to the report on EU-Armenia relations that we are discussing today.

Your report provides a good overview of the challenges the country faces. Armenia is a country that has suffered double crises: the 2020 war and the COVID pandemic. Moreover, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Armenia finds itself in a difficult position, having to rely for its security on a country that is carrying out an unprovoked aggression against its neighbour.

In this context, Armenia is looking towards the European Union as a fundamental partner. Given steady progress on reforms in democracy, fundamental freedoms, rule of law, and the fight against corruption, Armenia deserves our full support. Our Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement is the blueprint for Armenia's domestic reforms agenda. It has now been fully enforced for over two years. The Economic and Investment plan has the potential to mobilise around EUR 2.6 billion in private investments. It is already delivering in Armenia through developing green connectivity, energy efficiency, as well as supporting SMEs and socio-economic development. Of course, as your report rightly points out, much still needs to be done when it comes to the functioning of the justice sector, the fight against discrimination, gender equality, but also protection of vulnerable groups and to tackle foreign disinformation. We have an in-depth, regular dialogue with the Armenian authorities on all these issues.

The report also calls to further enhance EU Armenia economic and trade relations. The EU-Armenia, but also Armenia-Russia trade flows have increased several fold since the EU imposed additional sanctions on Russia. While we welcome our more intensive exchanges with Armenia, due to its geographic location it is also one of the partner countries with which we intend to cooperate more closely with the aim to prevent the circumvention of sanctions.

The EU is also actively involved in facilitating dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan. We remain committed to continue acting as an honest broker to help achieve the common goal of a secure, prosperous and peaceful South Caucasus for the benefit of all of its people. The President of the European Council, supported by the EEAS and our special representative has personally invested in this. We also have regular contacts with the ministers of foreign affairs of both countries on this.

The leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan should use the historic opportunity to solve this conflict for good and return to the substantial dialogue, as many important questions need still to be solved urgently. One such urgent issue is the obstruction of movement in the Lachin corridor. Since the beginning of December, the EU has mobilised all diplomatic efforts to solve this situation. The ongoing restrictions to freedom of movement and to the supply of vital goods are causing serious distress for the local population. As the deadly incident of the 5 March showed, the situation in this area is flammable.

Finally, I would like to mention the fully-fledged civilian CSDP mission that the EU has established in Armenia since January. Among others, the mission observes and reports on the security situation on the ground. This is yet another concrete and essential element in the EU's effort to support the peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

François-Xavier Bellamy, *au nom du groupe PPE*. – Madame la Présidente, Monsieur le Commissaire, chers collègues, le peuple arménien traverse aujourd'hui une menace existentielle. Ce soir, cela fait 92 jours, 92 jours que les Arméniens du Haut-Karabakh doivent vivre sans pouvoir sortir de leur enclave, privés de tout, privés d'alimentation, de ravitaillement, de gaz pour se chauffer, privés d'éducation pour leurs enfants. 92 jours que le monde reste bien silencieux. Et l'Europe en particulier.

Évidemment, les choses se sont améliorées grâce au travail qui a précédé ce rapport. Nous condamnons avec fermeté, le Parlement le dit clairement, cette menace existentielle organisée par l'Azerbaïdjan un siècle après un génocide que le dictateur azéri continue encore de nier, un siècle après un génocide, il est temps que l'Europe se tienne aux côtés du peuple arménien.

La mission européenne, vous l'avez dit, Monsieur le Commissaire, envoyée pour protéger les frontières de l'Arménie, pour vérifier qu'elles ne seront plus l'objet de ces infractions répétées, de ces attaques meurtrières, cette mission est aussi un signe que l'Europe prend conscience de sa responsabilité. Mais il faut aller plus loin. Tout n'a pas été fait. Et il est temps enfin de sanctionner le régime azéri qui se rend coupable de ces crimes contre le droit international et les principes essentiels de l'humanité.

Chers collègues, lorsque nous disons cela, on nous accuse parfois de défendre l'Arménie, de défendre un camp contre un autre. Mais nous ne défendons pas l'Arménie, nous défendons la justice, nous défendons les principes du droit international, nous défendons la sécurité de l'Europe elle-même. Car si ces principes sont mis à mal, alors nous sommes tous en danger. Ce n'est pas nous qui défendons l'Arménie, c'est l'Arménie qui défend tout ce à quoi nous tenons et nous lui devons bien ce soutien qu'il est temps enfin de lui apporter clairement.

Robert Hajšel, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – Madam President, dear Commissioner, several times already we have strongly condemned large-scale military aggression by Azerbaijan against Armenian people. Now we have to urge both sides of the conflict, especially Azerbaijani authorities, to respect the principle of territorial integrity and to refrain from any hostile rhetoric. We call on both sides to proceed without any further delay with the negotiation on a peace treaty towards reaching long and lasting, sustainable peace.

The ongoing blockade of Lachin corridors since last December is complicated, but it's more than complicating the lives of 100 000 people in the region. The most recent deadly incident, ten days ago, contributed to further escalation and requires proper investigation. Immediate action from Azerbaijani authorities is needed to remove any obstacles in freedom of movement along the corridor.

I hope that the recent deployment of a new EU mission to Armenia with a stronger mandate will contribute to peace and stability in the region. I fully understand Armenia's challenging geopolitical situation, but many challenges stand in front of the courageous Armenian people in the upcoming years, especially in terms of reforms. I hope that it will be the EU and not Turkey or Russia or Iran who will play a more active role in the region in the upcoming years, and that we can continue with the deepening of a constructive cooperation.

Nathalie Loiseau, *au nom du groupe Renew*. – Madame la Présidente, depuis plus de 90 jours, l'Azerbaïdjan bloque l'accès au Haut-Karabakh, coupant du monde 120 000 personnes. La Cour internationale de justice a enjoint à l'Azerbaïdjan de mettre fin au blocus. Il n'en a rien fait. Depuis sept mois, les troupes de Bakou occupent des terres arméniennes. La mission d'observation de l'Union européenne s'est déployée, mais les villageois arméniens sont inquiets.

Et pourtant, le gouvernement d'Erevan a proposé un plan de paix au président de l'Azerbaïdjan, qui a répondu par de nouvelles menaces. Depuis 1915, la Turquie refuse de reconnaître le génocide des Arméniens. De plus, le régime d'Ankara aide celui de Bakou. Et pourtant, dès les premiers jours qui ont suivi le terrible séisme qu'a connu la Turquie, l'Arménie y a envoyé de l'aide.

Depuis 2020, la Russie est censée venir en aide à l'Arménie et pourtant elle ne fait rien. Sans doute, le choix démocratique de l'Arménie déplaît à Moscou. Parler de l'Arménie, c'est parler trop souvent de ce qui la menace. On devrait aussi parler de son courage. On devrait surtout moins parler et agir davantage pour aider un pays qui regarde vers nous et qui a besoin de nous.

Viola von Cramon-Taubadel, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – Mr President, Commissioner, dear colleagues, Armenia is a remarkable European country surrounded by foes, geographically isolated, and struggling with an armed conflict, losing lives every day, and still its democracy is thriving. However, Armenia's bright future will be built on the shaky ground of its tragic past and a difficult present. As an eye-for-an-eye leaves everyone behind, there is no other option for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict but a peaceful solution. We cannot abandon the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh who are under constant threat of ethnic cleansing. Atrocities of the past can never justify atrocity in the future. Armenians and Azerbaijanis need to relearn how to live peacefully, and the EU is here to help to rebuild bridges and trust. Armenians understand perfectly that the Russian led CSTO only serves Russia and nobody else. It isn't in Putin's interest to see a peaceful Caucasus. All he wants is a military excuse to keep his boots on the ground in Armenia and Azerbaijan. If peace in the Caucasus is what Putin is afraid of, then it is peace he should get. Thank you very much to our rapporteur and all the shadows who had contributed to this report.

Charlie Weimers, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Madam President, firstly, I would like to congratulate the rapporteur on an excellent report which clearly distinguishes between aggressor and victim.

Azerbaijan's hostile acts continue unabated. The reopening of the Lachin corridor, blockaded by so-called environmental activists from Azerbaijan, is paramount. Baku insists that 'the legitimate demands of the representative of the Azerbaijani civil society should be heard and fulfilled.'

Colleagues, don't be fooled. There is no thing as a civil society independent from the state in an authoritarian dictatorship. In light of the Russia-led CSTO abandonment of Armenia, I welcome Armenia's commitment to CEPA as well as the EU civilian mission.

Colleagues, I stand with justice and peace. I stand with Armenia.

Gilles Lebreton, *au nom du groupe ID*. – Madame la Présidente, monsieur le Commissaire, chers collègues, le conflit dans la région du Haut-Karabakh doit être résolu par la diplomatie et non par les armes. L'Azerbaïdjan doit mettre fin à ses actes de blocus et de harcèlement et privilégier la négociation que lui propose l'Arménie. Un traité de paix est à portée de main si l'Azerbaïdjan accepte d'accorder des garanties raisonnables pour assurer la sécurité et les droits des Arméniens du Haut-Karabakh.

Ces garanties pourraient notamment inclure l'établissement d'une zone démilitarisée autour de cette région ou une présence internationale dans le territoire peuplé d'Arméniens. Il est regrettable que l'Azerbaïdjan considère que la question des droits et de la sécurité des Arméniens vivant dans le Haut-Karabakh relève exclusivement de ses affaires intérieures. Cette attitude intransigeante confirme hélas les craintes des services de renseignement américains qui pensent que ce pays s'apprête à lancer une nouvelle offensive militaire contre l'Arménie, comme elle l'a déjà fait en septembre dernier. C'est aussi ce que pense le premier ministre de l'Arménie, qui vient aujourd'hui même d'inviter les observateurs de l'Union européenne à la vigilance dans l'espoir de l'éviter.

Face à cette situation, les États membres de l'Union européenne doivent apporter sans ambiguïté leur soutien à l'Arménie, qui est ici la victime contre l'Azerbaïdjan, qui est l'agresseur. C'est d'autant plus nécessaire que le peuple arménien est historiquement et culturellement un peuple européen qui s'est battu vaillamment contre l'expansionnisme de l'Empire ottoman et qui a payé très cher son esprit de résistance. Victime d'un génocide de la part des Turcs en 1915, il est ensuite passé sous le joug soviétique. Redevenue indépendante en 1991 à la chute de l'URSS, l'Arménie ne doit pas être abandonnée par l'Union européenne face à l'offensive de l'Azerbaïdjan soutenue par la Turquie. La solidarité européenne doit jouer au profit de l'Arménie.

Hervé Juvin (NI). – Madame la présidente, Monsieur le Commissaire, merci de cette session qui traite un sujet majeur. Les Arméniens sont inquiets. Dans ce Parlement qui se mobilise massivement en faveur de l'Ukraine, la rhétorique militaire de l'Azerbaïdjan est insupportable.

Elle est insupportable parce qu'en effet, l'Arménie regarde vers l'Europe. Les liens culturels, les liens sociétaux, les liens historiques avec l'Europe sont majeurs. Dans le même temps, nous devons refuser toute hypocrisie. J'entends beaucoup parler du gaz de l'Azerbaïdjan. Nous ne nous faisons pas d'illusions. Le gaz de l'Azerbaïdjan, c'est du gaz russe. Et les relations que certains pays européens veulent développer avec l'Azerbaïdjan, c'est un excellent moyen de contourner les sanctions contre la Russie.

Ne nous faisons pas non plus d'illusions, si l'Union européenne le reconnaît, de grands pays mondiaux comme la Grande-Bretagne ne reconnaissent pas le génocide arménien. Il est urgent aujourd'hui de considérer que la tentation et la volonté de l'Azerbaïdjan de créer un corridor à Syunik avec la Turquie est une menace de nature géopolitique pour l'Europe.

Nous devons muscler notre corps d'observateurs qui doivent faire face à la défaillance des *peacekeepers* russes. Nous devons renforcer le soutien à une Arménie où des centaines de milliers d'Arméniens craignent pour leur survie au quotidien et sont menacés de ce que nous redoutons pour l'Ukraine.

Tomislav Sokol (PPE). – Poštovana predsjedavajuća, gospodine izvjestitelju, kolegice i kolege, izvršna dimenzija europske politike susjedstva oduvijek je poseban naglasak stavljala na odnose s Armenijom.

U tom pogledu važno je pohvaliti Armeniju zbog važnih reformi i temeljitog postupka demokratizacije provedenog u posljednjih nekoliko godina, čime je postala predvodnik regije u području demokratizacije. S druge strane, sigurnost, pa i sam opstanak Armenije okružene uglavnom neprijateljski raspoloženim susjedima trenutno su na kocki. Još uvijek se osjećaju posljedice obnove sukoba u Gorskom Karabahu 2020., uključujući golemo uništavanje armenske povijesne kulturne baštine. U rujnu 2022., Azerbajdžan je poduzeo veliki napad na međunarodno priznato područje Armenije koji je ostavio velike ljudske žrtve i materijalnu štetu. Od prosinca prošle godine blokiran je civilni promet Lačinskim koridorom između Armenije i Gorskog Karabaha, što ugrožava dostavu hrane i drugih ljudskih potrepština na ovo područje.

Dame i gospodo, Europa se mora puno aktivnije nego što je to bilo do sada uključiti u ovo područje te pružati gospodarsku, ali i svaku drugu pomoć koja je Armeniji potrebna. U suprotnom, Rusija će ponovno u potpunosti preuzeti ulogu zaštitnika Armenije i to iskoristiti za nametanje vlastite hegemonije u kavkaskoj regiji. Dame i gospodo, dragi kolegice i kolege, Armeniji treba konkretna pomoć a ne riječi.

Marina Kaljurand (S&D). – Madam President, Commissioner, colleagues. First of all, I would like to thank our rapporteur and congratulate him for this report.

As the Chair of the South Caucasus delegation, I would like to highlight some points.

Firstly, the deployment of the European Union mission in Armenia is a very important step for the security of the region and a significant contribution to further engagement of the EU in the South Caucasus.

Secondly, I appreciate Armenia's commitment to the CEPA Agreement and recognise Armenian achievements, including judicial reforms, the anti-corruption strategy and media freedom. At the same time, a lot remains to be done, including on protection of minorities, the LGBTQ community and gender equality.

Thirdly, I would like to reiterate that the EU's Eastern Partnership policy is tailor-made and based on the 'more for more' principle. The future of EU-Armenia relations depends on Armenia's political choices and commitments, some of which could be very challenging, including the customs union with Russia and Belarus and the CSTO.

Finally, I hope that constructive peace talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan will finally start.

Anna Fotyga (ECR). – Madam President, Commissioner, a country perpetrator of a crime of aggression, war crimes and genocide – ironically, genocide – serves as peacekeeper in a long-standing conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, always, for decades, willing to ignite it in order to divert our attention from its own crimes. It is good that NATO and important allies like the US engage this year in forging dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan, also counting on our positive, constructive contribution to this. It is of utmost importance to know that no security guarantees by Russia to Armenia may contribute to solving this conflict. Both countries are our partners and we have to support them.

Gianna Gancia (ID). – Signora Presidente, signor Commissario, onorevoli colleghi, oggi discutiamo della relazione UE-Armenia e della situazione in Nagorno-Karabakh. Come giustamente sottolineato nella risoluzione, Stato di diritto, diritti umani e libertà fondamentali sono valori comuni di democrazia e l'Unione europea deve ancora affrontare alcune questioni importanti riguardanti la stabilità e la sicurezza della regione.

È preoccupante constatare la mancanza di leadership dimostrata dall'Unione europea durante e subito dopo la guerra del 2020. Siamo qui per promuovere una regione del Caucaso meridionale sicura, stabile, pacifica e prospera, e l'Unione europea deve assumersi la responsabilità di essere un attore importante in questo processo.

La situazione del Nagorno Karabakh rimane precaria con il blocco del corridoio di Lachin che rappresenta un grave ostacolo per la libertà di movimento e la sicurezza umana nella regione. In conclusione, l'Unione europea deve fare tutto il possibile per promuovere la sicurezza e la stabilità nella regione meridionale.

Bert-Jan Ruissen (ECR). – Voorzitter, geachte commissaris, beste collega's, als een van de oudste landen ter wereld heeft Armenië een zeer rijke historie. Met een bevolking die gevormd is door het christendom. Maar ook een bevolking die lijdt. Het conflict rond Nagorno-Karabach trekt immers diepe sporen.

De Armeniërs daar wordt het leven nagenoeg onmogelijk gemaakt. Ze leven er in volstrekte isolatie, zeker nu de enige toegang tot het gebied wordt geblokkeerd door Azerbeidzjan. En de Russische zogenaamde vredesmacht, ze staat erbij en kijkt ernaar.

Voorzitter, wij mogen niet langer lijdzaam toezien. De uitbreiding van de Europese waarnemingsmissie is een eerste goede stap. Het is nu zaak dat deze missie ook toegang krijgt tot de Azerbeidzjaanse zijde van de grens.

Ik roep Azerbeidzjan op de blokkade van de Lachin-corridor per direct op te heffen. En tegelijkertijd, voorzitter, benadruk ik het belang van een vreedzame politieke schikking van het conflict. De EU kan daarin een belangrijke bemiddelende rol vervullen.

Spontane Wortmeldungen

Costas Mavrides (S&D). – Madam President, first of all, I extend my congratulations to the rapporteur for this impartial report.

In January of this year, we had a long discussion in this plenary session regarding the blockade of a large corridor by the Azerbaijanis against 120 000 Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh, including 30 000 children, with no medicine, no food and no schooling. Since then, in February, we had the binding International Court of Justice order that requires Azerbaijan to take all measures at its disposal to ensure unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles and cargo along the Lachin corridor. What has Azerbaijan done? Nothing. As long as Azerbaijan continues to blockade this corridor, does not respect international law, does not respect Armenian culture and religious heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh, we cannot consider Azerbaijan a reliable partner. But also this: it is a regime committing crimes against Armenians and against humanity.

Ангел Джамбазки (ЕСР). – Г-жо Председател, колеги, Европейският съюз и Европейският парламент дължат незабавно осъждане на блокадата на Азербайджан, която е наложена над Лачинския коридор. Тази блокада се явява продължение на една системна антиарменска политика, датираща още от 1915 г. По съществу си е продължение на геноцида, извършван над храбрия и първи европейски и християнски арменски народ от Османската империя и от младотурския преврат след 1915 г.

Това, което се случва там, е истински позор и Европейският парламент, Европейският съюз и Европейската комисия във Ваше лице, г-н Комисар, не може да продължава да си играе с Азербайджан. Не може да се правим, че не виждаме нарушаването на човешките права, блокадата, липсата на медицински услуги, притискането на тези хора там, защото те били от другата страна или защото сме имали геополитически интереси. Нали тук говорим, че геополитическият интерес е защита на всяко право на всеки един човек, защита на всяко едно човешко право на самоопределение. Аз лично вярвам, че както Арарат, така и Арцах, исторически арменски, някога пак ще бъдат. Но за целта тук, за да няма позор този парламент, това е Ваше задължение, трябва да бъде свалена тази блокада.

(Ende der spontanen Wortmeldungen)

Olívér Várhelyi, Member of the Commission. – Madam President, I want to thank the rapporteur and all Members who have contributed to the report. And, of course, we are very happy to see such great support emerging for Armenia. We are also very happy to hear how much commitment is taken towards post-conflict stabilisation, both in terms of relations between the two, but also in terms of Europe having the need to participate in the peacekeeping exercise as well. This is why our CSDP mission is, I hope, only a first step. Through this, we will contribute to the stabilisation of the entire region.

Andrey Kovatchev, rapporteur. – Madam President, Commissioner, dear colleagues, I hear your voice and I share your sadness about the decades-long non-resolution of this conflict causing so much suffering for all people in the region. This is a failure not only of the Minsk Group co-chairs, but of the entire international community. For a long time we left the initiative to Putin, and his only goal is to increase his influence in the region and the dependence of the state of Armenia by Russia.

I share the view of all of you that we should support much stronger EU involvement as a facilitator and mediator of the peaceful resolution of this terrible current situation. The key points are: immediate de-blocking of the Lachin corridor, effective guarantees for the Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh; a peace treaty between both sides, with all the elements we counted before.

But the most important thing is that the people in the region should have a peaceful future, should invest in their education, in their career, and not in weapons and not in fight and not in hate and not in discrimination.

I call again on Azerbaijan to de-block the Lachin corridor and a serious, effective, fruitful peace treaty with Armenia.

Die Präsidentin. – Die Aussprache ist geschlossen.

Die Abstimmung findet morgen, Mittwoch, 15. März 2023, statt.

Schriftliche Erklärungen (Artikel 171 GO)

Fabio Massimo Castaldo (NI), *per iscritto*. – Cari colleghi, ritengo che non si possa continuare a fare appelli ad entrambe le parti in conflitto, mantenendo una postura equidistante, quando i comportamenti degli attori in causa sono diametralmente opposti.

Da un lato abbiamo, l'Armenia, che ha sempre dimostrato un approccio propositivo ai tavoli negoziali, facendo aperture e dando il consenso alla presenza della nostra missione civile sul suo territorio nazionale. Dall'altra parte abbiamo l'Azerbaijan, che facendosi forte del supporto di stati autoritari come Turchia e Russia, e sfruttando appieno le latitanze della nostra Unione, mira a massimizzare, manu militari, i suoi vantaggi al tavolo negoziale.

È evidente che esiste un parallelismo tra quanto sta accadendo in Ucraina e nel Caucaso, con l'invasione da parte di uno stato autoritario ai danni di una democrazia, ma è altrettanto evidente come, in quest'ultimo caso, i nostri principi e valori stiano venendo sacrificati sull'altare della realpolitik.

Eppure, cari colleghi, dovremmo svincolarci dalla logica dei doppi standard che accompagna troppo spesso il nostro operato. I nostri principi e valori non sono in vendita, e non dovrebbero esistere quantità di risorse energetiche che possano mettere in discussione questa certezza, altrimenti che cosa resterebbe della nostra Unione?

Λουκάς Φουρλάς (PPE), *γραπτώς*. – Η αγωνία μου για το μέλλον στο Ναγκόρνο Καραμπάχ εντείνεται, καθώς η αστάθεια που δημιουργείται από τον αποκλεισμό του ζωτικής σημασίας διαδρόμου του Λατσίν δημιουργεί τεράστια προβλήματα. Τόσο η εισβολή των Αζέρων όσο και η υφιστάμενη κατάσταση στον διάδρομο του Λατσίν έγινε και γίνεται υπό τις ευλογίες του Ερντογάν. Προκειμένου να εξυπηρετήσει τα δικά του συμφέροντα και να παραμείνει στην καρέκλα της εξουσίας, δεν διστάζει να παίξει με τις ζωές δεκάδων χιλιάδων ανθρώπων. Η σχέση των ηγετών των δύο χωρών, τόσο της Τουρκίας όσο και του Αζερμπαϊτζάν είναι στενότατη, μιας και πρόκειται για δικτάτορες που καταπιέζουν τους ίδιους τους λαούς τους. Κάτι τέτοιο, δεν μπορεί να είναι άλλο ανεκτό. Το Διεθνές Δικαστήριο της Χάγης διέταξε το Αζερμπαϊτζάν να λάβει όλα τα μέτρα που διαθέτει για να διασφαλίσει την ανεμπόδιστη κυκλοφορία προσώπων, οχημάτων και εμπορευμάτων κατά μήκος του διαδρόμου του Λατσίν. Εκ μέρους της ΕΕ υπάρχει ενδιαφέρον για την ενεργοποίηση κοινών προσπάθειών, ώστε να αντιμετωπιστεί αποτελεσματικά και συνολικά το ανθρωπιστικό ζήτημα. Ωστόσο, δεν μπορώ να μην υπογραμμίσω ότι, όσο συνεχίζονται οι συγκρούσεις είτε είναι μικρές και τοπικές είτε μεγάλες σε κλίμακα, η εξεύρεση λύσεων σε τέτοιου είδους ζητήματα δυσχεραίνει. Γι' αυτόν ακριβώς τον λόγο η ΕΕ πρέπει να δείξει άμεσα αποφασιστικότητα και ενότητα.

21. Ir-relazzjonijiet UE-Ażerbajġan (dibattitu)

Die Präsidentin. – Als nächster Punkt der Tagesordnung folgt die Aussprache über den Bericht von Željana Zovko im Namen des Ausschusses für auswärtige Angelegenheiten über die Beziehungen zwischen der EU und Aserbaidschan (2021/2231(INI)) (A9-0037/2023).

Željana Zovko, *rapporteur*. – Madam President, dear Commissioner, this is the first comprehensive European Parliament report on EU-Azerbaijan relations since 2018, and it comes at a crucial time for our mutual relations.

Given the current geopolitical uncertainty, the report sheds light on the state of relations between the EU and Azerbaijan. As Azerbaijan is a strategic supplier of fossil fuel energy, it is essential that EU and Azerbaijan work on enhanced cooperation outside the energy sector.

It is in the EU interest to build on the strategic cooperation and economic integration with Azerbaijan, but we should also continue to promote human rights and democratic standards in the country. Respecting freedom of speech and the rights of minorities also contributes to the peaceful coexistence and security of everyone in the South Caucasus.

The current negotiations on the new bilateral comprehensive EU-Azerbaijan Agreement should follow this approach. I welcome the increased diplomatic activity of the EU in the region and encourage the EU to prioritise preventive diplomacy as an honest broker in the region, including through promoting inter-religious and intercultural dialogue.

The EU should not repeat the mistakes of the past, when other malign actors took advantage of our passivity to gain influence in this region, which is crucial for European security and stability. It is vital that Azerbaijan and Armenia come to a timely agreement on a sustainable peace treaty while respecting the principles of the Helsinki Final Act.

The report also highlights the importance of the rights and security of the Armenian population residing in Nagorno-Karabakh and the prompt and safe return of all refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes.

We call on Armenia and Azerbaijan to address all concerns relating to the functioning of the Lachin corridor through dialogue and consultations. Therefore, plenary amendments welcome the recent talks between Karabakh Armenians' and Azerbaijani representatives. Border demarcation and delineation are also critical components covered in the report.

The report denounces the destruction of cultural, religious and historical heritage since the beginning of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Urgent action is required and we call for a UNESCO mission to the region. Building strong relations with our neighbours is crucial, and this report can serve as a framework for future cooperation.

Finally, let me thank you, the shadow rapporteurs, for an excellent cooperation.

Olivér Várhelyi, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, honourable Members, today's debate is a timely opportunity to discuss our relations with Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan is an important partner for the EU. Therefore, we have an interest in continuing our good cooperation – particularly when it comes to energy – cooperation on reforms, trade and investments. Negotiations on a new comprehensive EU-Azerbaijan agreement are ongoing. We remain committed to continuing the negotiations with a view to finalising them soon. As you note in your report, the human rights situation and the respect for the rule of law in Azerbaijan remain a concern. These are at the core of our relationship as jointly agreed in the EU-Azerbaijan Partnership priorities. We firmly believe that the rule of law, human rights and democratic institutions are the fundamentals of an independent, stable and prosperous country, and the condition for a constructive business environment. We welcome Azerbaijan's signature of the European Convention on Human Rights Protocol banning the death penalty in all circumstances. We are closely following the implementation of the media law and the adoption of the new law on political parties. Through our EU delegation in Baku, we are closely following individual cases of human rights defenders. Our cooperation with Azerbaijan in the energy sector has intensified. A Memorandum of Understanding on a Strategic Partnership in the Field of Energy was signed in July last year in Baku. As you also acknowledged in the report, this cooperation is more important than ever for ensuring diversification of Europe's energy supplies, bringing new, reliable sources of energy to Europe. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has forced us to develop and diversify trade routes and transport connections between Europe and Asia.

I agree that also our cooperation with Azerbaijan in the area of connectivity is strategically important. In this context, we welcome the important assistance Azerbaijan has been providing to Ukraine. Connectivity and energy are key elements of the Economic and Investment Plan, which aims to mobilise up to EUR 2 billion of public and private investments in Azerbaijan. The EU is above all driven by the common goal to contribute to a stable, peaceful and prosperous South Caucasus. We stand ready to continue supporting Azerbaijan, whether through facilitation of the peace process or through the continued provision of humanitarian and demining assistance. The EU deployed its mission in Armenia, the EUMA, in order to reduce tensions and support the peace process. This is an important step to reinforce stability and strengthen the EU's role in the region. We continue to fully support the facilitation of the dialogue between the leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia on all issues pertaining to the peace process, including on a future peace treaty and border delimitation through the efforts of the President of the European Council. We encourage the leaders of both countries to use the historic opportunity to solve this conflict for good and to return to the substantial dialogue. Many important questions need addressing urgently. As we saw again on 6 March, the situation on the Karabakh line of contact continues to be very tense. We deplore the incidents that led to at least five deaths. The circumstances surrounding this deadly incident need to be fully investigated. All parties should show restraint in order to prevent any actions which could further undermine the regional stability and threaten the peace process. We will continue to be fully mobilized.

Peter van Dalen, *namens de PPE-Fractie*. – Voorzitter, het verslag van collega Zovko bevat enkele stevige uitspraken over Azerbeidzjan. En terecht. Maar het is niet genoeg. Het voortdurende geweld van dictator Aliyev tegen zowel Nagorno-Karabach als tegen Armenië vereist totale veroordeling in de meest krachtige bewoordingen.

Ook ben ik verbolgen over de voortdurende blokkade door Azerbeidzjan van de Lachin-corridor. En vergeet u niet, Aliyev heeft al sinds enkele maanden troepen staan binnen de grenzen van Armenië. Ik heb zelf bij de zuidelijke stad Goris onlangs de verwoestingen van hun beschietingen gezien.

Maar waar het verslag echt tekortschiet, is in de verwerpelijke gasdeal die Commissievoorzitter Von der Leyen heeft getekend met president Aliyev. Die paar miljard kubieke meter gas waren echt wel ergens anders te krijgen geweest. En bovenal, het effect is dat Aliyev nu een politieke aanmoediging voelt door dit gasgebeuren, door deze deal, en zijn agressie wordt alleen maar erger.

Die gasdeal is een geopolitieke fout die van tafel moet. En daarom steun ik morgen alleen maar dit verslag als een paar amendementen die ik mede heb ondertekend worden aangenomen.

Isabel Santos, *em nome do Grupo S&D*. – Senhora Presidente, como já aqui foi referido pela relatora Zovko, que aproveitou para saudar, desde 2018 que não era apresentado um relatório sobre as relações União Europeia-Azerbaijão, mas, debaixo do regime autoritário da família Aliyev, pouco ou nada muda no Azerbaijão.

Falar de Estado de direito continua uma miragem diante de um sistema judicial controlado e obediente. As violações de direitos humanos somam-se. A repressão e a detenção arbitrária de ativistas, opositores políticos e jornalistas continuam uma constante, situação que se agrava quando falamos de mulheres, ativistas e jornalistas, ou dos ataques aos direitos da população LGBTQI.

Uma atitude musculada está em claro contraste com a incapacidade de desobstrução do corredor de Lachin, bloqueado por denominados ambientalistas. Mais uma provocação, com o objetivo de deteriorar as condições de vida da população arménia de *Nagorno-Karabakh*.

As constantes provocações, atacando a soberania da Arménia e causando o recrudescimento do conflito nesta região, a sujeição dos prisioneiros de guerra a tortura e a atos de humilhação e as execuções extrajudiciais de civis e militares arménios constituem violações do direito internacional que não podem ser toleradas.

É imperioso que se encontre uma solução de paz sustentável para este conflito armado, colocando termo à devastação e ao sofrimento prolongado das populações. Por isso, apelamos ao abandono da retórica belicista, ao desbloqueamento do corredor de Lachin e à recondução ao mais estreito respeito pelos princípios da Ata Final de Helsínquia e pelos princípios básicos do Grupo de Minsk da OSCE. E saudamos a missão da União Europeia, recentemente enviada com vista a ajudar à estabilização da situação de segurança e a reforçar os esforços de paz.

No entanto, Senhor Comissário, num quadro como este, torna-se óbvio que qualquer aprofundamento das relações da União Europeia com o Azerbaijão tem que ser sujeito à condicionalidade em matéria de respeito pelos princípios da democracia e dos direitos humanos e a uma atitude positiva em matéria de construção de condições para a paz na região.

Se não somos capazes de aprender com a história longínqua, Senhor Comissário, é bom que aprendamos com o presente e evitemos o proliferar de erros que só a nós nos cabe evitar.

Ilhan Kyuchyuk, *on behalf of the Renew Group*. – Madam President, dear Commissioner, dear colleagues, first of all, I would like to thank Ms Zovko for her constructive work on this very important report, and let's have a realistic approach on EU-Azerbaijan relations.

Having said that, I think we should start by respecting each other. Respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty is a vital precondition for future peaceful relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia and for resolving the long-standing conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Both countries need to recognise each other's territorial integrity and respect their sovereign borders. Azerbaijan and Armenia should also acknowledge each other's history, culture and identity towards future recognition. It doesn't mean that they should be stuck in the past, but rather focus on the future and upcoming generations.

Azerbaijan and Armenia should also promote economic cooperation and trade, which could help build mutual trust and promote stability in the region. People-to-people contacts should be encouraged to promote mutual understanding, tolerance and reconciliation.

Markéta Gregorová, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – Madam President, dear colleagues, Commissioner, I believe that EU-Azerbaijan relations need to be updated. However, I must underline that any deepening of ties with the EU must be conditional. That is not happening. There is no progress in respecting citizens' rights and freedoms, no improvement in ceasing repression of the political opposition and civil society, and no advancement in the rule of law, corruption and independence of the judiciary. On top of that, there has not been a solution to the Lachin corridors ongoing blockade, for which Azerbaijan is responsible and should take all measures at its disposal to ensure unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles and cargo in both directions. For those reasons, I cannot agree that the EU renewed its relations based on its energy needs. By now, we should have learned the lesson that support of authoritarian regimes does not pay up, not for us, and definitely not for Azerbaijani citizens.

Anna Fotyga, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Madam President, Commissioner, allow me at the beginning two reflections.

First, the term territorial integrity usually applies to internationally recognised borders, and secondly, many conflicts in the region are to be improved with Russia's defeat in the war waged against Ukraine.

I think that to the list enumerated by Commissioner of important parts in our relationship with Azerbaijan, we have to add security issues as well. Therefore, I commend the role of the EU representative to the Caucasus and his actions to enhance dialogue and, secondly, the NATO Secretary General's personal initiative with representatives, as well as US actions. We have to serve as real honest broker. That means trying not to take sides.

Idoia Villanueva Ruiz, *en nombre del Grupo The Left*. – Señora presidenta, la defensa de la democracia y los derechos humanos no puede estar supeditada a otros intereses. No podemos aceptar que la Unión Europea mire a otro lado cada vez que estos se violan siempre y cuando fluyan el petróleo o el gas. Lo que es consenso para Rusia también debería serlo para Azerbaiyán, para Arabia Saudí y para Qatar.

El régimen de Azerbaiyán no es un socio creíble ni fiable, como quiere hacer creer la Comisión. El presidente Aliyev lleva más de veinte años en el poder y es bien conocido por ser acusado de encabezar una trama de lavado de dinero sobornando a políticos europeos para blanquear la imagen de su régimen, la llamada «diplomacia del caviar». Seguro que en el Partido Popular la recuerdan. También es bien conocida su barbarie contra el pueblo armenio.

Mientras esta Cámara silencia el llamamiento al diálogo del secretario general de las Naciones Unidas, Azerbaiyán, aliado de Putin, es un socio creíble para hacer negocios. Curiosamente, se omite conocer que solo cuarenta y ocho horas antes de la invasión de Ucrania, Putin y él firmaron un acuerdo de cooperación y diplomacia militar.

No es creíble y no es fiable un régimen donde el Estado de Derecho se confunde con los deseos de su presidente. No es creíble, no es fiable un régimen donde no existe la libertad de prensa ni los derechos LGTBIQ, donde se encarcela a opositores políticos, donde se apalea a manifestantes y se reprime a defensores de los derechos humanos.

¿Este es el modelo de socio estratégico de la Unión Europea, el mundo que queremos impulsar? Basta ya de dobles raseros. Firmeza y coherencia.

Michaela Šojdrová (PPE). – Paní předsedající, vztahy mezi Evropskou unií a Ázerbájdžánem jsou poznamenány tím, jak se ázerbájdžánská vláda chová k Arménii i ke svým vlastním občanům. Zásadně odsuzujeme poslední vojenskou agresi Ázerbájdžánu na svrchovaném území Arménie v září 2022. Ázerbájdžán představuje strategického partnera pro nezávislost Evropské unie na energetických zdrojích. Ale jde o zájem obou partnerů, tedy jak Ázerbájdžánu, tak Evropské unie. Ázerbájdžánské státní orgány systematicky porušují základní lidská práva a svobody, pronásledují novináře a šíří dezinformace namířené proti Západu. Aby partnerství fungovalo, pak musí také Ázerbájdžán začít dodržovat lidská práva. Trvalého míru nedosáhneme násilím nebo vojenskými prostředky. Vyzýváme proto Ázerbájdžán, aby usiloval o smíření v zájmu svých občanů. EU má v tomto klíčovou roli prostředníka.

Spontane Wortmeldungen

Ангел Джамбазки (ECR). – Г-жо Председател, поздравления за колегата Зовко, както винаги отлично подготвен, отличен доклад. Това обаче, което трябва да се каже и няма как да бъде спестено, е, че за да бъдат подобрени и възстановени отношенията между Европейския съюз и Азербайджан, Азербайджан трябва да вземе своето отношение и да прекрати войната, която води срещу Армения. Трябва да деблокира Лачинския коридор, трябва да прекрати унищожаването на църкви, на православни манастири, на спомени, на гробища. Да прекрати насилието и агресията, която води срещу Арцах. Напомням, Арцах е изконна исторически арменска територия. Територията на една от най-старите нации, каквато е арменската в Европа, една от най-старите европейски цивилизации и една от най-старите християнски цивилизации. Тази линия на геноцид, на насилие и на терор, осъществявана още от Османската империя, от османските турци и продължена, за съжаление, от Азербайджан, трябва да бъде прекратена и тогава вече може да се говори за подобряване на отношенията, за търговски отношения и т. н. Що се отнася до нарушаването на правата на човека, това не може да бъде търгувано за нефт и за газ. Поне така твърдите Вие. Аз съм склонен да се съглася с Вас в този случай.

(Ende der spontanen Wortmeldungen)

Olivér Várhelyi, Member of the Commission. – Madam President, honourable Members, the debate today manifests your continued interest in EU-Azerbaijan relations, and I want to stress an important message out of this debate again, which is that the EU will continue to follow closely the human rights situation in Azerbaijan and the respect for the rule of law.

I can assure you that our intensified energy cooperation with Azerbaijan does not sideline our continuous efforts to advocate for human rights and the rule of law in our dialogue with Azerbaijan. And we will continue to do so. We will continue to engage with our Azerbaijani counterparts to advance discussions on all issues pertaining to the peace process.

Željana Zovko, rapporteur. – Madam President, thank you very much, and thank you very much once again Commissioner. I took on board all the speeches by my colleagues. Once again, thanks very much to the shadows and for their, once again, constructive speech. I think this is a very critical report. This is a report that deals with Azerbaijan as a whole, as a country, and what needs to be improved. The European Union should work on human rights and respect for media freedoms, and respect for women – that's the most important thing. Women are the ones who will change that society. That society will change either way, but women are the force that will change it, regardless of whether they prevent the marches on International Women's Day. Tomorrow, we have a very important speech on that, really, most important celebration. So, thank you.

It's not easy: the European Union can play a really honest broker in this, in the South Caucasus; if we don't play it here – where we need both countries on board and we need to take both countries from malign influence, from Russia, from Türkiye, from Iran and from all these countries that will never contribute to the democratisation of the societies – then we will not succeed anywhere else. So this report is a first step on this. Thank you once again, and I hope that you will support the report tomorrow at the plenary vote.

Die Präsidentin. – Die Aussprache ist geschlossen.

Die Abstimmung findet morgen, Mittwoch, 15. März 2023, statt.

22. Spjegazzjonijiet tal-vot

Die Präsidentin. – Als nächster Punkt der Tagesordnung folgen die Erklärungen zur Abstimmung.

22.1. It-tnaqqis annwali vinkolanti tal-emissjonijiet ta' gassijiet serra mill-Istati Membri (Regolament dwar il-Kondiviżjoni tal-Isforzi) (A9-0163/2022 - Jessica Polfjärd)

Mündliche Stimmerklärungen

Charlie Weimers (ECR). – Fru talman! En planekonomisk utopi – så kan man sammanfatta omarbetningen av direktivet om byggnaders energiprestanda. Målet är att alla byggnader ska bli utsläppsfria. Vällovligt, men orealistiskt.

Att försöka energieffektivisera över 30 miljoner byggnader på den korta tid som anges i direktivet blir dyrt. Prislappen för kommissionens förslag: 275 miljarder euro *per år*. Europaparlamentets förslag skulle kosta närmare 400 miljarder euro *per år*.

Utsläppshandelssystemet är långt ifrån perfekt, men ägarna avgör i alla fall själva om de sparar på att byta värmesystem eller isolera. EU har tydligen ingen tillit till marknaden, utan lösningen är alltid att centralstyra och detaljreglera.

I stället för påtvingade renoveringar och än mer skattepengar skyfflade till Syd- och Östeuropa bör frågan överlätas till marknaden, medlemsstaterna och husägare. De vet nämligen bättre än byråkraterna i Bryssel.

Ангел Джембазки (ECR). – Г-жо Председател, убедено гласувах против доклада, защото задължителните годишни намалявания на емисиите на парникови газове, задължителни за държавите членки, т. нар. „Регламент за разпределяне на усилията“ не са нищо повече от т. нар. „зелен екстремизъм“. Зеленият екстремизъм отново надделя и не само в тази зала, но и в междунституционалните преговори.

Съществуващото законодателство определя задължителни национални цели за парникови газове за всяка една от 27-те държави – членки на Европейския съюз, което общо възлиза на 30% намаляване на емисиите за 2030 г. Като базова линия е взета 2005 г. Предложението, което се гласува, увеличава още веднъж тази цифра до 40%. Това се прави чрез законодателно определяне на т. нар. „траектория на намаляването“ и определя степен на гъвкавост, резерви, заеми, банкиране и други такива неща. Това е неразумно. Това поставя тези сектори в изключително трудно положение поради много добавяне на регулации, на администрация, на опит да бъдат обложени работещи бизнеси със социалистически и комунистически по своя дух и замисъл данъци и това е неразумно.

Michaela Šojdrová (PPE). – Paní předsedající, dámy a pánové, podpořila jsem tento finální kompromisní návrh revize nařízení o sdílení úsilí, který se podařilo dojednat během dialogu během českého předsednictví. Tento předpis o sdíleném úsilí se vztahuje na emise skleníkových plynů v odvětvích, která nebyla zahrnuta do systému EU pro obchodování s emisemi, jako např. benzín a nafta používané v silniční dopravě nebo paliva k vytápění, případně hnojiva. Za účelem snížení emisí v těchto odvětvích pro období 2021 až 2030 stanoví nařízení závazné národní cíle a stanoví roční přiděly emisí pro každý členský stát. Tyto cíle považuji za realistické. Společný evropský cíl emisí je snížení o 40 % do roku 2030 a pro Českou republiku snížení o 14 %. Cíl se bude postupně snižovat do roku 2030. Za důležité považuji, že roční přiděly emisí pro období 2026 až 2030 budou aktualizovány v roce 2025 na základě komplexního přezkumu. Toto nařízení považuji za realistické, a proto jsem pro něj hlasovala.

22.2. L-użu tal-art, it-tibdil fl-użu tal-art u l-forestrija (LULUCF) (A9-0161/2022 - Ville Niinistö)

Mündliche Stimmerklärungen

Charlie Weimers (ECR). – Fru talman! Centralistisk miljöpopulism – det är vad detta förslag handlar om. Det kan vi sverigedemokrater inte stå bakom. Därför röstade vi nej till LULUCF-direktivet om markanvändning och skogsbruk.

Skogen omnämns inte i EU-fördragen. Direktivet strider därför mot principen om tilldelade befogenheter och subsidiaritetsprincipen. En växande skog binder koldioxid. Med hänvisning till klimatet försöker EU därför detaljstyra även detta område.

För att kompensera för andra länders utsläpp vill unionen använda svensk skog för att öka inlagringen av koldioxid. Om den inte ökar till 2030 hotas Sverige med kraftiga böter. Vår skogsindustri ska bära kostnaden så att andra länder slipper vidta åtgärder. Detta EU-beslut kommer att kosta skogs- och lantbruksjobb på landsbygden. Sverigedemokraterna kämpar, som enda parti, helhjärtat mot denna utveckling.

Ангел Джамбазки (ECR). – Г-жо Председател, категорично гласувах против това предложение за европейски регламент за колективно постигане на неутралитет. Няма как да не спомена думата „колективно“, която за нас, които сме живели в този строй, знаем какво значи в нашия исторически контекст. Сега към същността на текста.

Като част от пакета „Подготвени за цел 55“ този регламент обхваща емисии от парникови газове, резултат от пряка човешка дейност при използването на земята. Чрез приложеното законодателство се въвеждат допълнителни задължения и де факто санкции под формата на увеличаване на целта за следващата година. Тези държави членки, които не могат да постигнат т. нар. заложен цели – отново забрани, отново бюрократични тежести с едничката цел да се угоди на крайните зелени екстремисти в тази зала. Не се мисли как това ще се отрази върху селското стопанство, върху горските стопанства, нито как държавите членки ще се съобразяват с поредния абсолютно излишен законодателен акт, изработен от чиновници, които не са виждали гора извън саксиите в офиса си. Тези действия убиват европейската икономика. Затова твърдо се противопоставям на такива зеленистки идеи, които се изповядват, за съжаление, от мнозинството в тази зала.

Michaela Šojdrová (PPE). – Paní předsedající, dovoluji, abych také vysvětlila, proč jsem podpořila finální kompromisní návrh revize nařízení o využívání půdy a lesnictví, zkráceně tomu říkáme LULUCF. Jedná se o důležitou oblast, která má velký potenciál přispět ke zmírnění produkce emisí v EU. Revize nařízení se zaměřuje na podporu zacházení s lesy a půdou tak, aby absorbovaly maximum skleníkových plynů. Zároveň je třeba zachovat přirozené funkce krajiny, lesů a zemědělství. Vítám, že byl zachován realistický celoevropský cíl absorpční kapacity 310 milionů tun ekvivalentu CO₂ do konce roku 2030 se závazným čtyřletým rozpočtem na roky 2026 až 2029 pro každý členský stát. Hodnoty pro roky 2026 až 2029 budou mít pouze indikativní charakter. Zásadní bude splnění rozpočtu v rámci celého období. Byl také dosažen kompromis v oblasti požadavků na monitorování a vykazování, který by neměl navýšit administrativní zátěž pro členské státy.

22.3. Ir-rendiment tal-bini fl-użu tal-enerġija (riformulazzjoni) (A9-0033/2023 - Ciarán Cuffe)

Mündliche Stimmklärungen

Eugen Tomac (PPE). – Doamna președintă, bineînțeles că îmbunătățirea performanței energetice a clădirilor este un deziderat la care cu toții aspirăm, mai ales în condițiile actualelor provocări legate de mediu.

Bineînțeles că cu toții ne dorim facturi mai mici și eficientizarea cheltuielilor, însă să ne întrebăm, înainte de toate, dacă țintele pe care ni le propunem sunt realiste, răspund ele așteptărilor pe care le au cetățenii europeni, dacă tranziția către clădiri cu emisii zero începând cu 2030 este suficient de lină încât să nu afecteze unele state și foarte mulți utilizatori finali.

Susțin, fără îndoială, tranziția verde, că este o necesitate, însă nu înainte de a ne asigura că este viabilă și nu va afecta cetățenii vulnerabili, care oricum sunt puternic afectați de toate măsurile din ultimele luni și ani.

Charlie Weimers (ECR). – Fru talman! Miljontals hushåll kämpar med inflation och höga elräkningar. Samtidigt kräver kommissionen ytterligare bindande årliga minskningar av växthusgasutsläppen. Sverige kommer att drabbas hårdare än andra länder. Vi har redan minskat våra utsläpp väsentligt, och alla billiga åtgärder har redan genomförts. Därför kommer det att bli dyrare för oss att nå dessa nya mål.

Vägtransporter, uppvärmning av byggnader, jordbruk, små industrialanläggningar och avfallshantering kommer alla att belastas med egna utsläppsmål. Vi vet ännu inte prislappen för klimatmålen för Sveriges räkning, men dragkampen om reduktionsplikten visar att en sänkning av bränsleskatten kan kosta upp till 40 miljarder kronor.

Någon måste säga det: EU håller på att utvecklas till en centralstyrd planekonomi. En effektiv miljö- och klimatpolitik måste bygga på fria val, teknikutveckling och medlemsstater som själva bestämmer hur mycket och på vilket sätt de bäst kan bidra.

Förordningen kommer att resultera i högre inflation, ökade elpriser till liten klimatnytta. Därför röstade vi sverigedemokrater nej.

Ангел Джамбазки (ECR). – Г-жо Председател, процесът на подобряване на енергийната ефективност на сградите безспорно е важен. Това обаче няма как да стане със забрани. Този процес си има своя цена, тъй като ремонтите, особено сериозните ремонти, са скъпи и често пъти свързани с големи първоначални инвестиции. И с тази директива не се създават фондове на Европейския съюз, които да обезпечат тази инвестиция. Следователно балансът между амбициите и задълженията трябва да бъде много деликатен, а задълженията идват със стимули и реалистични очаквания. Докладът не успява да постигне този баланс между задължения и забрани, от една страна, и стимули, от друга. Това поставя нови задължения, увеличава амбициите в сравнение с първоначалното предложение на Комисията до степен, в която те са непостижими и много скъпи както за държавите членки, така и за частния сектор. Има други проблеми с текста, да не говоря там за вечните теми, които се вкарват тук, но като цяло това е едно раздуто предложение, пълно с елементи и допълнения, които не са свързани с директивата. Допълнителна администрация, допълнително утешняване не са включени в текста на Комисията. Ето по тази причина гласувах против този текст.

Michaela Šojdrová (PPE). – Paní předsedající, dámy a pánové, Evropský parlament dnes přijal revizi směrnice o energetické náročnosti budov a já bych chtěla vysvětlit, proč jsem pro tento návrh nehlasovala. Samozřejmě, že jsem pro energetické úspory, ale jsem přesvědčena, že členské státy jsou schopny tento požadavek řešit ve vlastní působnosti v zájmu svých občanů, protože úspory přece chceme všichni. Proto bych očekávala na evropské úrovni například standardy, které by byly doporučené. Ostatně mimo směrnici již existují právní předpisy, které se zabývají zvyšováním energetické účinnosti, včetně ceny uhlíku nebo schválené směrnice o energetické účinnosti. Je nutné zajistit, aby tato směrnice nebyla jen dalším nařízením pro členské státy, ale v každém případě už dnes víme, že přinese novou administrativní zátěž pro úředníky i pro stavebníky. Stanovuje nové požadavky na majitele domů, které budou promítnuty do celkové ceny. Dá se očekávat tedy, že dojde i ke zdražení renovací budov. Evropská unie má členským státům pomáhat zvládnout náročné snižování emisí a lepší fungování. Nemá je však dělat za ně.

Cristian Terheş (ECR). – Madam President, I voted against the Energy Performance of Buildings report because it will lead to a severe increase in home rental prices, which will make the very few rich people richer and the rest of the people poorer.

Every time a European bureaucrat proposes something and labels it as 'ambitious', that means it is actually bad for the people, and this report just proves that. It is absurd to have the so-called ambitions that are converting into more obligations for the people which are costing them even more money. For example, the Member States will have to ensure that the use of fossil fuel heating systems will not be authorised in existing buildings undergoing major renovations, deep renovation or renovation of heating systems, as well as in new buildings, starting from 24 months after the adoption of this directive. The solution left for the people is to heat their homes using electricity, which is more and more expensive, mainly due to European Green Deal utopian objectives.

Europe needs a pragmatic leadership, clearly different than the current one, a leadership that can provide practical solutions to increase economic growth or people's health while reducing costs and making the continent a better, safer and cleaner place to live.

22.4. L-Att dwar id-Data (A9-0031/2023 - Pilar del Castillo Vera)

Mündliche Stimmerklärungen

Eugen Tomac (PPE). – Doamna președintă, avansul tehnologic ne-a pus față în față cu noi provocări și de aceea cred că este esențial să avem reguli clare care să reglementeze acest domeniu.

Avem nevoie de echitate în mediul digital și tocmai de aceea cred că este necesar ca utilizatorii, dar și producătorii, să poată valorifica datele dispozitivelor la care sunt conectați.

Sunt esențiale aceste noi norme pe care le pregătim, tocmai pentru că această problemă este importantă pentru a putea utiliza și a accesa datele generate în Uniunea Europeană, în toate sectoarele economice.

Legea aceasta obligă și, evident, oferă echitate în mediul digital pentru a stimula o piață a datelor competitivă, pentru a deschide noi oportunități pentru inovare bazată pe date și va face datele mai accesibile pentru toți.

22.5. L-attivitaġiet tal-Ombudsman Ewropew – rapport annwali 2021 (A9-0054/2023 - Anne-Sophie Pelletier)

Mündliche Stimmerklärungen

Cristian Terheș (ECR). – Doamna președintă, am votat în favoarea raportului privind activitatea Ombudsmanului European pentru anul 2021, deoarece, sub conducerea lui Emily O'Reilly, aceasta a fost una dintre puținele instituții europene care chiar protejează drepturile cetățenilor și are curajul să atragă și să tragă Comisia Europeană și pe Ursula von der Leyen la răspundere pentru abuzurile făcute.

În anul 2021, Emily O'Reilly a deschis numeroase anchete privind lipsa de transparență a Comisiei Europene și a altor instituții europene: o astfel de anchetă privind modul în care Ursula von der Leyen a negociat și a achiziționat, într-un mod total netransparent și ilegal, miliarde de doze de vaccinuri pe bani publici, prin mesaje text schimbate personal cu CEO-ul de la Pfizer, Albert Bourla, iar o altă anchetă privind refuzul Agenției Europene pentru Medicamente de a acorda acces publicului la documentele referitoare la fabricarea vaccinurilor ARNm împotriva COVID-19. Este abuziv să respingi cetățenilor dreptul de a ști cum au fost testate injecțiile cu care au fost constrânși să se injecteze în pandemie.

Felicit Ombudsmanul European că nu a cedat presiunilor și și-a exercitat mandatul de control democratic asupra instituțiilor publice europene.

În urma acestui raport, Ursula von der Leyen ar trebui, dacă nu de onoare, măcar de rușine, să-și dea demisia.

22.6. Koerenza tal-Politiki għall-Iżvilupp (A9-0019/2023 - Janina Ochojska)

Mündliche Stimmerklärungen

Eugen Tomac (PPE). – Doamna președintă, Uniunea Europeană, în calitate de cel mai important donator mondial de asistență pentru dezvoltare, se distinge în mod categoric de alți parteneri internaționali ai săi.

Ațiunea europeană pe scena internațională este ghidată de principii cheie, precum democrația, statul de drept, universalitatea și indivizibilitatea drepturilor omului și a libertăților fundamentale, respectarea demnității umane, principiul egalității și solidarității, precum și respectarea principiilor Cartei Organizației Națiunilor Unite și a dreptului internațional, fapt care duce la implementarea unor obiective umanitare esențiale, precum a nu lăsa pe nimeni în urmă și satisfacerea în primul rând a nevoilor celor mai defavorizați, cu ambiția de a reduce și eradică pe termen lung sărăcia.

Faptul că Parlamentul European a votat cu o foarte mare majoritate acest raport, reafirmă mandatul Uniunii Europene în materie de politică externă de a contribui la o lume mai justă și la bunăstare pentru toți. Avem un semnal puternic pentru amprenta pe care vrea să o lase Uniunea Europeană în lume.

Die Präsidentin. – Die Erklärungen zur Abstimmung sind damit geschlossen.

23. L-aġenda tas-seduta li jmiss

Die Präsidentin. – Die nächste Sitzung findet morgen, Mittwoch, 15. März 2023, 9.00 Uhr statt. Die Tagesordnung wurde veröffentlicht und ist auf der Website des Europäischen Parlaments verfügbar.

24. Approvazzjoni tal-minuti tas-seduta li għaddejja

Die Präsidentin. – Das Protokoll dieser Sitzung wird dem Parlament morgen nach der Abstimmung zur Genehmigung vorgelegt.

25. Għeluq tas-seduta

(Die Sitzung wird um 22.50 Uhr geschlossen.)

Tifsira tas-simboli użati

*	Proċedura ta' Konsultazzjoni
***	Proċedura ta' Approvazzjoni
***I	Proċedura Leġiżlattiva Ordinarja: l-ewwel qari
***II	Proċedura Leġiżlattiva Ordinarja: it-tieni qari
***III	Proċedura Leġiżlattiva Ordinarja: it-tielet qari

(It-tip ta' proċedura tiddependi mill-bażi legali proposta mill-abbozz ta' att)

Abbrevjazzjonijiet użati għall-Komitati Parlamentari

AFET	Kumitat għall-Affarijiet Barranin
DEVE	Kumitat għall-Iżvilupp
INTA	Kumitat għall-Kummerċ Internazzjonali
BUDG	Kumitat għall-Baġits
CONT	Kumitat għall-Kontroll tal-Baġit
ECON	Kumitat għall-Affarijiet Ekonomiċi u Monetarji
EMPL	Kumitat għall-Impjiegi u l-Affarijiet Soċjali
ENVI	Kumitat għall-Ambjent, is-Saħħa Pubblika u s-Sikurezza tal-Ikel
ITRE	Kumitat għall-Industrija, r-Riċerka u l-Enerġija
IMCO	Kumitat għas-Suq Intern u l-Harsien tal-Konsumatur
TRAN	Kumitat għat-Trasport u t-Turiżmu
REGI	Kumitat għall-Iżvilupp Reġjunali
AGRI	Kumitat għall-Agricoltura u l-Iżvilupp Rurali
PECH	Kumitat għas-Sajd
CULT	Kumitat għall-Kultura u l-Edukazzjoni
JURI	Kumitat għall-Affarijiet Legali
LIBE	Kumitat għall-Libertajiet Ċivili, il-Ġustizzja u l-Intern
AFCO	Kumitat għall-Affarijiet Kostituzzjonali
FEMM	Kumitat għad-Drittijiet tan-Nisa u tal-Ugwaljanza bejn is-Sessi
PETI	Kumitat għall-Petizzjonijiet
DROI	Sottokumitat għad-"Drittijiet tal-Bniedem"
SEDE	Sottokumitat għas-"Sigurtà u d-Difiża"
FISC	Sottokumitat għall-Kwistjonijiet Fiskali

Abbrevjazzjonijiet użati għall-Gruppi Politiċi

PPE	Grupp tal-Partit Popolari Ewropew (Demokristjani)
S&D	Grupp tal-Alleanza Progressiva tas-Socjalisti u d-Demokratiċi fil-Parlament Ewropew
Renew	Grupp Renew Europe
Verts/ALE	Grupp tal-Hodor/Alleanza Hielsa Ewropea
ID	Grupp Identità u Demokrazija
ECR	Grupp tal-Konservattivi u r-Riformisti Ewropej
The Left	Grupp tax-Xellug fil-Parlament Ewropew - GUE/NGL
NI	Membri mhux Affiljati