



C/2025/1696

20.3.2025

FULLSTÄNDIGT FÖRHANDLINGSREFERAT DEN 13 MARS 2024

(C/2025/1696)

EUROPAPARLAMENTET

SESSIONEN 2024–2025

Sammanträdena den 12–14 mars 2024

STRASBOURG

Innehållsförteckning	Sida
1. Öppnande av sammanträdet	5
2. Välkomsthälsning	5
3. Behovet av att ta itu med den brådskande frågan om ukrainska barn som tvångsförflyttats till Ryssland (debatt)	5
4. Inrättandet av ett europeiskt initiativ för att årligen utse europeiska huvudstäder för barn (debatt)	15
5. Återupptagande av sammanträdet	20
6. Detta är Europa – debatt med Finlands statsminister Petteri Orpo (debatt)	20
7. Återupptagande av sammanträdet	36
8. Omröstning	36
8.1 Europeisk mediefrihetsakt (A9-0264/2023 – Sabine Verheyen) (omröstning)	37
8.2 Rättsakten om artificiell intelligens (A9-0188/2023 – Brando Benifei, Dragoș Tudorache) (omröstning)	37

Innehållsförteckning	Sida
8.3 Ändring av direktiv 2013/11/EU om alternativ tvistlösning vid konsumenttvister samt direktiven (EU) 2015/2302, (EU) 2019/2161 och (EU) 2020/1828 (A9-0060/2024 – Laura Ballarín Cereza) (omröstning)	37
8.4 Stängning av den europeiska plattformen för tvistlösning online (A9-0058/2024 – Laura Ballarín Cereza) (omröstning)	37
8.5 Återvinning och förverkande av tillgångar (A9-0199/2023 – Loránt Vincze) (omröstning)	37
8.6 Användning av informationssystemet för den inre marknaden och den gemensamma digitala ingången för vissa krav som föreskrivs i direktivet om europeiska gränsöverskridande sammanslutningar (A9-0006/2024 – Anne-Sophie Pelletier) (omröstning)	38
8.7 Tvångslicensiering för krishantering och ändring av förordning (EG) nr 816/2006 (A9-0042/2024 – Adrián Vázquez Lázara) (omröstning)	38
8.8 Leksakers säkerhet och upphävande av direktiv 2009/48/EG (A9-0044/2024 – Marion Walsmann) (omröstning)	38
8.9 Ändring av direktiv 2008/98/EG om avfall (A9-0055/2024 – Anna Zalewska) (omröstning)	38
8.10 Ett enda ansökningsförfarande för ett kombinerat tillstånd för tredjelandsmedborgare att vistas och arbeta på en medlemsstats territorium och en gemensam uppsättning rättigheter för arbetstagare från tredjeland som vistas lagligen i en medlemsstat (omarbetning) (A9-0140/2023 – Javier Moreno Sánchez) (omröstning)	38
8.11 Europeiska gränsöverskridande sammanslutningar (A9-0062/2024 – Sergey Lagodinsky) (omröstning)	38
8.12 Rapporteringskrav inom vägtransporter och luftfart: förordning (A9-0033/2024 – Jan-Christoph Oetjen) (omröstning)	39
8.13 Rapporteringskrav inom vägtransporter och luftfart: beslut (A9-0034/2024 – Jan-Christoph Oetjen) (omröstning)	39
8.14 Minimikrav på minimigränser för raster och dygns- och veckovila inom sektorn för tillfällig persontransport (A9-0370/2023 – Henna Virkkunen) (omröstning)	39
8.15 Fastställande av unionens tullkodex och inrättande av Europeiska unionens tullbyrå och upphävande av förordning (EU) nr 952/2013 (A9-0065/2024 – Deirdre Clune) (omröstning)	39
8.16 Ändring av förordning (EG) nr 223/2009 om europeisk statistik (A9-0386/2023 – Johan Van Overtveldt) (omröstning)	39
9. Återupptagande av sammanträdet	40
10. Justering av protokollet från föregående sammanträde	40
11. Anklagelser om korruption och missbruk av EU-medel i Spanien under pandemin (debatt om en aktuell fråga)	40
12. Den europeiska planeringsterminen för samordning av den ekonomiska politiken 2024 – Den europeiska planeringsterminen för samordning av den ekonomiska politiken: sysselsättningsprioriteringar och sociala prioriteringar för 2024 (gemensam debatt – den europeiska planeringsterminen)	50
13. Riktlinjerna för budgeten för 2025 – Avsnitt III (debatt)	66

Innehållsförteckning	Sida
14. Typgodkännande av motorfordon och motorer med avseende på utsläpp och batteriers hållbarhet (Euro 7) (debatt)	76
15. Återupptagande av sammanträdet	87
16. Omröstning	88
16.1 Typgodkännande av motorfordon och motorer med avseende på utsläpp och batteriers hållbarhet (Euro 7) (A9-0298/2023 – Alexandr Vondra) (omröstning)	88
16.2 Tillfälliga handelsliberaliseringsåtgärder som kompletterar de handelsmedgivanden som är tillämpliga på ukrainska produkter enligt associeringsavtalet mellan EU/Euratom och Ukraina (A9-0077/2024 – Sandra Kalniete) (omröstning)	88
16.3 Tillfälliga handelsliberaliseringsåtgärder som kompletterar de handelsmedgivanden som är tillämpliga på moldaviska produkter enligt associeringsavtalet mellan EU/Euratom och Moldavien (A9-0079/2024 – Markéta Gregorová) (omröstning)	89
16.4 Den europeiska planeringsterminen för samordning av den ekonomiska politiken 2024 (A9-0063/2024 – René Repasi) (omröstning)	89
16.5 Den europeiska planeringsterminen för samordning av den ekonomiska politiken: sysselsättningsprioriteringar och sociala prioriteringar för 2024 (A9-0050/2024 – Dragoș Pîslaru) (omröstning)	90
16.6 Riktlinjerna för budgeten för 2025 – Avsnitt III (A9-0068/2024 – Victor Negrescu) (omröstning)	90
16.7 Resolutionsförslag – Närmare förbindelser mellan EU och Armenien och behovet av ett fredsavtal mellan Azerbajdzjan och Armenien (RC-B9-0163/2024) (omröstning)	90
17. Återupptagande av sammanträdet	90
18. Finansiella regler för unionens allmänna budget (omarbetning) (debatt)	90
19. Sammanhållningspolitiken 2014–2020 – genomförande och resultat i medlemsstaterna (debatt)	97
20. Debatter om fall av kränkningar av de mänskliga rättigheterna samt av demokratiska och rättsstatliga principer (debatt)	109
20.1 Den omedelbara risken för massvält i Gaza och attackerna på leveranser av humanitärt bistånd	109
20.2 Förtrycket i Afghanistan, inbegripet offentliga avrättningar och våld mot kvinnor	122
20.3 Fallet Rocío San Miguel och General Hernández Da Costa, bland andra politiska fångar i Venezuela	127
21. Tilltagande retorik och våld mot hbtqi-personer: den senaste tidens attacker i Thessaloniki (debatt)	131
22. Den tid det tar för Europeiska kommissionen att behandla begäranden om allmänhetens tillgång till handlingar (debatt)	138

Innehållsförteckning	Sida
23. Röstförklaringar	142
23.1 Europeisk mediefrihetsakt (A9-0264/2023 – Sabine Verheyen)	142
23.2 Rättsakten om artificiell intelligens (A9-0188/2023 – Brando Benifei, Dragoș Tudorache)	142
23.3 Typgodkännande av motorfordon och motorer med avseende på utsläpp och batteriers hållbarhet (Euro 7) (A9-0298/2023 – Alexandr Vondra)	143
23.4 Den europeiska planeringsterminen för samordning av den ekonomiska politiken: sysselsättningsprioriteringar och sociala prioriteringar för 2024 (A9-0050/2024 – Dragoș Pîslaru)	143
23.5 Närmare förbindelser mellan EU och Armenien och behovet av ett fredsavtal mellan Azerbajdzjan och Armenien (RC-B9-0163/2024)	143
24. Föredragningslista för nästa sammanträde	144
25. Justering av protokollet från detta sammanträde	144
26. Avslutande av sammanträdet	144

FULLSTÄNDIGT FÖRHANDLINGSREFERAT DEN 13 MARS 2024

PŘEDSEDNICTVÍ: DITA CHARANZOVÁ

místopředsedkyně

1. Öppnande av sammanträdet

(The sitting opened at 9.01)

2. Välkomsthälsning

President. – Before we start the debate, I would like to warmly welcome the special guests today who are in the gallery: Valeriia Halych, who was deported to Russia and, thankfully, returned to Ukraine, her mother Nataliia Halych, as well as Andrii Chernousov from 'Voices of Children' and Olga Pustovit from the 'Center for Civil Liberties' in Ukraine.

(Applause)

They are here with us as a testimony of Putin's brutal policy towards Ukrainian children, and they are also to follow our debate on the need to address the urgent concerns surrounding Ukrainian children forcibly deported to Russia.

A warm welcome. Thank you for being with us.

3. Behovet av att ta itu med den brådskande frågan om ukrainska barn som tvångsflyttats till Ryssland (debatt)

President. – The next item is the debate on Council and Commission statements on the need to address the urgent concerns surrounding Ukrainian children forcibly deported to Russia (2024/2620(RSP)).

Hadja Lahbib, Présidente en exercice du Conseil. – Madame la Présidente, honorables parlementaires, chers membres de la Commission, chère Commissaire, chère Natalia, le Conseil européen a insisté, il y a un an déjà, sur le fait que la Russie doit assurer le retour en toute sécurité des Ukrainiens transférés de force ou déportés en Russie, en particulier les enfants. Je peux vous assurer que le Conseil reste fermement engagé dans la lutte contre l'impunité pour les crimes internationaux commis dans le cadre de la guerre d'agression contre l'Ukraine, y compris, bien entendu, les crimes commis contre les personnes particulièrement vulnérables que sont les enfants.

Les ministres de la justice réunis au sein du Conseil ont évoqué cette question des enfants transférés de force il y a dix jours, lors d'une discussion sur la lutte contre l'impunité à laquelle participait le procureur général ukrainien Andriy Kostin. Les ministres et le procureur général ukrainiens ont rappelé que la lutte contre l'impunité était un effort de longue haleine, et qu'il faut mener ce combat sans relâche. La tâche est immense, vu l'ampleur et le nombre de crimes commis.

Les efforts déployés par le Conseil et les par États membres prennent plusieurs formes. Je ne vais pas tous les passer en revue, mais je voudrais tout de même insister sur quelques aspects particulièrement importants. Tout d'abord, je veux rappeler que de nombreux États membres ont ouvert des enquêtes pour crimes de guerre au niveau national. Les autorités judiciaires de sept États membres se sont associées aux autorités ukrainiennes dans une équipe commune d'enquête soutenue par Eurojust. Grâce à une législation adoptée en un temps record par les colégislateurs, Eurojust a mis sur pied une banque de données contenant les éléments de preuve portant sur ces crimes internationaux. C'est la toute première fois, tous les secteurs de criminalité confondus, qu'une telle banque de données existe. Eurojust héberge aussi le Centre international pour la poursuite du crime d'agression contre l'Ukraine, qui est elle aussi unique en son genre. Les États membres apportent également leur soutien à l'Ukraine et à la Cour pénale internationale pour leur permettre de continuer leurs efforts, que ce soit au niveau financier ou de par leur expertise, médico-légale par exemple.

C'est durant la discussion au Conseil, il y a dix jours, que le procureur général ukrainien et les ministres de la justice des États membres ont appris la délivrance par la Cour pénale internationale de deux nouveaux mandats d'arrêt, cette fois en lien avec les frappes de missiles par les forces russes. Ces deux mandats d'arrêt s'ajoutent à ceux émis il y a un an à l'encontre du président Vladimir Poutine et de la commissaire russe aux droits de l'enfant, qui portent spécifiquement sur la déportation et les transferts d'enfants.

Après une phase où il fallait créer de nouveaux outils et de nouvelles structures, ce que nous avons fait ensemble, une grande partie des efforts est maintenant accomplie par les autorités judiciaires nationales et internationales. Le Conseil continuera bien sûr de soutenir les efforts pour lutter contre l'impunité pour les crimes commis en Ukraine.

Dubravka Šuica, *Vice-President of the Commission*. – Madam President, dear friends from Ukraine, dear honourable Members, dear minister, a generation of Ukrainian children has experienced more than a year of fear, loss, tragedy and violence. They had to leave life as they know it behind them.

Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine is having a devastating effect on all Ukrainians, but especially on children. The European Union is not silent in light of Russia's unlawful deportation or transfer of Ukrainian children. This is a terrible crime inflicting unimaginable suffering. The perpetrators of these crimes must be held accountable.

These children must return to their families and to their communities. To achieve this, the European Union fully supports a number of different initiatives. The European Union participates in the Ukrainian initiative to bring kids back to Ukraine, supported by President Zelenskyy's office. This initiative will unite the efforts of the Ukrainian authorities, foreign governments and international organisations and works on returns, on accountability and on prevention.

In Kyiv, the European Union is part of the Group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict in Ukraine with other foreign missions. The European Union will also continue to support and engage with the UN's children and armed conflict mandate, and welcomes Russia being included in the 'list of shame' for the first time this year.

We welcome the launch of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children on 3 February this year. The European Union will continue to follow the work of the coalition closely and is currently assessing how it can best support the coalition and its activities.

The European Union is also fully committed to take all necessary efforts to ensure that those responsible for the crime of unlawful deportation or transfer of Ukrainian children are held accountable.

Seventeen Member States have so far opened investigations into international crimes committed in Ukraine, and the European Union is supporting these national investigations through strengthening judicial cooperation via Eurojust.

Six Member States and Ukraine are members of the joint investigation team, to which the ICC and Europol are participants. In this vein, we warmly welcome and support the issuing of arrest warrant by the International Criminal Court.

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

The European Union has so far supported the ICC with over EUR 10 million since the beginning of the invasion. The court is a key actor for consistency and enforcement of the international criminal justice system. The European Union has been and continues to support the Prosecutor General's Office of Ukraine to strengthen its capacities to investigate and prosecute international crimes committed in Ukraine. This also includes support for the Atrocity Crimes Advisory Group together with the US and the UK.

We have financed the IT advancement of the Prosecutor General's Office with EUR 4 million. We are furthermore dedicated to support national investigations opened into international crimes committed in Ukraine.

In addition, the European Union is committed to improving the coordination of various support efforts to the Prosecutor General's Office through the international platform of the dialogue group.

Dear Members, I look forward to today's exchange.

Rasa Juknevičienė, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – Madam President, dear colleagues, dear brave Ukrainian girl, Valeriia, to date, around 20 000 Ukrainian children have been stolen from their homeland and deported to Russia, with only 400 having been returned. Since 2014, estimates suggest the number of these forcibly displaced children could be as high as 700 000. Many of these children are orphans or kids without parental care.

Deportation – a war crime under the Rome Statute and the Fourth Geneva Convention – is being used as a weapon against the most vulnerable. The goal of this merciless policy is as clear as it is cruel: to erase the Ukrainian identity of these children and 'Russify' them.

I grew up in Soviet-occupied Lithuania, so I know what 'Russification' and 'Sovietisation' means. The names of children are changed; their birth certificates are altered. They are bombarded with Russian propaganda and forced to attend Russian military processions. Their forcible deportation is not merely a violation of international law; it is a calculated act of cultural and national genocide, aiming to extinguish the very essence of Ukraine's future.

We call on the EU to condemn these actions and to recognise them as part of a genocidal policy against the Ukrainian people. We also urge the EU to establish a dedicated team and provide sustainable, well-funded support to assist Ukraine in identifying, returning and rehabilitating these children, and to continue supporting organisations like Golosy Ditey, which are crucial in these efforts.

Heléne Fritzon, *för S&D-gruppen*. – Fru talman! I krig och konflikt är det alltid barnen som drabbas hårdast. Barn dödas, skadas, drabbas av brist på mat, vatten och säkra platser. Barn tvingas sluta skolan eller separeras från sina föräldrar. Att barn tvångsförflyttats till Ryssland är helt oacceptabelt i detta Rysslands folkrättsvidriga, brutala och hänsynslösa angrepp mot Ukraina.

Den ryska regimen måste ställas till svars för sina krigsbrott och barnens rättigheter måste försvaras. Vi socialdemokrater tog initiativet till ett barnskyddspaket som EU har ställt sig bakom. För det handlar om barnens och Ukrainas frihet och framtid.

Men det handlar också om vår europeiska sammanhållning och om Sveriges säkerhet och alla Europas länders säkerhet. Vi står upp för barnen.

Hilde Vautmans, *namens de Renew-Fractie*. – Voorzitter, minister, commissaris, en vooral: moedige bezoekers uit Oekraïne. Ik ben heel erg blij dat men ten minste u heeft kunnen terugbrengen. Dat doet mij vandaag het meeste plezier.

Kinderen zijn altijd het meest kwetsbaar in een oorlog. Dat Rusland nu meer dan 20 000 onschuldige kinderen uit Oekraïne heeft gedeporteerd, is walgelijk en misdadig. Waarschijnlijk zijn het er nog veel meer. Ik hoorde de spreekster zeggen: "750 000". Dat is eigenlijk hallucinant.

Als moeder van twee kinderen vraag ik mij af: wat ik nu zou doen als dat mijn kinderen waren? Als het mijn zoon was? Als het mijn dochter was? Als je weet dat Rusland die kinderen in heropvoedingskampen gedwongen russificeert, van hun identiteit berooft? Laten we er geen doekjes om winden. Dit zijn oorlogsmisdaden en die moeten bestraft worden.

Als medevoorzitter van de Intergroep Kinderrechten roep ik op tot twee dingen:

maak er werk van om die kinderen zo snel mogelijk terug te brengen waar ze thuishoren, bij hun ouders in Oekraïne; en

zet alles op alles om die oorlogsmisdaden zwaar te bestraffen.

Viola von Cramon-Taubadel, *im Namen der Verts/ALE-Fraktion*. – Frau Präsidentin, Frau Kommissarin, Vertreter des Rates, Walerija, Natalija, Andrij und Olha! Ilja war erst neun Jahre alt, als eine russische Granate seine Mutter vor seinen Augen tötete. Ilja selbst wurde schwer am Bein verwundet. Russische Soldaten brachten ihn in ein Krankenhaus, operierten ihn ohne Anästhesie. Seine Ärzte zwangen ihn, Russland und nicht die Ukraine zu loben.

Sascha, elf, flehte die russischen Soldaten an, ihn nicht von seiner Mutter zu trennen – vergeblich. Sascha wurde in ein Filtrationslager gezwungen, um seine ukrainische Identität auszulöschen.

Kira, vierzehn, versteckte sich in unterirdischen Bunkern, bevor sie von russischen Soldaten gefangen genommen und gezwungen wurde, in einem russischen Haushalt zu leben.

Ilja, Sascha und Kira können sich eigentlich glücklich schätzen: Ihr Schicksal wurde bekannt, sie konnten gerettet werden. Sie sind nur einige der über 20 000 ukrainischen Kinder, die von Russland entführt und in Umerziehungslager oder russische Haushalte gezwungen wurden, oft weit entfernt in Sibirien. Putins oberste Kinderentführerin, Frau Lwowa-Belowa, rühmte sich sogar, 700 000 ukrainische Kinder „gerettet“ zu haben. Glücklicherweise steht diese Dame jetzt auf der Fahndungsliste des Internationalen Strafgerichtshofs, zusammen mit ihrem Chef.

Russland tötet Eltern, entführt ihre Kinder und steckt sie in Programme zur Gehirnwäsche. Der teuflische Plan besteht darin, die ukrainische Identität zu vernichten und die Zukunft der Ukraine zu zerstören. Genau das ist die Definition von Völkermord im Wörterbuch.

An der Seite der Ukraine zu stehen, bedeutet, an der Seite der zahllosen Kinder zu stehen, die eine Chance verdienen, ihre Familien zu sehen, und eine Chance, Ukrainerinnen und Ukrainer zu bleiben.

Jadwiga Wiśniewska, *w imieniu grupy ECR*. – Pani Przewodnicząca! Szanowni Państwo! Drodzy przedstawiciele ukraińskiego narodu! Pochylamy się dziś nad tragedią tysięcy ukraińskich dzieci. Tysiące dzieci zostało brutalnie odebranych swoim rodzinom i wywiezionych w głąb Rosji. Działania te mają charakter systemowy i prowadzone są na dużą skalę. Rosja celowo zrywa wszelkie więzi, jakie mają dzieci ze swoją ojczyzną. Uczy się je kłamstw o rosyjskiej agresji na Ukrainę. Oddawane są do nielegalnej adopcji. Likwiduje się ich akta osobowe, wymazuje się ich ukraińską tożsamość. Przymusowe przesiedlenia ukraińskich dzieci do Rosji są zbrodnią wojenną noszącą znamiona ludobójstwa. To jedna z najbardziej cynicznych zbrodni reżimu Putina. Ta dramatyczna sytuacja nie może pozostać bez odpowiedzi. Międzynarodowy Trybunał Karny wystawił nakazy aresztowania dla prezydenta Putina oraz rosyjskiej komisarz ds. praw dzieci Marii Lwowej-Bielowej między innymi za rolę w tej zbrodni.

Reżim Putina w całości musi odpowiedzieć za te zbrodnie. I dlatego powinniśmy nałożyć embargo również na żywność z Rosji, żeby takich sytuacji handlowych nie wykorzystywano do uwiarygodniania takich zbrodni, o jakich dzisiaj mówimy. Musimy działać razem, by zakończyć ten koszmar i zapewnić ochronę ukraińskich dzieci. Ten haniebny atak musi zostać potępiony przez społeczność międzynarodową i mam nadzieję, że wobec Rosji zostaną zastosowane dotkliwie i skuteczne sankcje. Oprócz wzruszeń i unoszenia się potrzeba realnych działań.

Jaak Madison, *on behalf of the ID Group*. – Madam President, dear colleagues, and dear Ukrainian friends in the Chamber who are visiting us here, first of all, we are very, very sorry for all Ukrainian children and families who have lost kids to the Russians and who are kidnapped or forcibly deported to Russia.

I would like to mention – because I have few minutes here left – they mentioned some kind of statements of the Russian propaganda, what we have heard for the last two years, and I'm afraid that there are very many people in Europe, and a few people in this Chamber, who also are believing this kind of propaganda. We have heard, probably in the TV channels or in the social media, that the Russians are actually protecting those kids because they are taking them away from the war zone and keeping them alive and safe on the Russian side. And that's why they are like the real heroes and saviours, and we should be very thankful for the Russians that they are taking those kids from the Ukrainian side to Russian side.

But the problem with the Russian propaganda is that normally something like 5% of it is true, and 95% of it is absolutely false, fake news, and this is also fake news. So it means that, for the Russian propaganda, you are attacking the neighbourhood country, you are killing them, you're trying to occupy them, or you try to force them to do whatever you want they have to do. And then you say, 'OK, but I will take those kids, thousands of kids on the Russian side, because we are the saviours, so we are the good guys actually here'. There are people who are really believing this kind of things.

The second thing about the mentality of Russia, and there's nothing new that they are deporting the people, so if somebody's surprised in this House – because we should have one of the highest knowledge of the information above the Europeans – there's nothing new of the Russians that they are deporting the people on the Russian side. That's the old tactic.

I would like to remind you, in about 10 days, there is an anniversary of the mass deportation from the Baltic countries. It will be 75 years when almost 100 000 people were forcibly deported to Siberia, to Russia, and very many of them died there – and the Russian propaganda, they are still saying today that actually, it didn't happen, and if it happened, actually, they were the bad people. They were the capitalists who were too rich and they are taking money away from the poor people. But the fact is that 80% of them were kids and women, so I really don't believe that the kids and women are really the capitalists who are like the labour people are forcing to the job.

So it's an old tactic for the lying and using the propaganda and the problem, of course, here is, now, that we are doing too less and too late. I was listening very carefully also to the representative from the Council, and it's very beautiful and nice that we are opening all the investigations. Yes, we are putting the legal procedures forward, it's great.

Yesterday – I hope that you have watched this already – yesterday I was watching again the best documentary movie this year, *20 days in Mariupol*. I don't know how many of you have seen this. If you haven't seen this, you have to watch this, you have to watch this. And the problem is that all the world is seeing: they're killing the small kids, they're destroying the city, we are watching on the news, and then we're saying that, 'Yes, but we have to open an investigation by the way, we have to take legal steps'.

The problem is that we are taking too little steps to give the military aid to win the war, to really push back those Russians who are the real guilty and who are doing this kind of war crimes. That's the only solution to end this war and help these kids.

Marcel de Graaff (NI). – Voorzitter. Al deze verslagen over de deportatie van Oekraïense kinderen naar Rusland zijn pure propaganda. Rusland heeft miljoenen Oekraïense vluchtelingen opgevangen, waaronder gelukkig ook honderdduizenden kinderen die door het Oekraïense leger werden en worden gebombardeerd. Het Parlement moet zich tegen deze Oekraïense oorlogsmisdaden uitspreken. Het Internationaal Strafhof moet Zelensky hiervoor vervolgen.

Oekraïne is bovendien zelf de grootste leverancier van kinderen voor pedonetwerken, mensensmokkel en orgaanhandel. Het heeft hiervoor kinderkennels met draagmoeders. In Rusland krijgen kinderen een traditionele opvoeding en opleiding. In het Westen krijgen ze transgenderindoctrinatie, hormoonblockers en genitale verminking.

De hypocrisie is hemeltergend. Het Westen moet ophouden met deze oorlogshitserij ... *(De Voorzitter ontnemt de spreker het woord)*

Michaela Šojdřová (PPE). – Madam President, dear colleagues, this discussion is because we want to stop the spread of this misinformation. So, this is the reason for this discussion: to stop to spread disinformation, propaganda – Putin's propaganda – as previous colleagues said.

Paní předsedající, dámy a pánové, já neumím odpovědět na to, proč je zde Putin. Proč je zde zase někdo, kdo unáší děti stejně jako kdysi Hitler? Valerie se v 15 letech ocitla u babičky na okupovaném území. Dostala se na území Ruska a myslela si, že bude studovat na střední škole. Ale brzy zjistila, že z ní Rusko chce udělat Rusku. Měla zapomenout na Ukrajinu. Měla zapomenout na svoji maminku, svůj ukrajinský jazyk. Pokusila se vrátit, ale povedlo se jí to až na potřetí a dosud na to nevzpomíná ráda. Ale dnes je šťastná. Je tady s námi. Je šťastná, protože se jí to podařilo. Kolika tisícům dětí se to nepodařilo? Zejména mladší děti nejsou schopny se spojit se svými rodiči či opatrovníky a vyhledat pomoc. Putin je rychlejší, dětem vydává ruské občanství, mění jejich identitu tak, aby nebylo už možné je vyhledat a vrátit. Zkrátka čas tady hraje proti nám, a proto bylo tak důležité mít tuto diskuzi s Komisí a s Radou ještě dnes.

Ukrajina potřebuje naše zbraně, aby se ubránila ruské přesile. To je zásadní úkol pro dnešek. Ale nesmíme zapomenout na ukrajinské děti, protože to je budoucnost. Evropský parlament vyzval k pomoci ukrajinským dětem již v září 2022 a tehdy jsme žádali Mezinárodní výbor Červeného kříže, aby využil své pravomoci. Rusko 2 roky brání Mezinárodnímu výboru Červeného kříže, aby konal své poslání. I to musí vědět mezinárodní veřejnost.

Dámy a pánové, já děkuji za vaši spolupráci, za to, že hlas Evropského parlamentu je slyšet, a my musíme spojit své síly s Komisí, s Radou, s ukrajinskou vládou. Sláva Ukrajině! Pravda a láska zvítězí.

Elisabetta Gualmini (S&D). – Madam President, I have to say that what happened some seconds ago with MEP Marcel de Graaff is a very, very serious issue. We cannot tolerate Russian propaganda in this House. We cannot tolerate pro-Putin fake propaganda in the House of democracy. We cannot tolerate the violation of the truth!

We are fighting and all Parliament is united to defend democracy against tyranny, against authoritarian regimes. So please don't come in this House to tell lies in front of these girls, please. We have to condemn this. So, *care ragazze*, I'm sorry for what has happened. I shift to Italian.

La ferocia di un tiranno si misura col comportamento verso le persone più fragili – i bambini prima di tutto – rubati ai genitori dall'Ucraina, strappati con la forza nei convitti, deportati in campi di rieducazione, costretti a diventare cittadini russi.

Siamo arrivati alla cancellazione dell'identità ucraina, all'annientamento della cultura delle origini, della propria storia e delle proprie radici. E questa è la forma più odiosa di totalitarismo: 20 000 deportati da Mosca in Russia e in Bielorussia.

È imperativo che condanniamo chi commette questi crimini di guerra! Ripetiamolo: è Vladimir Putin il responsabile! Ripetiamolo: è Vladimir Putin! Deve andare di fronte alla Corte penale internazionale. L'indottrinamento, il lavaggio del cervello, la propaganda finta sono le armi delle dittature e delle mire imperialiste di Putin.

L'Europa alzi la propria voce, ma la dittatura non vincerà contro la democrazia, l'autoritarismo brutale non vincerà contro la libertà e noi siamo qua con voi. *Slava Ukraini!*

Catharina Rinzema (Renew). – Voorzitter, wat er zojuist in dit huis, het Europees Parlement, gebeurd is, is een schande. Europarlementariër Marcel de Graaff heeft hier propaganda van een ongekende orde over ons uitgesproken. Ik vraag me oprecht af: wie betaalt Marcel de Graaff voor deze Russische propaganda?

Now I'll continue my speech in English.

Because an innocent looks on. Hope drowns her pleading eyes. The endless pain of wars. "Please end this war," she cries. When I think about all the children forcibly deported, as a mother, my heart cries. I saw those who pay the price with evil all around them.

I come here to call for more sanctions. We must understand the extent of a state-backed network from both Russia and Belarus. We must find and punish those criminals. There are at least a dozen state officials who have been identified but not sanctioned yet.

And what about the foster families in Russia who are receiving the displaced minors? Sanctions as well.

What about the children whose pleading eyes cry "please bring me home"? Are we doing enough? We cannot go back to sleep. It will haunt us. We must be awakened. Oh, children! Turn back. You're only young once.

Bronis Ropė (Verts/ALE). – Pirmininke, gerbiama ministre, komisare, kolegos, mieli ukrainiečiai. Europa neturi teisės nuvilti Ukrainos vaikų. Ilgus metus pirkdami Rusijos išgaunamus resursus, mes stiprinome Putino įtaką. Žiūrėjome pro pirštus į jo daromus nusikaltimus. Jei reaguodavome, atsakas buvo trumpalaikis ir mažai paveiklus. Tai leido Putinui galvoti, kad jis gali žengti toliau. Negebėdami susitarti ir net vykdyti Ukrainai duotus pažadus, mes ir toliau nuviliame ukrainiečius, kurie žūsta nuo Rusijos raketų. Mes nuviliame daug tėvų, kurių gyvybių nesugebėjome apsaugoti. Kremlius tiesia rankas link artimųjų netekusių vaikų. Kyla klausimas, ar ir vėl užsimerksime ir vėl paskėsime diskusijose. Rusija supranta tik jėgos kalbą. Padarykime viską čia ir dabar, kad Rusija pralaimėtų šitą karą, nes tik tokiu atveju vaikai galės grįžti namo, nenuvilkime jų.

Veronika Vrecionová (ECR). – Paní předsedající, už snad každému musí být jasné, že Putin nezaútočil na Ukrajinu kvůli nějakému domnělému ohrožení z rozšiřování NATO nebo kvůli údajné ochraně ruskojazyčných menšin. Putin se vzhledl v historii a tradici ruského kolonialismu a imperialismu a snad nejodpornější tváří tohoto ruského vidění světa jsou zločiny, kterých se dopouští na dětech a mladistvých. Násilné únosy ukrajinských dětí do Ruska a snaha o jejich porušování není nic jiného než realizace plánu na zničení ukrajinského národa, zničení jeho jazyka, kultury, identity, budoucnosti. Snad nejhorší na tom celém je spolupráce ruského Červeného kříže na těchto zločinech. Jednoho dne se za to bude muset Putin i jeho věrchuška zodpovídat. A na tom musíme také pracovat.

Andrea Bocskor (NI). – Elnök Asszony! Az ukrajnai lakosság már több mint két éve szenved az országban dúló szörnyű háborútól. Köztük a harcok legvédtelenebb áldozatai: a gyermekek. A gyermekek lelki és fizikai szenvedései mellett súlyos probléma, hogy több ezer gyermeket hurcoltak el Oroszországba. Bár az elhurcolások sokszor ártatlannak tűnő ürüggyel történtek, Oroszország nem segítette elő, sőt több eszközzel gátolta, hogy visszatérhessenek szüleikhez, ami elfogadhatatlan. Ezzel megsértik a nemzetközi jogot, a nemzetközi egyezményeket, az EBESZ kötelezettségeket és a negyedik genfi egyezményt is.

Soha, semmilyen körülmények között nem engedhetjük meg, hogy gyermekek szenvedjenek. Garantálni kell az Ukrajnában élő gyermekek védelmét és biztonságát. Mindent meg kell tennünk, hogy a deportálásokat megakadályozzuk, és az elhurcolt gyermekek visszatérhessenek a családjukhoz. Mint megannyi gyermeknek a világon, nekik is joguk van a stabil, biztonságos otthonhoz, az oktatáshoz, az egészségügyi ellátáshoz. Ezt csak a mihamarabbi békével tehetjük lehetővé. A békével tehetjük a legtöbbet a gyermekekért.

Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D). – Señora presidenta, señora presidenta en ejercicio del Consejo, señora comisaria, se han cumplido dos años de la criminal guerra de Putin contra Ucrania durante los cuales este Parlamento Europeo ha debatido y constatado crímenes de guerra imprescriptibles con decenas de víctimas civiles inocentes y entre ellas, por supuesto, también niñas y niños.

Pero aquí estamos hablando de otro crimen de guerra calificado como tal por la Corte Penal Internacional, que ha emitido orden de búsqueda y captura no solo contra Putin, sino contra la comisaria rusa de los Derechos del Niño, de acuerdo con el informe del Comité de Derechos del Niño de las Naciones Unidas de enero y con las Resoluciones de este Parlamento Europeo que condenan el traslado forzoso de más de veinte mil niñas y niños a Rusia. Exige su regreso, su retorno inmediato a donde pertenecen. Y, por supuesto, califica como crimen de guerra lo que lo es: es un crimen de genocidio de acuerdo con el Derecho internacional, además de un crimen de guerra, el privar de identidad y sustraer de la cultura a la que pertenecen a veinte mil niñas y niños inocentes.

Y este Parlamento emite un mensaje muy claro. Puede que no sea mañana ni pasado mañana, pero los crímenes de guerra no prescriben y este Parlamento no va a parar hasta que los responsables de crímenes de guerra sean traídos ante la justicia de la Corte Penal Internacional.

Petras Auštrevičius (Renew). – Madam President, minister, Commissioner, just minutes ago, we have been reminded that Russian infiltration into this House is real and clear. We have to withstand all those pressures and to fight propaganda and disinformation of Russian lifestyle as much as we can. Otherwise we will fail. We will fail miserably.

Colleagues, why do the Russian occupiers separate and deport Ukrainian people? What are the reasons? First of all, it's a part of the systematic destruction of the Ukrainian nation. It's Putin's plan: a Ukraine without Ukrainians. Secondly, the Russian occupiers are trying to compensate for their human losses in Ukraine, and they suffer greatly because of their aggression they started against Ukraine.

This week, it was reported that there is a special programme in Russia to 'Russify' and indoctrinate deported Ukrainian children at schools who are prevented from returning to their homeland. The West must continue to raise the issue of deported Ukrainian children in all international forums.

(The speaker agreed to take a blue-card question)

Miapetra Kumpula-Natri (S&D), blue-card question. – Ms Auštrevičius, do you think we can do more? I am now chairing the INTA Committee's Russia monitoring group on sanctions, and I know how difficult it has been between the Member States to agree.

But also there is good news that there is a long list – 700 pages – of individuals, and also individuals who are in charge of doing this, initiated 'Russification', are taking care of the PR campaign in Russia, which somebody even reads here. They are doing the plans, how they get the passports. And now I also hear bad news from occupied regions that they need passports, Russian passports, to go to schools or they pay people to send them to Siberia.

What can we do more than say to our own national governments that do more? Do you have ideas?

Petras Auštrevičius (Renew), blue-card answer. – Thank you very much for your question, we not only can, we must do much more. And we have to oppose the Putin's regime by all means.

For your information, just yesterday, a close associate of Navalny, Leonid Volkov, was attacked in Vilnius, Lithuania. I mean, they have long hands. They try to impose an atmosphere of fear, uncertainty, to shake us, to make us not moving, not being united.

This Sunday will be a sham election in Russia. Let's call these elections illegitimate. Let's not recognise those results. And we will start from the very beginning, opposing the regime, from very painful place we have. So let's be united and let's not be afraid of making clear and sound decisions.

Catch-the-eye procedure

Sunčana Glavak (PPE). – Poštovana predsjedavajuća, kolegice i kolege, brojna su djetinjstva uništena. Djeca se koriste kao sredstva pritiska ili ratni trofej. A što se događa ovdje pred našim očima u Europskom parlamentu? Ruski agitatori šire neistine i propagandu.

Mi moramo pokazati da smo ujedinjeni, da smo na pravoj strani povijesti i da smo na strani nevinih. Na strani nevinih, onih 20 000 djece koja su deportirana, a samo ih je 388 vraćeno. Takvo masovno preseljenje ukrajinske djece kršenje je normi međunarodnog humanitarnog prava, a čuli smo – Rusija ga provodi isključivo u svrhu njihove daljnje rusifikacije, brisanja nacionalnog identiteta i transformacije njihove ukrajinske svijesti u rusku svijest. Oni žele ruski „svet“, nemojte to nikada zaboraviti, a u našem okruženju događa se nešto slično.

Kolegice i kolege, djecu koriste kao štit, oni su najobičnije kukavice. A što je nama činiti? Dobar je ovo korak, međutim moramo biti snažniji i moramo biti jači. Moramo odmah zatražiti da se svi slučajevi prisilnih nestanaka istraže, a odgovorni odgovaraju za ono što su učinili, a to su ratni zločini.

Miapetra Kumpula-Natri (S&D). – Madam President, I want to be very concrete about what can we do more. I think that when we talk about the children here, there is need for the battlefield help from our side. There is need for Ukrainian society to run. There is no nation during the war if you don't have schools and electricity and systems in place. So we have done our best to also support these 50 billion.

But for the children, once you get the children back or broken families back, what can we do to help them? One idea is these rehabilitation centres that we can create to give them a safer place, if you can find a safer place today in Ukraine. I think we also can help NGOs working very close to those front line and in the society.

I think we don't only need to give more, but give our hearts for the issue and look at the eyes of the children. There has been already one and a half years ago the UN declaration on these deported children and issue. And we just hear the numbers going bigger.

So, if we all put efforts together and also in the international podiums take up this every time you speak, Madam Minister or Commissioner, bring the children on the topic very high.

(End of catch-the-eye procedure)

Dubravka Šuica, Vice-President of the Commission. – Madam President, honourable Members, there is no need to repeat what has been said here this morning. But I have to say that I would subscribe all the statements this morning but one, which was really horrible, by the pro-Russian guy, who tried to disseminate this disinformation, fake news and propaganda. To hear this was disgusting.

The Commission is committed to continue supporting the work of the International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression Against Ukraine via Eurojust. The Commission aims to secure long-term funding for this institution and welcomes that the US will contribute with over USD 1 million to this institution.

Eurojust's Core International Crimes Evidence Database is fully operational to support the activities of the International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine.

The Commission, together with EEAS, is committed to taking forward the discussions on the establishment of a special tribunal for the crime against Ukraine. This discussion has shown the magnitude of the commitments of all of us and that all of us share the same commitments, and we have to address this issue in a much heavier manner, if I may say so.

Time is ticking, and we all need to do our utmost to ensure that these children return to their families and communities. To return the missing Ukrainian children is of vital importance to us in our work, both in terms of political priority and through various initiatives that we will continue to support.

We must help millions of Ukrainian children overcome the terrible trauma that has been inflicted on them to enable them to regain a sense of normality and to regain their childhood in the end.

Every child matters and every Ukrainian child represents Ukrainian future. This is a sentence with which I will repeat: Ukraine cannot be rebuilt without its children. In this way, we must ensure that Ukrainian reconstruction efforts and national reform processes mainstream children's rights and needs throughout. This is something which I'm also in charge of in my demographic portfolio.

Investing in children is an investment in Ukrainians' future, in Europe's future and in a safer world. So it is investment in humanity.

To conclude, once again, Russia must be held accountable for these horrible acts. The European Union is taking action. Sanctions have been imposed on 39 individuals for the deportations and for this forced transport of Ukrainian children.

We keep drawing attention to these horrible acts also in the international fora, which is also important. And, as I already said in my introductory statement, we cooperate under 'Bring Kids Back UA'. So, together we can do more and we are trying to do our best.

Hadja Lahbib, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Madam President, dear Members of Parliament, thank you very much for your contribution to this very important debate. Thank you for your commitment to truth and democracy.

These deportations and forced transfers of children remind us of the darkest moments of the last century. Children are certainly the most vulnerable victims in situations of war and conflict. Since the start of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, over 19 500 Ukrainian children have been forcibly deported and displaced from Ukraine to Russia, with only 388 children able to return home.

It is to say that yes, we must, we have to do more. The fight against impunity for the deportation of children – as well as for other war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Ukraine – is a priority for the Council and, I am sure, for you as well.

The Belgian Presidency is firmly committed to continuing the efforts in the Council, in partnership with the Commission, to continue to provide all necessary support to Ukraine and the ICC to ensure that justice is done. And as Commissioner Šuica has just mentioned, in addition to the four arrest warrants issued, including one against Putin, sanctions have been taken against 39 people linked to these kidnapping and deportations. We will continue to investigate and to try our best to take back home as many children as we can.

President. – We thank you, Minister. With that I will close the debate.

Written statements (Rule 171)

Fabio Massimo Castaldo (Renew), *per iscritto*. – Quella dei bambini deportati in Russia è una tragedia che ricorda pericolosamente da vicino alcune delle pagine più buie della storia umana. Immaginate la paura e l'incertezza di questi bambini, strappati dalle braccia delle loro madri, catapultati in un paese straniero, lontano dai propri affetti e incarcerati in campi di rieducazione forzata. Se questo non è un crimine contro l'umanità, mi chiedo che cosa possa esserlo.

L'ambizione di Putin è chiara: vuole rubare il futuro dell'Ucraina. Quello delle future generazioni, colleghi, è un tema estremamente caro alla nostra Unione e a tutti noi. Abbiamo chiamato il fondo di ripresa dalla pandemia «NextGenerationEU», proprio per sottolineare che le azioni di oggi servono a creare un domani migliore.

Ecco, con la stessa forza, convinzione e determinazione dovremo batterci per dare un futuro migliore alle prossime generazioni di ucraini, tenendo bene a mente che queste sono parte integrante della prossima generazione di europei, che sono i futuri cittadini dell'Unione.

La forza di una società si misura dal modo in cui protegge i suoi membri più vulnerabili. La forza della nostra Unione si misurerà esattamente così: con la capacità che avremo di proteggere questi bambini, dando loro la speranza di un futuro libero, un futuro nella nostra grande famiglia europea.

Ewa Kopacz (PPE), *na piśmie*. – Julia 14 lat, Danil 9 lat, Oleksandr 4 lata. Ty tylko trójka z dziesiątek tysięcy ukraińskich dzieci porwanych przez rosyjski reżim, których dane możemy znaleźć na ukraińskim portalu „Dzieci wojny”. Dzieci siłą wywiezionych z domów dziecka, rozdzielonych z rodzinami w procesie filtracji lub podstępem odebranych rodzicom pod pretekstem wyjazdu na letni obóz.

W zamkniętych instytucjach, w ramach tzw. edukacji patriotycznej, są zmuszane do śpiewania rosyjskiego hymnu, wiwatowania na cześć Putina i przeklinania Ukrainy. Przechodzą szkolenia wojskowe, są upokarzane, zastraszane, a za nieposłuszeństwo bite. Wmawia im się, że Ukraina ich nie chce, że nigdy już nie zobaczą rodziców, że staną się prawdziwymi Rosjanami.

Ta przestępcza polityka rasyfikacji ukraińskich dzieci to zbrodnia przeciwko ludzkości. Putin i jego poplecznicy to zbrodniarze wojenni, a fakt, że na czele tego centralnie sterowanego procederu stoi rosyjska rzeczniczka praw dziecka, pokazuje, jaki jest kremlowski reżim.

Dlatego musimy w każdy sposób wspierać organy państwa ukraińskiego i organizacje, które działają na rzecz powrotu dzieci do ich rodzin, a zbrodniarzowi na Kremlu jasno mówić, że od kary za tę zbrodnię nie ma ucieczki. I nawet jeśli część najmłodszych dzieci zapomni, skąd pochodzi, my musimy pamiętać i dawać świadectwo, bo bitwa o powrót każdego bezprawnie wywiezionego dziecka to walka o przyszłość narodu ukraińskiego.

Eva Maydell (PPE), *in writing*. – Few actions show the destructive and inhumane capability of Putin's war more than the forceful deportation of Ukrainian children. Russian armed forces kidnap young and vulnerable Ukrainians and thereby strip them of their identities, separate them from their families and eventually assimilate them in their totalitarian state.

Letting this cruelty go unnoticed and without adequate response will only embolden Putin. When the EU, an alliance standing for human rights, turns a blind eye to the suffering of Ukrainian children, Putin will feel emboldened to commit even more heinous crimes.

I must reiterate my calls for strong responses. Most fundamentally, we must support civil society organisations that can save these children. These organisations already proved that they can bring children home, as they have done with hundreds of them. However, tens of thousands of young victims remain deported in Russia – far from their schools, families, and communities.

Witold Jan Waszczykowski (ECR), *na piśmie*. – Według informacji ukraińskiego rządu niemal 20 tysięcy dzieci zostało uprowadzonych i wywiezionych w głąb Rosji w przeciągu minionych 2 lat. Zaledwie 388 z nich wróciło bezpiecznie do swoich rodzin. Dzieci te poddawane są reedukacji i rusyfikacji zgodnie z bogatymi tradycjami z czasów carskich i stalinowskich.

Niewyobrażalne tragedie tysięcy ukraińskich rodzin powinny uzmysłować wszystkim na Zachodzie kilka niezaprzeczalnych faktów. Po pierwsze, jeżeli cywilizowany świat ulegnie zmęczeniu wojną na Ukrainie i pozwoli Putinowi wygrać, nasze dzieci i nasze rodziny nie będą mogły czuć się bezpiecznie.

Po drugie, imperium Putina jest chore nie tylko z nienawiści, ale i chore w sensie dosłownym. Populacja Rosji ulega stopniowemu zmniejszaniu od przeszło 25 lat, kiedy Putin przejął władzę. Szacuje się, że jeden na stu Rosjan jest nosicielem wirusa HIV. Śmiertelne żniwo zbiera uzależnienie od alkoholu i narkotyków. Społeczeństwo rosyjskie starzeje się w zatrważającym tempie, a średnia długość życia przeciętnego Rosjanina znacznie odbiega od średniej europejskiej. I w tym również należy upatrywać przyczyn zbrodniczej polityki Putina, mającej na celu zapobieżenie upadkowi chorego imperium przez podbój.

Po trzecie, negocjacje sankcjonujące terytorialne zdobycze Rosji nie zapewnią trwałego pokoju. Putin nie zrezygnuje z dalszych podbojów również z powodów demograficznych. Rosja musi zostać pokonana, a nie przekonana.

4. Inrättandet av ett europeiskt initiativ för att årligen utse europeiska huvudstäder för barn (debatt)

President. – The next item is the debate on a Commission statement on the creation of a European initiative for an annual designation of European capitals for children (2024/2621(RSP)).

I would like to inform Members that there will be only one round of political group speakers, therefore no catch-the-eye procedure, and no blue cards will be accepted.

Dubravka Šuica, *Vice-President of the Commission*. – Madam President, honourable Members, I want to thank you for presenting this initiative. Working on democracy and demography, we have the word *demos*, meaning people. Our work in the European Commission also signifies taking into account the views of all generations in our democracy.

When it comes to children, I want to make the point that they are our agents of change. Throughout my mandate, children have made it clear to me that they are engaged citizens and eager to participate in their democracy. Equally, making children's rights a reality in all dimensions must take place at all levels of governance. This includes the local level, the cities, the regions. This is where we can see how we can make a difference in children's daily lives.

The European Union continues to put children's rights at the heart of its efforts. Just three years after its adoption, the Commission has delivered on the commitments to turn the Strategy on the Rights of the Child into action. It is about empowering local and regional actors to cover all dimensions of children's rights. Everything from health and social inclusion to services and protection against violence.

I would like to single out one key issue that we have collectively tried to address together throughout this mandate, and it is child poverty. In the European Union, one in five children is affected by poverty and socioeconomic exclusion. Many of these children live in cities, it is not only in rural areas. When it comes to the implementation of the European Child Guarantee, our key instrument to tackle child poverty, cities play a crucial role in delivery of services such as early childhood education and care, education, including school-based activities and healthy lunches, and also housing, which is a key problem in Europe nowadays.

So it is essential to continue investing in children. It is essential to fully implement the European Child Guarantee. Also in the next mandate, child poverty in the European Union must be eradicated once and for all.

Cities are key actors in democracy. The participation of children in political and democratic life is a right, it is also a necessity to make our democracies more resilient from within – it's not only from outside. So children want and they have the rights to be included in developing solutions to their problems. They want to be involved in decisions at home, at school, in their cities, regions, countries, but also at the European level. That is why we have launched the European Union Children's Participation Platform, together with children, civil society organisations and the European Parliament. I also want to thank the Intergroup for children because we really cooperate, this is very good collaboration.

We, therefore, learnt about your initiative to establish a European capital for children with interest. In this vein, we also need to recall that any initiative involving children needs to be comprehensive. As you are probably aware, similar ideas have been developed at the European Union level. For example, the very successful European Capital of Culture, European Capital of Democracy – the European Capitals of Inclusion and Diversity Award also recognises the role that cities and local authorities play in fostering diversity and inclusion. The objectives that you set out with this initiative are at the heart of some existing funding schemes.

The European Commission Citizens Equality, Rights and Values programme fosters children's engagement and participation. It also supports citizens' engagement and participation in the policymaking process. Civil society and international organisations have developed initiatives that aim at supporting cities in becoming more attuned to children's needs, and empowering children in voicing their ideas. For example, a Child Friendly Cities Initiative has been led by UNICEF with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child since 1996.

All these initiatives require a thorough and complex process of preparation and management. This would also require exploring all existing mechanisms which could already support such an initiative as the European capital for children. I will end now here, listen to your remarks and then, in the end, I will express our position.

Sabine Verheyen, *im Namen der PPE-Fraktion*. – Frau Präsidentin! Zunächst einmal möchte ich mich bei den vielen Unterstützerinnen und Unterstützern für diese Initiative bedanken – zum Beispiel bei der Präsidentin Roberta Metsola, die vom ersten Moment an sehr positiv war, bei den beiden Vizepräsidentinnen Gabriele Bischoff und Ewa Kopacz, die sehr unterstützend an dieser Initiative beteiligt waren, sowie bei den Initiatoren dieser Initiative. Denn ich glaube, ohne die Initiative von Menschen vor Ort, von Menschen auf der lokalen Ebene, sind viele Aktionen in dieser Form nicht möglich.

Kinder als die jüngsten Mitglieder unserer Gesellschaft sind nicht nur unsere Zukunft, sondern auch unsere Gegenwart. Ihre Gedanken, Ideen und Bedürfnisse sind von unschätzbarem Wert. Ihr Wohlergehen, ihre Bildung und Teilhabe sind entscheidend für die Entwicklung einer gerechten und nachhaltigen Gesellschaft. Kinder dürfen nicht bloß passive Empfänger von Entscheidungen sein; vielmehr ist es unabdingbar, ihre Stimme zu hören und ihre Ansichten ernst zu nehmen.

Als Mitglieder des Europäischen Parlaments haben wir uns erfolgreich dafür eingesetzt, die Rechte von Kindern zu stärken, sei es durch Gesetzgebung, Bildungsprogramme und Schutzmaßnahmen. Nun fordern wir die Kommission dazu auf, Möglichkeiten zu evaluieren, um eine europäische Kinderhauptstadt zu etablieren, denn es ist auch wichtig, dass wir die lokalen Gebietskörperschaften, dass wir die Gemeinden und die Städte, die sich gerade für Kinderrechte, für die Partizipation von Kindern engagieren, sichtbar machen, Best-Practice-Modelle deutlich machen.

Eine solche Kinderhauptstadt würde den Kindern neben der *EU Children's Participation Platform* eine physische Plattform bieten, um ihre Anliegen zu äußern und Ideen zu teilen. Darüber hinaus hätten sie die Möglichkeit, die EU spielerisch kennenzulernen und Demokratie hautnah zu erleben. Dies würde nicht nur ihr Selbstvertrauen stärken, sondern auch ihr Verständnis für Demokratie und die EU fördern. Durch die Begegnungsmöglichkeiten von Kindern aus verschiedenen Ländern und Hintergründen könnte schon in jungen Jahren das interkulturelle Verständnis gefördert werden, was Grundlage für ein friedliches und harmonisches Zusammenleben in der EU ist.

Die europäische Kinderhauptstadt ist eine logische Ergänzung zu erfolgreichen Initiativen der europäischen Jugendhauptstadt. Beide Initiativen könnten durch eine ausreichende europäische Förderung ihr volles Potenzial entfalten. Lassen Sie uns die Initiative der europäischen Kinderhauptstadt angehen und damit einen bedeutenden Schritt für die Stärkung unserer Kinder, der Zukunft unserer Demokratie und der Völkerverständigung in Europa setzen!

Gabriele Bischoff, *im Namen der S&D-Fraktion*. – Frau Präsidentin, Frau Vizepräsidentin Šuica! Es ist mir eine große Ehre, dass wir heute diese Entschließung des Europäischen Parlaments auf den Weg bringen, eine Entschließung, die fordert, dass wir tatsächlich eine europäische Kinderhauptstadt starten und dass wir den Mut haben, die Kinder, ihr Wohlbefinden, ihre Rechte, ihre Chancen und Teilhabe in den Mittelpunkt zu stellen – nicht als Anhängsel, nicht sozusagen nebenbei.

Im Oktober haben wir einen offenen Brief gestartet, und 49 Abgeordnete aus vielen Fraktionen haben ihn unterstützt. Ich möchte mich auch noch einmal ausdrücklich bei Vizepräsidentin Ewa Kopacz für die sehr gute Zusammenarbeit hier bedanken.

Diese Entschließung ist auch eine Erfolgsgeschichte von einem kleinen Förderverein aus Hamburg, der sich seit Jahren für dieses Projekt eingesetzt hat. Wenn wir wollen, dass Europa eine Zukunft hat, dann müssen wir den Kindern eine Stimme geben. Das hat der Vereinsvorsitzende Jan Haarmeyer erklärt, der auch hier heute unserer Debatte folgt und den ich sehr herzlich begrüße. Wir brauchen eine starke Kinderhauptstadt, die muss mit Ressourcen unterlegt sein, weil wirklich die jungen Europäerinnen und Europäer unsere Zukunft sind.

Wir bauen auf auf vielen Initiativen – das haben meine Vorrednerinnen schon gesagt – in Europa: der Kindergarantie, den Initiativen für mehr Kinderrechte. Auch weil wir gerade in der Pandemie gesehen haben, dass Kinder ganz besonders zurückstecken mussten, Kitas geschlossen waren, und dass wir durch diese Kinderhauptstadt auch ausdrücken können, dass wir den Fokus wirklich wieder auf Kinder und Jugendliche lenken.

Wir wollen, dass sie an der Zukunft Europas beteiligt werden. Wir wollen sie zusammenbringen. Wir wollen, dass die Städte – und es ist gesagt worden – als Akteure, wo Europa stattfindet, hier auch mit im Zentrum stehen und zeigen können, was sie wirklich alles unternehmen, um das Leben von Kindern zu verbessern.

Deshalb glaube ich, lassen Sie uns, Frau Kommissarin, dafür einsetzen, dass wir diese Kinderhauptstadt so schnell wie möglich auf den Weg bringen, dass wir den Kindern das Signal geben: Ihr seid die Zukunft, wir trauen uns, das zu machen.

Laurence Farreng, *au nom du groupe Renew*. – Madame la Présidente, Madame la Commissaire, chers collègues, la place de l'enfant doit être centrale dans notre société. Nous en avons bien conscience, ici, au Parlement européen. Nous avons créé la garantie européenne pour l'enfance en 2021 pour financer des projets en faveur de l'accès des enfants à tous les services essentiels: la santé, l'éducation et une bonne alimentation. Mais il reste tellement à faire pour les enfants, qui sont les premières victimes de la pauvreté et des violences familiales. Nous devons agir dans la lutte contre les abus sexuels, contre l'inceste, pour la protection des enfants en ligne, pour l'éducation au numérique.

Oui, une capitale serait une bonne initiative, mais nous devons avant tout progresser sur le plan réglementaire et social. Je soutiens cette idée, mais je plaide pour que les politiques européennes en faveur des enfants aient une vraie place, au-delà des nouvelles initiatives, qui peinent à exister. Nous avons en effet déjà les capitales européennes pour la jeunesse, mais, sans financement européen, elles ne peuvent pas se développer. Donnons donc plutôt de vrais moyens financiers et logistiques à ces capitales de la jeunesse, et, ensuite, créons les capitales européennes de l'enfant.

Diana Riba i Giner, *en nombre del Grupo Verts/ALE*. – Señora presidenta, los niños y las niñas serán los que en el futuro se verán directamente afectados por las decisiones que nosotros, los adultos, tomemos hoy. Así que debemos garantizar no solo que sus voces, sus necesidades y sus prioridades sean tenidas en cuenta, sino también que puedan participar plenamente en aquellos procesos que marcarán sus vidas. Y esto, además, debe hacerse en coordinación y cooperación con las autoridades locales, los Estados miembros y las organizaciones de la sociedad civil dirigidas por niños o que trabajen con ellos. En este sentido, las ciudades deben ser los primeros entornos seguros y protectores.

Por eso damos la bienvenida a iniciativas como las capitales europeas de la infancia, aunque debemos garantizar que, para que alcancen su máximo potencial, se complementen con otras iniciativas existentes —como la Capital Europea de la Juventud— y que sean codirigidas por los propios niños a través de sus organizaciones y clubes.

Al fin y al cabo, como nos recuerda Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, todas las personas mayores fueron al principio niños, aunque pocas de ellas lo recuerden.

Андрей Слабаков, *от името на групата ECR*. – Г-жо Председател, аз знам какво ще донесе тази инициатива и какво ще се случва в тези столици. Това вече е правено в България, казва се Асамблея „Знаме на мира“. Там се събираха от цял свят. Прави се с цел промиване на мозъци. Значи тези тоталитарни прийоми на мен са ми известни, защото аз не съм много малък.

Това, което ме притеснява, е, че децата трябва да взимат решения. Вече е правено от Червените кхмери в Камбоджа, резултатът е два милиона убити, като много от тези решения са на деца. Това не е, защото децата са лоши, това е, защото те са много емоционални и все още нямат изградена ценностна система, а тя се гради в семейството. И освен това какво означава децата да се образуват като европейски граждани? Те са първо граждани на собствените си държави, после са европейски граждани, жители на Земята и обитатели на Слънчевата система. В крайна сметка столицата на децата ще бъде поредното безсмислено прахосване на пари и то най-вече за сметка на държавите.

Sandra Pereira, *em nome do Grupo The Left*. – Senhora Presidente, à designação anual das capitais europeias da criança deveriam corresponder medidas concretas que fizessem cumprir o objetivo de erradicar a pobreza e a exclusão social infantil, criando condições de igualdade de oportunidades para que todas as crianças possam ter um desenvolvimento integral, equilibrado e saudável. De outra forma, como tantas outras iniciativas, propalam-se objetivos sem que lhes corresponda a ação necessária para os concretizar.

Às crianças deve ser garantido o direito a brincar no local onde vivem e sem medos, a desfrutar da natureza e de espaços verdes, de equipamentos que fomentem a prática desportiva, da criação e fruição cultural, sem discriminações e violência. As cidades, vilas e aldeias, e os territórios, devem promover equipamentos adequados que garantam estes direitos e uma oferta alargada de transportes públicos de qualidade que possibilite a mobilidade para poder usufruir.

Esta iniciativa não ilude o problema real: uma em cada quatro crianças na União Europeia são afetadas pela pobreza e a exclusão social. Este é também o resultado das políticas da UE de empobrecimento, ao mesmo tempo que cauciona os lucros crescentes dos grandes grupos económicos.

Exigem-se respostas que assentem em três eixos fundamentais: a garantia da salvaguarda dos direitos próprios das crianças; direitos sociais e laborais para os pais ou cuidadores; e serviços públicos universais, gratuitos e de qualidade.

Num relatório recente, do qual fui relatora, elencaram-se propostas que falta concretizar: o aumento da oferta pública e universal de serviços de creches e educação pré-escolar; o reforço do investimento em serviços de saúde ou educação universais, públicos e de qualidade; a garantia de condições decentes na habitação; o acesso a uma nutrição equilibrada ou a transportes acessíveis; a conexão entre a concretização dos direitos das crianças e a efetivação dos direitos dos seus pais, nomeadamente através da defesa do trabalho com direitos e com salários justos, bem como do acesso aos direitos parentais, incluindo o direito à amamentação; a defesa e a afirmação do direito a brincar.

Para além destas, impõem-se ainda medidas que consagrem um caminho de garantias e reforço dos direitos dos pais, nomeadamente a redução do horário de trabalho para as 35 horas semanais; reforçar a proteção social das crianças, nomeadamente através da universalização e reforço do abono de família; a limitação do trabalho por turnos, noturno, ao fim de semana e em laboração contínua; o combate à precariedade; e creche gratuita para todas as crianças até aos três anos e a criação de uma rede pública de creches, que é o que temos defendido em Portugal.

Dubravka Šuica, *Vice-President of the Commission*. – Madam President, thank you, dear honourable Members, I have listened attentively to your remarks, and thank you for your visions and for your proposal.

I can agree that we have to give children a voice. As a preliminary draft assessment, the Commission believes that such an initiative would require analysis, preparation, building on existing initiatives and already available funding schemes, in close consultation with all relevant stakeholders.

But coordination is necessary. These stakeholders would include – I will repeat – international organisations such as Unicef and key children's rights organisations. The provisions and safeguards of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child will need to underpin this proposal, with the best interests of the child at the centre.

It is also important to consult local and regional stakeholders, and especially children themselves, on their priorities and their needs, which could be broader than this specific initiative. Joining forces is key to make a change in children's lives – together with the European Parliament, with Member States, local authorities, international and civil society organisations, practitioners, the whole society and children themselves.

In this vein, I also want to thank this House for your engagement and partnership in making the European Union Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the European Child Guarantee a reality for every child. At this stage, we take good note of welcoming and underlying principles, and the importance of embedding children's rights in local realities.

We also note that this initiative seems to be at a preliminary reflection stage. To conclude, we therefore invite you to analyse this proposal in more detail, taking into account existing initiatives and mechanisms. We will evaluate your proposal.

And I have to tell you, on a personal note, when I was a mayor back in 2000, I established a Children's City Council so children could elect or select their own mayor, because we know that democracy starts at a very early stage. You might have noticed that we adopted in the European Commission the Defence of Democracy package, which was announced by President von der Leyen in this House. Today, we have to defend democracy – it's obvious, unfortunately.

So where do we start? We have to defend democracy from within. It's not only about disinformation and something which comes from different third countries; it's also within. We have to make our children be literate to differentiate between what is fake and what is a lie. What is true? What is this information? What is genuine information?

So we have to start from a very early stage and this is what we are proposing. This is very important. We established the Children's Participation Platform, which is now operational, so children can express their views there. So I think that this is very important.

I see Ms Bischoff here remembering the future of Europe. You know that we incorporated one third of youngsters into this exercise, and youngsters for us are children from 16 to 25 years old. So we know when we talk about the future of Europe, we talk about their future. So how can you talk about them without them? And we want to have them in.

I think this initiative is excellent. It's always about resources, so let's see how we can join forces and how we can find resources. So at this stage we take good note, but it doesn't mean that we cannot develop this initiative in the next mandate. Thank you very much for this initiative and let's stay in touch.

President. – We thank you, Commissioner. I have received one motion for a resolution to wind up the debate¹.

The debate is closed and the vote will be held tomorrow.

(The sitting was suspended at 10.12)

1 See minutes.

PRESIDENZA: ROBERTA METSOLA

President

5. Återupptagande av sammanträdet

(The sitting resumed at 10.37)

6. Detta är Europa – debatt med Finlands statsminister Petteri Orpo (debatt)

President. – Dear colleagues, good morning – *hyvää huomenta*. I am delighted to announce that we have the Prime Minister of Finland, Petteri Orpo, with us today.

Dear Prime Minister, dear Petteri, welcome to the European Parliament. Thank you for accepting our invitation to address this House as part of our ‘This is Europe’ series of debates.

Finland is a nation I know well and one that I can say holds a very special place in my heart. But allow me now on behalf of all Members of this House to reiterate the European Parliament’s appreciation for Finland’s commitment to the European Union – over your thirty year membership – to our shared values, and particularly for your support to Ukraine and to our collective security.

Thank you, Prime Minister, for your personal leadership and your resolve towards strengthening our European project, for Finland’s support to a free and democratic Ukraine, and I wish to commend you on steering Finland towards NATO membership.

Having a 1 400 kilometre border with Russia means that Finland is uniquely qualified to lead when it comes to Europe’s security and defence. It also means that Finland has faced hybrid threats in recent weeks and months that have put pressure on our systems. We understand that our security architecture must be able to respond to the level of threat our way of life is facing.

Finland has benefitted from close to EUR 2 billion in recovery and resilience funds that will support Finland’s economy in the digital and green transition, and RePowerEU cleantech funds will continue to support Finland’s innovation and businesses on the road to sustainable growth. This is important to underline.

And it is important – as I said in Helsinki last week – that as many Finnish citizens as possible continue to help shape the future of Europe and go out to vote in the European Parliament elections on 9 June.

Dear Prime Minister, dear Petteri, the floor is yours.

Petteri Orpo, Prime Minister of Finland. – Madam Speaker, dear Roberta, honourable Members of the European Parliament, fellow Europeans, it’s good to see you. Many familiar faces here today.

I am happy to be here at the European Parliament – a building I have visited numerous times, previously as Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Minister of the Interior and Minister of Finance.

Today, I stand before you not just as the Prime Minister of Finland but also as a committed European, eager to share Finland's vision for a resilient, competitive and secure Europe.

Now we find ourselves at a key moment in history, one that calls for our courage, unity and determination. We have returned to the very fundamentals of European integration: promoting peace and defending our values. The ongoing war in Ukraine is not just a conflict on our continent's borders; it is a stark reminder of the fragility of our peace. It threatens the very principles on which our Union was built. As Europeans, it is high time for us to wake up and smell the coffee. This is the defining challenge of our generation and our continent.

Finland, which shares a long border – more than 1 300 kilometres – with Russia, understands the significance of this moment. Finland has never dropped the ball when it comes to security and defence. After the Cold War, we remained committed to maintaining a credible and independent defence capacity.

Our decision to join NATO is not one we took lightly; it was a clear signal of our commitment to European security. Now we are happy to finally welcome our close neighbour Sweden to the Alliance. Welcome.

(Applause)

The war in Ukraine has been a wake-up call for all of us. We must never again be so reliant on others for our energy and security. We must take care of our own defence. Ramping up our defence industry, improving our preparedness and strengthening our borders are critical pillars of our shared security architecture. We are living in a time where practically all policy fields are linked to our security, and without security, we cannot ensure a prosperous future for Europe.

For us in Finland, the EU is the most important political and economic frame of reference and community of values. My Government is committed to a strong European Union – an EU that acts, not only reacts. We want to build a Union that takes care of our common security and works for our economy. Upholding the rule of law in Europe must remain our core principle.

Today I have three main points for the future of Europe and the next mandate.

First, we have to strengthen Europe's strategic competitiveness. The reason our economic competitiveness is so crucial is simple. Europe is falling behind in productivity. Our standard of living is diminishing compared to others. The United States and China are experiencing faster growth and attracting investments. Should this trend persist, we will no longer be able to stand on our own feet.

We must build our competitiveness by developing our strengths and through market-based solutions, with a fully functioning internal market at the core. This foundation will enable us to thrive in an increasingly competitive global landscape.

We need to cut the bureaucratic red tape, implement sustainable fiscal policies, reform labour market regulation, and conclude new trade deals. We must foster innovation and skills, strengthen our internal market and ensure significant funding for innovation and research.

These initiatives are the bedrock of long-term competitiveness. There is an immense need to finance our defence and the green transition, as well as broader competitiveness-enhancing policy areas like research and innovation.

We must also utilise existing instruments more effectively. This means reforming the next MFF and seeking more financial resources from the markets, for example through the EIB and by developing the Capital Markets Union. We need a true European Investment Union. It is essential that we make investing in Europe attractive again.

The urgency of reverting the State aid rules to their normal framework has become increasingly apparent. The escalation of State aid competition threatens the very core of our single market. Such competition can lead to a race to the bottom, where countries with deeper pockets can unfairly support their domestic industries.

The principle of a single market is founded on equal opportunities for all, not a fragmented landscape where walls are built and financial muscle overshadows market dynamics. It is crucial that we restore the normal State aid rules. A healthy single market benefits all European citizens and business – today and in the long term.

Jacques Delors, father of the European single market, would indeed be deeply concerned by the current practices regarding the relaxation of State aid rules. The dilution of these rules risks undermining the level playing field Delors worked so tirelessly to establish.

When it comes to our trade policy, we must refocus on the core principles of trade policy itself. Our setbacks have often stemmed from pursuing broad-ranging agreements with noble intentions and expecting our negotiating partners to commit to them. If we want to be globally relevant, we need a better ability to conclude, ratify and implement trade deals, not a better ability to bring them down.

(Applause)

The European Union's trade policy is not only a vital instrument for boosting competitiveness; it has become crucial in building partnerships in today's global landscape.

Friends, secondly, we have to improve European comprehensive security. This includes defence and border security, but also preparedness more broadly.

Firstly, ramping up our defence industry is priority number one. The European Union has the regulation and the resources, and we need to use those tools. Even as a member of NATO, we think that Europe can do a lot. NATO and the EU do not exclude each other – they complement each other.

Next, on border security, Russia has weaponised migration to put pressure on Finland and the entire EU. Russia is pushing third country nationals towards our eastern land border. This is not acceptable. The numbers are still relatively low, but the phenomenon is worrisome. If we can't stop this phenomenon now, it will also become a question of numbers and a greater threat to national and European security. Security at the EU's external borders is at the core of the EU's existence.

Safeguarding our external front lines against any form of hybrid attacks is crucial. This is why our response has been decisive. We have closed our eastern land border and are in the process of preparing new legislation. We are doing this to protect the entire European Union. A hybrid attack on our border is a hybrid attack against the whole of Europe. Therefore, we need to evaluate our existing European legislation, to see whether it is strong enough to tackle these challenges in its current state. If not, then we must consider updating it to better suit the time we are living in. We must send a clear message: Europe is resolute in its defence, agile in its response, and firm in its commitment to the safety of its borders.

In addressing the security of our borders, we must also focus on the people who live in these critical areas. Tourism and all cross-border trade has stopped indefinitely. The vitality of the EU's external border regions is crucial, not just for national security but for the cohesion of our society. The war has caused the economic base in these border areas to decline. This trend, if unchanged, will lead to depopulation and pose a grave risk to the security and stability of our Union. It is necessary that we implement EU-level policies aimed at revitalising these areas and making them more secure against external threats.

On preparedness. Preparedness for crises is one of the cornerstones of security. The EU and its Member States must be better prepared for a growing number of increasingly complex crises, as we have learned from the COVID-19 crisis, the war in Ukraine and the energy crisis. It is in everyone's interest to improve the level of preparedness of all Member States and the EU as a whole.

In this context of preparedness, Finland stands ready to share our experiences of resilience and readiness. Our nation has long been recognised as a superpower in preparedness. It is a status born out of necessity and reinforced by our history and geopolitical position.

We have developed comprehensive strategies that cover all sectors of society, from public to private. Our approach to preparedness includes not only physical defences but also societal resilience, which is critical in facing both conventional and hybrid threats.

I believe Finland's model of preparedness could offer valuable lessons for the European Union. By adopting similar comprehensive and forward-thinking strategies, we can enhance the resilience of the entire Union.

This is why we ask the Commission to develop and publish the first EU strategy for a Preparedness Union. This should be based on a whole-of-society approach, where the needs and contributions of all political sectors are taken into account.

We are not suggesting another policy document; we are calling for an innovative blueprint that ensures the European Union's resilience in the face of complex challenges.

Our third priority has to do with the environment and climate. With the right kind of climate policy, we can strengthen our security of supply, boost our economies and improve the supply of European raw materials. The Government of Finland is committed to reaching the climate goals. We think that while tackling climate change, we can also create jobs and phase out fossil fuels. We have the technology and know-how for this here in Europe.

We must emphasise a clean transition that leverages the bioeconomy and circular economy. With clean energy – in the form of nuclear power, wind power, solar power and biomass – we will attract industry that can produce and export these clean solutions.

We should combat climate change and support biodiversity in a way that recognises the diverse circumstances across the Member States. A technology-neutral, cost-effective clean transition will pave the way for sustainable growth. The bioeconomy and renewable natural resources are our allies in reducing emissions and diminishing harmful dependencies on third countries.

As we look towards the next legislative term, it is important to admit that our environmental and climate goals cannot be achieved through more regulation alone. Regulation has been necessary and will continue to be, but our approach thus far has focused too much on the details, losing sight of the broader picture.

We must have proper impact assessments. In the upcoming term, we must recalibrate our climate policy and shift away from overly detailed regulation to fostering innovation. We need carrots and incentives, not sticks and bureaucracy.

(Applause)

As I approach the end of my speech, I will turn back to the situation in Ukraine. I say it is our job as leaders to fight against any pessimism and to show an example and leadership. Everyone has to wake up.

Russia continues to commit war crimes in Ukraine. It has shifted to a war economy. Russia is evidently preparing for a long conflict with the West and represents a permanent and existential military threat to Europe. If we, as a united Europe, fail to respond sufficiently to this challenge, the coming years will be filled with danger and the looming threat of attack.

We must bolster our support for Ukraine now for it to win this war and at the same time enhance our own defence capabilities and the ability to defend ourselves.

(Applause)

It is also essential that we offer a credible European path forward for Ukraine. Enlargement of the EU is a geopolitical necessity and a question of security.

Ukraine has demonstrated its ability to defend itself, and the Ukrainian people's resolve remains high. Their resilience and determination pose a significant challenge to Russian interests. Supporting Ukraine is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic necessity. The cost of Russian military success would far exceed the investment required to support Ukraine. Imagine what will happen next if Russia succeeds.

I say that every euro spent on Ukraine today is a low price compared to the alternative costs if Russia wins.

(Applause)

We have already taken significant steps, but more must be done. Ukraine is fighting, and we have the resources to support it. Ukraine deserves a just and lasting peace on its own terms. Securing the agreement on the EU's Ukraine Facility among all 27 Member States was crucial.

Next, we need to deliver on ammunition production and agree on additional funding for the European Peace Facility and Ukraine Assistance Fund as quickly as possible. Finland is doing its share: we have increased our ammunition production, and I urge all Member States to do the same.

(Applause)

It is crucial to recognise that Russia's military capabilities are limited, despite its attempts to hide this fact. Russia is not invincible. We can overcome this challenge if we pool our resources together. We have the financial means, now we need to demonstrate our political commitment. Self-satisfaction is no longer an option; our collective future depends on our ability to recognise and counteract the threats posed by an aggressive and militarised Russia.

Strengthening our defence is not just a matter of national security – it is a precondition for preserving the peace and stability that have long been the hallmarks of European integration and prosperity.

In this light, we have to amplify the European Investment Bank's engagement in security and defence financing.

(Applause)

Recognising the EIB's pivotal role in investment financing and as the EU's lending arm, there is an urgent call to extend its capabilities beyond dual-use projects, especially in response to the growing demands within the European security and defence sectors.

Friends, more Europe doesn't and shouldn't mean less America. The United States is and will be our most important ally and we must strengthen our trans-Atlantic links in both defence and trade.

Dear friends, let us leave this hemicycle today with a clear resolve: to strengthen our Union, to secure our borders and to support our friends in need with more than just words. Our actions today will define the legacy of our generation and shape the course of history. The time for action is now.

Thank you.

(Applause)

Manfred Weber, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – Madam President, Madam Vice-President, dear Prime Minister, dear Petteri, first of all, thank you for addressing the European Parliament and as an EPP Group leader, I want to congratulate you for the trust you received from the Finnish people for being elected as Prime Minister and after your success, Alexander Stubb was elected as President of Finland. So it is in good safe EPP hands today, thanks to the trust of the Finnish people.

Finland is a true EPP – European – success story, and also an EPP success story. The first country in Europe to introduce a universal election law for parliamentary elections in '96. In '97, when women had no voting rights in most of Europe, they were already 19 members in the Finnish Parliament – women, female members – in the Finnish Parliament. Since gaining independence in 1917, Finland has made an incredible journey: from being one of the poorest countries in Europe, it has become one of the most successful. And today, Finland is a European leader in gender equality, climate policy and innovation. Probably it has something to do with 'sisu', the special determination that defines the Finnish national character.

And, dear Petteri, you and Kokoomus have definitely shown some special determination in always standing up for Finland's accession to NATO. The Finnish Socialists and Greens changed their minds about joining NATO only after the invasion of Ukraine, while already in 2018, you were warning Europe, I quote: 'The crisis in Ukraine, recent terrorist attacks and hybrid threats have shown that both the EU's defence cooperation and NATO are needed and that they can complement each other.' And that is really true EPP leadership.

Finland makes both NATO and the European defence stronger. Not only do you bring the strongest artillery in Western Europe, an army capable of fighting in -40 degrees, but also the experience of guarding Europe's longest border with Russia. Finns know what it means to have Russians as neighbours. Like the Ukrainians, you fought in cold trenches and frozen forests to stay free. The only difference is that you stood up to Stalin alone, whereas today we stand together against Putin.

This means not only supporting Ukraine as long as this takes, but also stopping Putin's hybrid warfare against the Finnish border, as you said. Finland also is currently building up a fence to protect our external border. We, as the EPP do what is necessary to do and, dear Petteri, the Finnish border is a European border, as you said. The Finnish border is NATO border. No dictator can use illegal migration as a weapon to blackmail us as Europeans.

Standing together always means to build up also a competitive Europe. And when it comes to innovation, the Finns are hard to beat. Finland is today a world leader in digital infrastructure, the first country in Europe to build up a 5G network and it is already ready to implement 6G. Finland, Europe's forest, has made innovation the basis of its climate policy. Companies are investing currently EUR 200 billion, 70 % of Finland's GDP, in our green transition. Almost 1 in 3 Finnish employees works directly or indirectly in the tech sector. So you are proving that innovation is the way to more, to better quality jobs. And how do we do so? High quality education, investment and research and development for more than 3 % of GDP and cutting red tape. To become more innovative, Europe must become more like Finland.

Dear Petteri, your leadership is making Europe stronger, safer and ready to face not only today's challenges, but also tomorrow's challenges. Thank you for being with us.

Iratxe García Pérez, on behalf of the S&D Group. – Madam President, dear Prime Minister, welcome to the European Parliament. Welcome to the House of the European democracy.

The European people learned through great suffering that hate and fear are dangerous to democracy, a hate and fear that the far right has against those who they consider to be different, a hate and fear that are affecting the centre right within the European Union, where the far right has been allowed to be part of five national governments and hundreds of regional and municipal governments.

Dear Members, Finland is another example of the regression and the decline represented by the alliance between the European People's Party and the far right. Mr Orpo, do you believe that the best way to defend workers' rights is to promote dismissals, undermine social dialogue and restrict the right to strike? Do you think that the best way to eradicate poverty and inequality is to reduce public spending on pensions, unemployment benefits, housing and parental allowances?

Are you proud of your Finance Minister when she posts on social media with large scissors, expressing satisfaction at cutting people's income and social security? Do you feel comfortable governing with a minister who declared himself a Nazi? And this person is still a minister.

Mr Orpo, your alliance with the far right is the real threat to our democracy and to the European project. This is why the future of the European Union is at stake. And the question that we must ask our citizens is clear. What kind of Europe do we want?

A Europe hostage to climate change denial or a Europe committed to fight against it and that makes the green transition an opportunity to create wealth? A Europe that undermines the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women or a Europe that defends the feminist cause and the achievements of women? A Europe of the elites or a Europe that protects workers in the face of the challenges posed by artificial intelligence and protects families in time of crisis, as we did during the pandemic on the war?

Dear Members, in times of uncertainty and great transformation, it is not enough to simply try to resist the reactionary wave. We have to move forward. We need a European project that makes citizens proud again to be European, a project that is not guided by the fear, hate and pessimism of the right and the far right.

Mr Orpo, Mr Weber, put an end to your alliance with those who want to destroy Europe. Let us continue building a Union that will be a beacon to inspire the world through its example of integration and progress; a Union with more democracy and more equality; a Union that makes the social pillar a reality with decent jobs and affordable housing; a Union that is more united and also more open; a Union at the forefront of the fight against climate change, committed to human rights, and that places people at the centre of the digital transformation.

Mr Orpo, Mr Weber, your only enemy is the far right. In the last century, your political family made a mistake by opening the door to the far right, and Europe and the world paid a high price. Now, let us say no to the darkness and yes to more years of hope and progress.

Valérie Hayer, *au nom du groupe Renew*. – Madame la Présidente, Madame la Vice-Présidente, Monsieur le Premier Ministre, beaucoup, dans cet hémicycle, ont toujours considéré la Finlande, votre pays, comme une terre où règnent quiétude et sérénité. À tel point que nombreux sont ceux qui ont oublié que la Finlande partage la plus longue frontière d'Europe avec la Russie. Une frontière qui a été, vous l'avez rappelé, le théâtre d'une guerre hybride avec l'instrumentalisation de migrants, l'hiver dernier, par Vladimir Poutine. Avec l'arrivée du printemps, il y a fort à parier que cela soit de nouveau bientôt le cas.

C'est inacceptable, et l'Union européenne doit continuer à apporter le soutien nécessaire, comme elle a déjà commencé à le faire en mobilisant les agents de Frontex. Quelles que soient les manœuvres de Vladimir Poutine, nous nous y opposerons. Nous nous y opposerons, comme nous nous opposons à sa propagande – propagande qui voudrait faire croire que l'OTAN serait une force s'étendant tel un empire pour encercler la Russie. C'est un mensonge, et l'adhésion de la Finlande à l'OTAN en est une nouvelle preuve. Ce n'est pas l'OTAN qui s'étend d'elle-même, ce sont des États souverains qui font le choix, démocratiquement, de demander à rejoindre notre alliance. Pas l'inverse.

Si de nouveaux États souhaitent rejoindre l'OTAN, ce n'est évidemment pas par hasard. C'est parce qu'ils comprennent que le monde a évolué et que la Russie les menace à un tel point qu'ils sont prêts à renoncer à une politique de neutralité ancrée depuis des décennies dans leur identité politique.

Monsieur le Premier Ministre, chers collègues, tout cela démontre que la Finlande a sa place dans le réveil stratégique de l'Europe. Et pour cela, l'Union européenne doit muscler sa politique pour l'Arctique, où les intérêts des Américains, des Chinois ou des Russes sont grandissants. Des acteurs, disons-le, qui ne fondent pas nécessairement les mêmes espoirs que les Européens dans cette aire.

C'est pourquoi il nous faut une véritable stratégie, qui s'empare non seulement de la protection du climat et de la biodiversité dans la région, mais aussi des enjeux de défense et de diplomatie qui s'y jouent. C'est désormais un impératif géopolitique, pour la Finlande, pour toutes ces régions et pour l'Europe.

Philippe Lamberts, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – Madam President, dear Prime Minister, welcome to the European Parliament. It is a pleasure to have you here.

As a leader of the Greens, you can imagine that I was expecting what you would say on the climate. I had to wait for a while in your speech to get to that point, and the first thing that struck me is that there was a lot in your speech about competitiveness, at the beginning, and then some stuff on the climate, and you don't make the link. But this is the only game in town for Europe. If we do not lead this transition, China and the US will. So it is a matter of economic survival for Europe. It is not a detail of something that we can leave for later.

Second: details. You say that we focussed on details. Setting ourselves the goal of climate neutrality – a detail? Regulations to reduce emissions in transport, in buildings, in energy – details? Absolutely not! What we did is focus on the bare essentials.

There's one point I agree with you on, which is that no, you cannot achieve everything through regulation. There I totally agree. But regulation sets ourselves targets and creates markets. So we need regulation. You cannot say okay, we should dispense with it. You didn't say that, but you cannot at the same time say we need more carrots, but then we don't want to spend money on it. I mean, what are the carrots if it is not public money?

There again I see really a contradiction in doing it. If we don't want to do it through regulation, it is going to be subsidies. That's what the US are doing. That's what's China is doing. They do not do anything on regulation; they do everything on subsidies. We have a more balanced approach where we have both regulation – say 'sticks' – and subsidies, and that's 'carrots'. But if you say we need less regulation and we want less state aid, and at the same time you say we want more climate action, then something is wrong. It doesn't work. You can't have all this.

Every study that looks at investment says we need between 2% and 2.5% of GDP extra on investment if we want to reach our climate targets. Of this, most agree that at least half should be public investment. There is no way around this. So this is a moment where we need to step up the public investment. Again, I would call on you to support these investments locally and at the European level rather than oppose them.

Finally, Prime Minister, you know, I disagree with Manfred Weber on a lot of things. I disagree with Valérie Hayer on a lot of things. I disagree with Iratxe García on a lot of things, and with the far left as well. But at least we have a common base. We have a common base, and that is that human dignity is indivisible. None of us says that some human beings are inferior or implies this. And this is where I believe that people like us should never, never go into alliance with people who de facto consider some human beings as inferior. That's what you did in Finland. I'm glad, Manfred, that your colleagues in Portugal are not going to do that.

Nicola Procaccini, *a nome del gruppo ECR*. – Signora Presidente, signor primo ministro Orpo, è un grande piacere darLe il benvenuto a nome dei Conservatori europei.

Vista da qui, la vostra vittoria alle elezioni in Finlandia è stata più importante di quanto Lei possa immaginare; lei ha sconfitto la stella nascente dei socialisti europei, una delle massime esponenti delle follie *eurogreen*, un'icona dell'agenda progressista globale, e questa cosa non gliela perdoneranno mai.

Ed ancora più significativa è stata la scelta di governare insieme al partito dei Finlandesi, autorevole membro della nostra famiglia politica; è riuscito a resistere alla pressione di chi non voleva l'unione tra una forza politica del PPE ed una dell'ECR, perché se il centrodestra è unito vince, ovunque in Europa, e questo le sinistre lo sanno bene.

Purtroppo talvolta riescono ancora a dividerci. Ricorda le parole di Paavo Haavikko? «Quando le decisioni sono importanti, non tutti sono in grado di prenderle». Fortunatamente le sinistre non ce l'hanno fatta a Praga, a Stoccolma, a Roma e a Helsinki.

E i fatti ci dicono che il vostro governo sta rilanciando l'economia, diminuendo la burocrazia, difendendo la famiglia e preservando le tradizioni nazionali. Avete un approccio fermo e pragmatico sull'immigrazione e avete compiuto la storica scelta di aderire alla NATO, rafforzando la nostra sicurezza comune in uno dei confini più difficili del nostro continente e della nostra libertà. *This is Europe!* Questa è l'Europa che amiamo e per cui vale la pena battersi! Buon lavoro.

Jaak Madison, *ID-ryhmän puolesta*. – Arvoisa puhemies, hyvät kollegat, arvoisa pääministeri Orpo, olen oikein iloinen, että minulla on mahdollisuus puhua täällä virolaisena eli Suomen naapurimaan edustajana, joka on kulttuurisesti, historiallisesti ja kielellisesti lähellä Suomea.

Ensinnäkin ei voida korostaa liikaa sitä, kuinka tärkeää Suomen liittyminen Natoon on ollut Pohjois- ja Itä-Euroopalle ja kuinka tärkeää se on Virolle. Suomi on rakentanut puolustuskykyään vuosikymmeniä ja menestyksekkäästi, sillä Suomen puolustuskyky on yksi Euroopan parhaista. Virolaisena minulla on selvä käsitys, että Suomi on noudattanut periaatetta "vähemmän sanoja, enemmän tekoja". Muiden Euroopan maiden, myös Viron, tulisi noudattaa samaa. Nyt kun Viro ja Suomi ovat liittolaisia Natossa, se vahvistaa entisestään maidenme välistä yhteistyötä. Tiedämme hyvin historiasta, että yhteinen naapurimme Venäjä aina odottaa hetkeä, jolloin sen rajanaapurit ovat heikkoja ja unohtaneet Venäjän todellisen luonteen.

Mutta jotta sekä Viro että Suomi olisivat vahvoja, tarvitaan yhteistyötä, yhteistyötä myös Euroopan unionissa, koska monet Euroopan maat eivät ehkä ymmärrä tarpeeksi hyvin meille maissamme tärkeitä huolenaiheita. Esimerkiksi niin sanottu vihreä siirtymä: esimerkiksi riittävä energiansaanti on elintärkeää sekä Virolle että Suomelle, mutta sitä ei voida taata vain tuulella tai aurinkovoimalla, koska se on teknisesti mahdotonta, puhumattakaan valtavista summista, joita viherintoilijat ovat valmiita tuhlaamaan tähän tarkoitukseen ja joiden takia asukkaidemme toimeentulo heikkenee. Euroopassa pitäisi siirtyä realistiseen ilmasto- ja energiapolitiikkaan ja unohtaa vihreät utopiat.

Tämä koskee myös maahanmuuttopolitiikkaa. Vaikka Suomen väkiluku on lähes viisi kertaa suurempi kuin Viron, olemme silti pieniä maita sekä eurooppalaisessa että globaalissa mielessä. Maahanmuutto Lähi-idästä ja Afrikasta uhkaa kansallista olemassaoloamme. Emme voi unohtaa, että myös naapurimaamme Venäjä on käyttänyt maahanmuuttoa rajoillamme välineenä hybridihyökkäyksissä. Ongelmana on myös Euroopan unionin painostus yhteisen maahanmuuttopolitiikan harjoittamiseen, joka selvästi vaikeuttaa maidemme mahdollisuuksia hallita maahanmuuttoa.

Siksi toivon Suomen ja Viron yhteistyön lisääntyvän entisestään, koska huolestamme myrskyisessä maailmassa ovat hyvin samankaltaisia.

And for the final statement, don't very much listen about the Socialists and Greens because they haven't really heard about democracy, that there are elections, and the people are giving the voice which kind of government they would like to have. That's why good luck and keep on the same track.

Nikolaj Villumsen, *on behalf of The Left Group*. – Madam President, dear Mr Orpo, normally I would be happy and proud to welcome a prime minister from another Nordic country here in the European Parliament, but sadly I have to say today I'm not. Instead, I am disappointed, sad and honestly angry to have to welcome a Nordic prime minister that is leading a charge against social and trade union rights in his own country.

Mr Prime Minister, the topic today is 'This is Europe', and I have one thing to tell you: the Europe you represent, Mr Orpo, is not the Europe I want. And more importantly, it is definitely not the Europe citizens need. What you are doing is clearly wrong because you are undermining what makes a Nordic welfare state strong. Your government makes it easier to fire people, and at the same time you want to cut social welfare and protection. This will harm workers and their families.

Yet sadly it doesn't stop here. At the same time, you try to undermine the Finnish system of collective bargaining – a collective bargaining system we, on a European level, aim to increase, you are actively trying to suppress. I'm sad to say so, but that is shameful.

As if this was not enough, you also want to limit the freedom of people to go on strike and protest your policies. But Prime Minister, when Finnish people protest you in the street, the solution is not to take away the possibility to strike. Instead you should stop, reflect and listen.

Mr Orpo, the Europe you represent is clearly a Europe for the few; a Europe that does not take care of your citizens, of our citizens and the planet. Instead, it runs away from responsibility. Sadly, we have seen it before. Whenever the right governs with the far right, the picture is the same. Those that claim to speak for the common man quickly betray him. Those that say they have the ordinary worker's interests and concerns at heart quickly and brutally betray her. And that is exactly what is happening in Finland. That is exactly what we are seeing right now. And that is the reason that people are protesting you and your government, Mr Prime Minister.

Dear Mr Orpo, this is Europe, and what you provide is definitely not the Europe we want. Mr Orpo, this is Europe. It should be a Europe for the many, not just a Europe for the wealthy few.

Sirpa Pietikäinen (PPE). – Arvoisa pääministeri, totesitte, että me tarvitsemme Euroopan, jolla on kyky toimia eikä vain reagoida. Kaikkea onnea ja rohkeutta sen tavoitteen eteenpäin viemiseksi neuvostossa, sillä sitä me juuri tarvitsemme tällä hetkellä. Eurooppa ei koskaan enää saa tulla yllätetyksi. Me tarvitsemme valmiusunionia, joka perustuu laajan turvallisuuden käsitykseen – olipa sitten kyse pandemioiden torjumisesta, lääkkeiden riittävyydestä, ruoan riittävyydestä ja laadusta, syliin kaatuvan ilmastonmuutoksen riittävästä torjunnasta ja kunnianhimon tason nostamisesta tai sitten valmiudesta sotilaallisiin epävarmuuksiin tai muunlaisiin hyökkäyksiin ympärillämme.

Me tarvitsemme laajan turvallisuuden käsitystä, joka ottaa myös, kuten sanoitte, sosiaalisen turvallisuuden mukaan. Sillä demokratian rapautuessa ja ääriilikkeiden noustessa myös toimintakykymme halvautuu, ja se voi olla tosiasiaa pahin uhka, joka meille voisi tapahtua.

Meillä pitää olla kykyä muuttaa ongelmat haasteiksi ja haasteet mahdollisuudeksi, ja juuri sitä on investointiunioni: se, miten transformoimme taloutemme ja teollisuutemme vihreäksi, kilpailukykyiseksi, informaatioteknologiaa hyväksikäyttäväksi ja kestävyttä pitkällä aikajänteellä sekä sosiaalisesti että taloudellisesti tuottavaksi. Ja tähän meillä on kyky Euroopassa, paras mahdollinen globaalisti katsottuna. Tartutaan siihen kaksin käsin. Siirretään rahat siihen, mikä on tehokasta kilpailukykyistä tuotantoa, kasvatetaan kansallisvarallisuutta ja pidetään eurooppalaista huolta.

Eero Heinäluoma (S&D). – Hyvä nähdä teidät, pääministeri Orpo, täällä Euroopan parlamentissa. Suomi on täällä ollut aina arvostettu, rakentava jäsenmaa. Esittelitte ajatuksia varautumisunionista. Hyvä niin. Mutta entä sosiaalinen unioni, ihmisiä puolustava unioni, kaikkien markkinavoimien keskellä? Tästä Delors puhui: työmarkkinoiden sopimustoiminnan edistämisestä, vuoropuhelusta, yhdessä tekemisestä, toistensa kunnioittamisesta. Eikö teidän pitäisi viedä eteenpäin yritysvastuudirektiiviä, kunnioittaa naisten oikeuksia, työntekijöiden ja kuluttajien oikeuksia suurten monikansallisten yritysten puristuksessa? Eikö pitäisi viedä eteenpäin luontokadon pysäyttävää lainsäädäntöä?

Eurooppaa rakennetaan positiivisin aloitteen. Siksi toivonkin, että hallituksenne vie eteenpäin sosiaalisesti kestävää unionia, mutta olisi aloitteellinen myös puolustusyhteistyössä. Eikö olisi aika nostaa suomalainen EU:n ensimmäiseksi puolustuskomissaariksi?

Mauri Pekkarinen (Renew). – Arvoisa puhemies, herra pääministeri, EU:n keskeinen peruspilari ovat reilut sisämarkkinat. Ne ovat erityisen tärkeitä viennistä elävälle maalle, kuten Suomelle. Reiluus tarkoittaa sitä, että yritykset kilpailevat sisämarkkinoilla aidosti ja kilpailukykyisimmät voittavat. Se takaa koko EU:n tuottavuuden ja kasvun. Komission syksystä 2020 lähtien myöntämät neljän tuhannen miljardin euron suuruiset poikkeukset valtiontukisääntöihin rikkovat tätä periaatetta. Miljardien käyttäminen milloin suurten yritysten hankintaan omaan maahan, milloin vaikkapa fossiilisen energian tukemiseen – tämä kaikki on väärin. Kiitos pääministeri Orpo, että tuomitsitte tämän. Näin ymmärsin.

EU:n talouskehitys on surkeaa. Kun kasvun tekijöistä työpanoksen määrä ei juurikaan EU:ssa lisäännä, tuottavuuden parantamiseksi on nyt kyettävä ottamaan pitkä loikka. Siihen tarvitaan rahaa. Olin aikanaan tekemässä kuuluisaa päätöstä, että EU:n pitää saavuttaa 2020 kolmen prosentin taso tutkimus- ja innovaatiorahoituksessa. Me olemme epäonnistuneet surkeasti tässä. EU:ssa kuitenkin käytetään alue- ja elvytystukiin yhteensä varoja noin tuhannen miljardin euron verran muutamassa vuodessa. Näille rahoille on osoitettava uusi suunta: tutkimuksen, innovaatioiden ja avainteknologioiden tukemisen suunta. Ja se on ihan muuta kuin sisämarkkinoita rapauttava valtion tuki.

Putinin julma sota on suuri inhimillinen katastrofi, mutta se on myös iso aineellinen menetys Venäjän ja Valko-Venäjän naapureille. EU:n Interreg-ohjelma on hyvä auttamaan ystävällismielisten rajanaapureiden yhteistyötä. Nyt Venäjä ei ole ystävällismielinen eikä Interreg auta EU:n itärajan maakuntia. EU tarvitsee siksi nyt uuden ulkorajaohjelman. Sellaisen tarve on valtavan paljon suurempi ja perustellumpi kuin brexitin vuoksi ulkorajanaapureille annettu 5 miljardin euron tuki.

Tärkeä osa EU:n strategisen autonomian ja huoltovarmuuden varmistamista on metsien kestävä käyttö. Mikään muu kuin puu ei voi korvata uusiutumattomia raaka-aineita.

(Puhuja suostuu vastaamaan sinisen kortin puheenvuoroon)

Maria Grapini (S&D), *întrebare adresată conform procedurii „cartonașului albastru”.* – Domnul prim-ministru a spus aici de mai multe ori: „trebuie, trebuie, trebuie”. Vreau să vă întreb dacă, din ceea ce a prezentat aici prim-ministrul, dumneavoastră ați înțeles că noi avem oportunități egale, toți, în Uniunea Europeană acum? Având în vedere că domnul prim-ministru a fost și ministru al agriculturii (*vorbitorul este întrerupt din motive tehnice*).

Vă întreb, domnul prim-ministru a folosit de mai multe ori cuvântul „trebuie” (*vorbitorul este întrerupt din motive tehnice*).

Domnul prim-ministru a spus de mai multe ori în intervenția domniei sale că „trebuie și trebuie și trebuie”. O să mă leg de o frază, și anume că este nevoie să avem oportunități egale, toți, în Uniunea Europeană, adică toți cetățenii din cele 27 de țări.

Considerați că, prin ceea ce a spus domnul prim-ministru, acum avem oportunități egale? Domnul prim-ministru este și membru al Consiliului și fost ministru al agriculturii, și întreb: cum consideră că ar trebui modificat PAC-ul pentru a fi egalitate pentru fermierii din Uniunea Europeană? Cum ar trebui să pledeze pentru Schengen ca să avem o piață unică?

Mauri Pekkarinen (Renew), *vastaus sinisen kortin kysymyksen.* – En aivan tarkkaan kuullut kysymyksen alkuosaa, mutta ymmärsin, että kysymyksen ydin liittyy kuitenkin siihen, että miten yhteistä maatalouspolitiikkaa pitäisi uudistaa, jotta kaikkialla Euroopan unionissa viljelijöillä olisi samanlaiset edellytykset. Se on tärkeä kysymys ja mielestäni todellakaan tänään se ei tapahdu. YMP ei vastaa eri puolilla Eurooppaa olevaa todellisuutta maatalouden harjoittamisen edellytyksistä. Kun minä katson täällä ympärilläni, kun asun täällä Strasbourgissa, täällä on vihreät pellot. Kun minä menen kotiin, siellä on metri lunta. Näiden peltojen hehtaarikohtainen tuki YMP:ssä on suurin piirtein sama teillä Ranskassa kuin meillä Suomessa. Tässä yksi esimerkki siitä, millä tavalla nykyinen YMP ei käsittele oikeudenmukaisesti ja tasapuolisesti kaikkia Euroopan unionin jäsenmaita. Muutenkaan YMP ei ehkä tunnista sitä totuutta, että ilmastomuutos on iso tosiasia ja se heijastaa monella tavalla uudentyyppisiä haasteita yhteiselle maatalouspolitiikalle.

Ville Niinistö (Verts/ALE). – Madam President, I do appreciate the way our Prime Minister spoke about European defence and the need to support Ukraine. On that, we Finns are united. Europe needs to lift itself in order to stop Putin's war policy and his policy of aggression.

However, our Prime Minister is a man of softly spoken words. He says, for example, that he wants to build on the Nordic labour model in Finland, when his actions are actually dismantling it. He says that he wants to keep the Finnish carbon neutrality target, when they do no action to achieve it, neither when it comes to forest sinks or reducing emissions or promoting CCS that he says that they would like to promote. They just don't do it.

At the same time, he gave an interview to *Politico* last week about the far right Finns Party in your government, and you said that you have 'moderated' them by giving them ministerial posts. They are not far right anymore, you said.

Well my question is, what party actually has changed in this government when Finland is facing unprecedented, historical strikes larger than in decades, with your labour cuts and your cuts on welfare, where a middle-income earner who becomes unemployed, a woman with two children, can lose over EUR 500 a month?

Which party has changed? Have you moderated the far right, or have you yourself moved further to the right to legitimise anti-egalitarian, anti-climate policies that are dismantling the Nordic labour model? That is the question that you have to answer.

Pirkko Ruohonen-Lerner (ECR). – Arvoisa puhemies, omalta osaltani haluan myös toivottaa teidät, pääministeri Orpo, tervetulleeksi Euroopan parlamenttiin. Haluan näin kärkeen korjata myös sosialistien ryhmäpuheen karkeudet, ja totean, että Suomessa ei ole äärioikeistopuoluetta hallituksessa. Meillä on isänmaallinen hallitus, joka tekee parhaansa korjatakseen edellisen sosialistihallituksen katastrofaalisen perinnön ja jättämän suunnattoman velkataakan, jota ei voida hoitaa ottamalla aina lisää ja lisää uutta velkaa ja jatkamalla holtitonta taloudenpitoa.

Viime syksynä Venäjä aloitti hybridioperaation Suomen rajalla käyttäen siirtolaisia aseena. Suomen hallitus toimi asiassa erittäin päättäväisesti sulkiessaan koko itärajan. Brutaalia hyökkäyssotaa kolmatta vuotta käyvä Venäjä on äärimmäisen arvaamaton. Kaikkiin mahdollisiin skenaarioihin on syytä varautua. Laittomien maahantulijoiden rajanylitykset on estettävä, tarvittaessa voimakeinoin. On muistettava, että Suomen rajavartijat turvaavat koko EU:n yhteistä ulkorajaa.

Tukea Ukrainalle on jatkettava ja entisestään voimistettava. Ukrainan on voitettava tämä sota, ja on velvollisuutemme tehdä kaikkemme, jotta tämä tavoite saavutetaan.

Vastuullinen taloudenpito on tärkeää koko EU:ssa ja kaikissa sen jäsenmaissa. Yli varojen ei voi elää. Suomi ei ensimmäistä kertaa historiassaan tukenut vastuuvapauden myöntämistä Euroopan komissiolle, mistä nostan hattua. Päätöksen taustalla olivat EU:n tilintarkastustuomioistuimen huolestuttavat havainnot EU-budjetin menojen hallinnan olennaisista ja laajalle levinneistä virheistä.

Euroopan talouden kilpailukykyvystä on pidettävä huolta. On välttämätöntä, että Suomen talous saadaan jälleen oikeille urille. Toivonkin johtamaltanne hallitukselta päättäväisyyttä poliittisten lakkojen edessä.

Jordan Bardella (ID). – Madame la Présidente, Monsieur le Premier ministre, alors que notre continent est agité par des tensions géopolitiques majeures et par le retour de la guerre, je veux vous parler des factures d'énergie, qui continuent d'augmenter mois après mois, pénalisant tout autant des fins de mois difficiles que la compétitivité de notre économie. L'Europe est-elle condamnée à voir ses usines partir et ses producteurs mourir? Cette question terrible, tous les Européens lucides se la posent. Les prix de l'énergie restent en effet l'un des plus grands handicaps pour notre continent, notamment face à l'Asie et aux États-Unis.

Depuis 2022, la hausse des prix de l'énergie a frappé de plein fouet nos boulangers, nos agriculteurs, nos industries, qui paient deux ans d'inaction pour résoudre cette urgence absolue. On juge la pertinence d'un modèle à sa résilience. Or, il faut voir en face l'échec de ce mécanisme européen de fixation des prix de l'énergie, qui n'a pas su protéger les peuples et les entreprises d'une explosion des tarifs. Il en a été l'amplificateur, diffusant l'onde de choc à toutes les composantes de notre économie, de l'industrie à l'agriculture en passant par les familles ou encore par nos boulangers.

En deux ans, l'Union européenne n'a pas été capable de réformer ce marché européen de l'électricité. Contrairement à certains, je ne me résous pas à ce grand déménagement industriel. Alors que la France dispose de l'atout historique du nucléaire, elle doit retrouver sa souveraineté énergétique dans une Europe qui investit enfin collectivement dans cette énergie abondante, bon marché et décarbonée. Le continent qui a vu naître Peugeot et Renault, le continent de la famille Dassault, le continent du Concorde, de l'Airbus ou du train à grande vitesse ne peut devenir un désert industriel. Ce serait une trahison du génie créatif de l'Europe.

Siegfried Mureșan (PPE). – Madam President, Prime Minister Orpo, welcome to the European Parliament. Thank you for a very pro-European speech, which is confirmed by your daily actions as Prime Minister. Finland is a model for many of us in many aspects. Finland is a model in terms of research and innovation, in terms of education, and Finland is globally a top-five country when it comes to defending the rule of law, fighting against corruption and defending the freedom of the press. And by the way, under the leadership of pro-European centre-right Prime Minister Petteri Orpo Finland is scoring better in defending European values than any country led by a left-wing government in Europe today.

We have many things to do together. Let me choose two: security and competitiveness, two topics which the Prime Minister has touched upon. In the area of security, to protect European citizens, we will have to do more than we anticipated initially. We will have to do it faster, earlier and for a longer period of time. We will have to pool our resources together to make sure that our troops are well equipped with the most modern, most effective equipment to be able to protect the people in Europe. Thank you very much, Prime Minister, for your readiness to have more European action in this area. And also thank you for protecting the Finnish border to the weaponised migration from the Russian Federation. Through your actions, you are protecting citizens everywhere in Europe. You are protecting a European border.

On competitiveness, we need a strong economy to be able to protect our citizens. We need a strong economy to be able to safeguard our social model in Europe. We all want pensions, minimum wages, all to be safeguarded and secured. In this respect, we will have to invest in research, innovation, digitisation, free trade, complete the single market, create a framework which the private sector feels comfortable to invest in.

Today we heard from Prime Minister Orpo that Europe can rely on Finland, and today we are telling to you, Prime Minister, that Finland can rely on the European Union.

Heléne Fritzon (S&D). – Fru talman! Statsministern! Finland och Sverige har så mycket gemensamt, inte minst vår nordiska arbetsmarknadsmodell. Den nordiska modellen som bygger på dialog och förhandling mellan starka och jämbördiga parter. Den har varit en källa till stolthet, styrka och välbefinnande för våra länder.

Men det jag ser nu som pågår i Finland gör mig orolig. Attacker på föreningsrätten, på strejkrätten och på arbetsrätten. Jag hör också att civilsamhällesorganisationerna i Finland varnar för att regeringens planerade nedskärningar riskerar att putta nästan 17 000 barn under fattigdomsgränsen. Detta i en tid när många kämpar med höjda priser.

Både Finland och Sverige har regeringar som har valt att samarbeta med de högerextrema. Statsministern! Min uppmaning blir därför till er att i en orolig omvärld måste politiken skapa sammanhållning och samförstånd, inte splittring och konfrontation.

(Talaren godtog att svara på ett inlägg ("blått kort"))

Petri Sarvamaa (PPE), blue-card question. – First of all, I have to remind the honourable Members that when we had a socialist Prime Minister, our instruction to the EPP was not to make this a discussion about domestic politics.

Min fråga till er ärade Europaparlamentariker Fritzon är, varför gjorde ni exakt tvärtom här i dag?

Heléne Fritzon (S&D), svar ("blått kort"). – Fru talman! Tack för frågan. Vi sitter i Europaparlamentet i en tid när vi har kris och krig i Europa. Varje medlemsstats agerande betyder en viktig skillnad för hur vårt samarbete fungerar.

Därför är det mycket relevant att påpeka att när samarbeten stärks i våra medlemsstater där vi tar in de högerextrema i regeringsarbetet, då öppnar vi också för att vi utmanar våra gemensamma europeiska demokratiska värden. Det är skälet till att jag pratar om det som pågår i Sverige och Finland.

Nils Torvalds (Renew). – Arvoisa puhemies, arvoisa komission puheenjohtaja, hyvä Petteri, tämä talo on vähän kuin Baabelin torni. Onneksi meillä on tulkit, jotka tekevät sekavastakin puheesta melkein ymmärrettävää. Mutta tänä päivänä joudumme vähän heitää haastamaan. Suomen kieli tuntee sellaisen sanan kuin orpo olo. Ja minulle tulee orpo olo silloin, kun katson, miten Suomi ja Eurooppa pärjää kilpailussa. Me jäämme jatkuvasti jälkeen sekä Yhdysvalloista että Kiinasta. Eräs syy tähän on se, että meillä on hallinnollinen taakka, joka välillä on ylisuuri.

Siitä syystä meidän pitää nyt katsoa, mitä tapahtuu tulevaisuudessa, kun kaikki esittävät tällaisia joulupukin listoja seuraavalle komissiolle. Seuraavan komission tehtävä on aikaansaada raamilainsäädäntöä. Keskustellaan vähän ranskalaiseen tapaan, että nyt kirjoitetaan pitkiä listoja siitä, mitä pitää tehdä ja mitä ei saa tehdä. Mutta on olemassa raamilainsäädäntöä, jolla voidaan luoda suuntaviivoja ja vielä hallita tätä tulevaisuudessa. Mutta tämä puute synnyttää tämän orvon olon. Tämä orpo olo ei tietenkään ole mitenkään sukua meidän pääministerille, mutta en voinut vastustaa kiusausta vähän leikkiä sanoilla, koska se on meidän tehtävä.

Anna Deparnay-Grunenberg (Verts/ALE). – Madam President, honourable Prime Minister Mr Orpo, dear colleagues, last October, Mr Orpo sent a letter to our President von der Leyen raising concerns about the pressure on forest and forestry due to EU legislation.

You asked to take more time. Already today, three quarters of Finland's forest habitats are threatened. Already today, Finnish forests became a net emitter of carbon dioxide instead of a sink. And it's not EU legislation that is responsible for the bad state of Finnish forests.

We cannot afford to take more time. To use your own words, we need a Union that acts, fighting the climate and biodiversity crisis together, and our European forests are our strongest allies in this fight. So I ask you today, what is your plan to improve the state of Finnish forests? How can Finland contribute to a successful monitoring law that is upcoming now? And when will the big clear cuts in Finland that are still practice in 80 % of the forest finally be stopped?

Zdzisław Krasnodębski (ECR). – Pani Przewodnicząca! Panie Premierze! W tamtym tygodniu odbyły się dni studyjne w Helsinkach (pięknym mieście) i podczas rozmów z politykami i ekspertami mogliśmy się przekonać, jak realistycznie podchodzi obecny rząd – i myślę, że Finowie w ogóle – do kwestii ochrony granic, migracji oraz do sprawy obrony i zagrożenia ze strony Rosji. Finlandia utrzymała obowiązek służby wojskowej wtedy, gdy zrezygnowano już z niego w większości krajów europejskich, co, jak wiemy, było błędem. Dzisiaj potrzebna jest realistyczna polityka obronna w Europie, to znaczy taka, która wzmacnia, a nie osłabia NATO. I pan premier o tym mówił. Nie osłabia się państw członkowskich i patriotyzmu ich obywateli mrzonkami o armii europejskiej i budowie państwa europejskiego.

Chciałem powiedzieć, że z przyjemnością wysłuchałem pełnego realizmu wystąpienia pana premiera, i mam nadzieję, że w tym kierunku będziemy zmierzać w przyszłej kadencji.

Anders Vistisen (ID). – Fru formand! Hr. premierminister! Ulovlig indvandring bruges som et våben mod de europæiske grænser. Vi har set det i Finland, hvor Rusland med deres aggression har skubbet ulovlige migranter mod dit land. Vi har set det i Middelhavet. Vi har set det i Tyrkiet mod Grækenland og Bulgarien, og det er noget, vi er nødt til at tage alvorligt fra Europas side. For selvfølgelig kan vi ikke forlade os på, at vores naboer altid har de bedste intentioner i sinde, når de bruger den slags instrumenter imod os. Derfor er det nødvendigt, at vi fra EU's side tager sagen i egen hånd og sørger for at løse udfordringen omkring den ulovlige migration én gang for alle her på vores kontinent og ikke regner med, at vi altid har venligtsindede naboer. For historien viser – som situationen i Rusland, i Tyrkiet og andre steder – at det kan vi ikke forlade os på. Lad os derfor tage det alvorligt nu, og lad os få gjort noget ved det, både i Finland og i resten af EU.

(Taleren accepterede at besvare et blåt kort-indlæg)

Niels Fuglsang (S&D), Blåt-kort-spørgsmål. – Fru formand! Ja, det er meget interessant, Anders Vistisen, med din kritik af, at tingene ikke bliver taget alvorligt, og din kritik af EU og alle mulige andre. Den sang kender vi fra dig. Men hvad er dit eget forslag egentlig til, hvordan vi forbedrer tingene her?

Anders Vistisen (ID), Blåt-kort-svar. – Jamen, Dansk Folkepartis forslag er jo det forslag, som de danske socialdemokrater har kopieret. Det er den australske model, og jeg er jo glad for, at vi har inspireret socialdemokraterne i Danmark. Nu tilhører socialdemokraterne desværre her i S&D-Gruppen et meget, meget lille mindretal, der ønsker at gøre noget ved den ulovlige indvandring. Men jeg synes da, der er god grund til at rose de danske socialdemokrater, og det er jo også derfor, mine kollegaer i AFD, i Rassemblement National og andre steder peger på Danmark, hvor Dansk Folkeparti har haft indflydelse på udlændingepolitikken, som et mønstereksempel på, hvor godt det kunne være i EU, hvis man gav højrefløjen indflydelse. Så tak til Niels Fuglsang for at demonstrere vigtigheden af den pointe. Jeg er glad for samarbejdet med de danske socialdemokrater, selv om I engang imellem er lidt for bløde til min smag.

Tomas Tobé (PPE). – Fru talman! Statsminister Orpo Petteri. Finland är och förblir Sveriges närmaste partner. Ett partnerskap som nu blir ännu starkare då båda våra länder nu äntligen är medlemmar i Nato. Jag vill från djupet av mitt hjärta tacka dig och Finland för stödet under denna resa. Kiitos.

Tyvärr är vi ju i en situation i Europa då vi har krig och båda våra länder har ju en central roll nu i att inte bara ge militärt och ekonomiskt stöd till Ukraina utan också, tror jag, i att vara glasklar i dessa tider att det inte är Ukraina som ska visa vit flagg, det är inte Ukraina som ska tvingas till förhandlingar utan det är Putin som ska ut ur Ukraina och Europa som ska försvaras.

Brando Benifei (S&D). – Signora Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, signor Presidente Orpo, l'idea di Europa che il suo governo rappresenta è l'opposto di ciò di cui c'è bisogno: un'alleanza dove partiti sedicenti moderati ed europeisti si piegano alla destra nazionalista e reazionaria come il partito dei Veri Finlandesi.

Un modello che forse può piacere ai Meloni e Salvini d'Europa, ma che produce solo divisione, debolezza, isolamento e fragilità per l'Europa. Non dimentichiamo le affermazioni demenziali, razziste, omofobe del pluricondannato presidente del parlamento finlandese, senza contare la vicenda dell'ex ministro dell'Economia che si è dovuto dimettere per commenti filonazisti.

Non solo affermazioni, ma anche riforme distruttive come le vostre modifiche al mercato del lavoro e della sicurezza sociale, che hanno portato i lavoratori a protestare nelle strade per giorni.

Noi siamo contro queste ammicchiate dove sedicenti europeisti strizzano l'occhio all'estrema destra; vale in Italia e vale in Europa, dove alle prossime elezioni dovremo lavorare perché l'Europa mantenga una strada chiara.

Presidente Orpo, non si faccia dettare l'agenda dai Veri Finlandesi, dimostri, nell'interesse dei finlandesi e degli europei, di essere un vero europeo.

Henna Virkkunen (PPE). – Madam President, Prime Minister Orpo, I wish to thank you, Prime Minister, for being here with us today, and thank you for your excellent speech.

The three main priorities you highlighted – strengthening Europe’s strategic competitiveness, improving our comprehensive security and promoting a clean transition – are precisely the sectors on which the European Union must focus. We must create a Europe that encourages companies to innovate and invest in Europe. We need to strengthen our own capacity, both in the economy and in security, so that Europe has the ability to act in all situations.

Finland is a good example of a model of comprehensive security where citizens, companies and the public sector work closely together to ensure preparedness, resilience and security of supply. Your proposal for a preparedness Union is indeed an excellent initiative that should be taken forward.

Prime Minister, I fully support your words about Ukraine. The European Union must bolster up our support for Ukraine. Concrete decisions and action is needed. We must help Ukraine win the war.

Miapetra Kumpula-Natri (S&D). – Madam President, first of all, there is no opposition here in Parliament. We are here for the different groups and for the citizens. I read the EPP promise for the next elections. It says it wants to defend workers’ rights and wants to have fair income. How do you, Petteri Orpo, take that EPP message to Council? And is this fake? We have people on the streets now. There are big strikes going on. The KOK Government is cutting benefits, cutting rights for the political strikes, and at the same time making benefits for our income level, the most rich one, and cutting the poor. And I am very worried that ‘17 000 more poor children’ is in the programme.

The previous government was in the time of the growing economy, and this government takes more loans than the previous one. So this is my call for the Council what to do: on the defence on the eastern border these issues are national and I welcome very much the strong words of the government that has to be taken there.

And finally, something was missing: the rule of law. You didn’t take that up. Is it because the MEPs here voted against your ministers and speakers, and others are saying that this is not important, it is Hungary who have their national rights? Please be strong there. The Finnish voice is needed. The processes started last term. They are vital for the democracy as well.

Petteri Orpo, Prime Minister of Finland. – Madam President, thank you for your attention and contribution. Thank you for the excellent European and domestic debate. A few comments on your remarks.

First, Mr Weber, thank you for your strong support. On NATO, you mentioned it is important that today in Finland we are united. Almost all Members of Finland’s Parliament support our membership of NATO, and together in Finland we are building up a strong NATO in Finland at this moment, and I’m proud of it.

Ms García Pérez – and for many others also – there are no far-right parties in my government. The Finnish Government is pro-rule of law; it’s pro-democracy; it’s pro-equal gender rights; it’s pro-Ukraine; pro-European Union.

Many of you were worried about the reforms we are doing in Finland. But we have to do those reforms, because in 15 years our economy has not grown and we are going to lose our welfare in Finland. That is why we are reforming our economy. We are reforming the labour market, the social security system, taxation, because our target is to create 100 000 jobs for the Finnish people, so we can take care of all Finnish people and take care of our welfare state, education, healthcare, etc. This is clear.

Ms Hayer, thank you for your strong words on our common security. The Arctic is a very important issue.

Mr Lambert, thank you for your very wise words. There is a strong link between growth and climate. It is clear. The green transition will provide opportunities to our businesses. We do need regulation, but we need better regulation.

And I want to also mention that we use EUR 1 billion to develop and research more in this period, because we need new innovations because of climate.

Viro ja Suomi ovat hyvin läheiset naapurit, ja yhteistyömme Itämeren alueen turvallisuudessa, rajaturvallisuudessa, energiassa, monissa kysymyksissä ovat meille hyvin tärkeitä.

Vi har ett fantastiskt samarbete med den svenska regeringen och vi har reformerat våra arbetsmarknader till den svenska modellen.

Eero Heinäluoman ehdotus ja tuki komission puheenjohtajan Von der Leyenin aloitteelle puolustuskomissaarista on erinomaisen hyvä, ja Suomi tukee sitä.

Dear colleagues, to my conclusions. My main messages for this Chamber are clear and urgent.

Firstly, we cannot afford to hesitate. The situation with Russia is not just a momentary crisis; it is a test of our resolve and our foresight. If we do not act decisively against the aggression now, we are effectively inviting future challenges to our borders and to the very ideals we hold dear. President Putin's ambitions will not be curbed by inaction. He will be emboldened by it.

Secondly, time is of the essence. Our words must now be matched by tangible action. We need to accelerate our defence production capabilities immediately. All these efforts require time – time that is slipping through our fingers even as we speak. The time to act is now.

By working together, we can multiply our effectiveness. Naturally, bilateral help is needed, but the EU must also work collectively. The unity displayed by the European Union has been commendable. However, it is now imperative that we embark on the next phase of our collective journey. Our security cannot hinge on the outcomes of elections in the United States.

Thirdly, and perhaps most critically, this effort requires substantial financial investment. As politicians, we are acutely aware of the numerous important and valuable demands on our budgets. For the past three decades, European nations have enjoyed the luxury of securing their defence at a relatively low cost. Regrettably, that era has come to an end.

The stark reality we have faced today is that our safety and the preservation of our democratic values come with a higher price tag. This is not merely about allocating funds for defence. It is about ensuring the robustness of our continent's economic foundation.

Fourthly, Europe needs to be stronger on the world stage. The European Union, our way of thinking and our values are essential in the current geopolitical landscape, as democracy and authoritarians compete over dominance. The EU needs to show its strength globally, especially as China and Russia are bringing forward their own ideas and narratives. We need a stronger European foreign policy and we need to make it more effective, using qualified majority voting in important areas.

Dear friends, a strong economy is the bedrock of our security. It enables us to invest in the advanced technologies and capabilities needed to protect our citizens and uphold our way of life. Moreover, a vibrant economy enhances our global influence, allowing us to shape a world order that reflects our values and our interests.

Only when our economic base is healthy can we efficiently protect the climate, improve our security and defend ourselves. This is why we need strategic competitiveness. This means building our long-term competitiveness by focusing on our own strengths, deepening the internal market, boosting innovation and focusing on market-based solutions.

This is a critical moment. We must be willing to make the hard choices that safeguard our future. Investing in our defence is not just a matter of national security; it is a commitment to the stability and prosperity of our Union. It is about ensuring that Europe remains a beacon of hope and freedom in an increasingly turbulent world.

Let us, therefore, approach this challenge not just with the seriousness it demands, but with a sense of shared purpose. Our collective future, the legacy we leave for the next generation, depends on the decisions we make today. Let us invest together in that future, in our security and in the enduring strength of our European Union.

(Applause)

President. – Thank you very much, Prime Minister Orpo, and thank you to all the colleagues who participated in the debate.

(The sitting was briefly suspended)

7. Återupptagande av sammanträdet

(The sitting resumed at 12.09)

President. – Dear colleagues, before we move to the vote I have two points of order.

Elisabetta Gualmini (S&D). – Signora Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, purtroppo questa mattina abbiamo assistito a un esempio inaccettabile di propaganda filorussa e putiniana ad opera dell'onorevole De Graaff, proprio durante il dibattito sui bambini ucraini deportati a forza in Russia, 20 000 circa.

È fondamentale condannare questo tipo di propaganda completamente falsa. Ci siamo sentiti dire che in realtà è Zelensky che deve andare di fronte alla Corte penale internazionale; che l'Occidente, insieme all'Ucraina, favorisce il traffico di minori, addirittura di organi; che l'Occidente, insieme all'Ucraina, diffonde l'indottrinamento transgender e addirittura le mutilazioni genitali. Parole inaccettabili nella casa della democrazia e della libertà.

Questo Parlamento ha da sempre difeso l'Ucraina e i bambini e le bambine dell'Ucraina contro l'invasione di quella che si può considerare una feroce tirannia, un feroce regime autoritario. Noi non consentiamo che si infiltri la propaganda filo-putiniana e filorussa sulla pelle dei bambini e delle bambine! E questo lo condanniamo.

President. – We will look at the exact wording used. The Vice-President who was chairing – I think it was Ms Charanzová – cut off the speaker then, so we will also do the procedure.

Laurence Farreng (Renew). – Madame la Présidente, le 7 janvier 2015 avait lieu la tuerie de Charlie Hebdo. Douze personnes massacrées pour un dessin, pour une caricature qui invoquait la religion. Parmi les rescapés, une dessinatrice de presse, Coco, qui vit sous protection policière. Cette dessinatrice a fait paraître lundi dans le journal Libération, une caricature qui dénonce l'horreur de la situation de famine à Gaza et évoque une nouvelle fois la religion. Depuis cette parution, Coco est l'objet d'un déchaînement de haine, de propos antisémites sur les réseaux sociaux et d'appels à la violence.

Pire encore, ce ciblage est relayé par un parti politique représenté dans cet hémicycle, la France Insoumise. Vous n'aurez pas notre haine, mais vous la méritez, voilà ce qu'a déclaré une députée française de ce parti. En ce jour où nous votons l'acte sur la liberté des médias, je voudrais que ce Parlement condamne fermement les attaques contre Coco. Je voudrais qu'à travers ce texte qui consacre la liberté des journalistes, nous reconnaissons également celle des dessinateurs et des caricaturistes.

Solidarité avec Coco et restons Charlie.

8. Omröstning

President. – The next item is the vote.

(For the results and other details concerning the vote; see minutes)

8.1 Europeisk mediefrihetsakt (A9-0264/2023 – Sabine Verheyen) (omröstning)

8.2 Rättsakten om artificiell intelligens (A9-0188/2023 – Brando Benifei, Dragoș Tudorache) (omröstning)

8.3 Ändring av direktiv 2013/11/EU om alternativ tvistlösning vid konsumenttvister samt direktiven (EU) 2015/2302, (EU) 2019/2161 och (EU) 2020/1828 (A9-0060/2024 – Laura Ballarín Cereza) (omröstning)

8.4 Stängning av den europeiska plattformen för tvistlösning online (A9-0058/2024 – Laura Ballarín Cereza) (omröstning)

– *Before the vote:*

Laura Ballarín Cereza, ponente. – Señora presidenta, señorías, la Europa que protege es la Europa que se preocupa por sus 450 millones de consumidores. Los consumidores de la Unión tienen derecho a acceder a procedimientos para resolver sus reclamaciones a las empresas de forma fácil, rápida y menos costosa que ir a los tribunales, independientemente de si el litigio es nacional o transfronterizo o de si la compra se realizó en la tienda de su barrio o por internet.

Necesitamos realizar mayores esfuerzos para invertir y capacitar a las empresas y a los consumidores para el comercio digital, que ha crecido de forma exponencial tras la pandemia de COVID-19, lo que implica muchos riesgos.

Con este informe sentamos las bases para una resolución alternativa de litigios mejor y más popular; para que la mediación en los litigios de consumo se adapte por fin a la realidad, donde el comercio digital es cada vez mayor; para luchar contra la publicidad engañosa, los patrones oscuros o el bloqueo geográfico injustificado.

Por todo eso, señorías, nos sobran los motivos para votar a favor de este informe: para que defender nuestros derechos como consumidores no salga tan caro y para que usar la resolución alternativa de litigios sí valga la pena.

8.5 Återvinning och förverkande av tillgångar (A9-0199/2023 – Loránt Vincze) (omröstning)

– *Before the vote:*

Loránt Vincze, rapporteur. – Madam President, the agreement on the directive on asset recovery and confiscation had very broad support in the Parliament in all the phases of negotiations. Allow me to highlight some elements of this new tool in fighting organised and cross-border crime. The new confiscation framework of assets deriving from criminal activity targets the core motivation of organised crime: financial gain. Their profits are estimated at EUR 150 billion in the EU. Yet currently only about 1% of proceeds from organised crime are confiscated. Why is this so? We cannot confiscate if we cannot find out swiftly what assets criminals possess. It is difficult to confiscate assets the criminal origin of which is skilfully concealed, and cross-border exchange of information, even within the EU today, is limited and slow.

The negotiated text will change the situation on all these fronts. Asset recovery authorities will have almost immediate access to all the relevant national asset databases, and they will be able to freeze criminal assets before they dissipate. Loopholes used by criminals to avoid confiscation will be closed by non-conviction-based confiscation or confiscation of unexplained wealth linked to criminal activities. Asset recovery offices will be mandated to swiftly exchange information with their counterparts in other EU Member States, and victims' rights are now also better protected.

The Parliament has secured a large number of wins during negotiations. So together with my colleagues the shadow rapporteurs, we encourage you to support this important legislative initiative as a relevant step in the fight against criminal organisations and to increase the security of our citizens.

8.6 Användning av informationssystemet för den inre marknaden och den gemensamma digitala ingången för vissa krav som föreskrivs i direktivet om europeiska gränsöverskridande sammanslutningar (A9-0006/2024 – Anne-Sophie Pelletier) (omröstning)

8.7 Tvångslicensiering för krishantering och ändring av förordning (EG) nr 816/2006 (A9-0042/2024 – Adrián Vázquez Lázara) (omröstning)

8.8 Leksakers säkerhet och upphävande av direktiv 2009/48/EG (A9-0044/2024 – Marion Walsmann) (omröstning)

Marion Walsmann, Berichterstatlerin. – Frau Präsidentin, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Mit der Abstimmung zum Bericht über die Spielzeugsicherheit werden wir einen großen Schritt gehen, um die in die Jahre gekommenen bestehenden Regelungen an die Bedürfnisse unserer Zeit anzupassen. Wir müssen die Gelegenheit beim Schopfe packen, denn unsere Kinder müssen als die am meisten gefährdete und vulnerable Verbrauchergruppe besser vor unsicherem Spielzeug geschützt werden.

Wir werden Risiken, die aus gefährlichen Chemikalien, aus ungenügender Cybersicherheit oder schlicht mangelnder Herstellung herrühren, adressieren. Denn wenn es um die Gesundheit unserer Kinder geht, gibt es keine Toleranz. Grenzwerte für chemische Substanzen, die sich an den aktuellen wissenschaftlichen Erkenntnissen orientieren, ein digitaler Produktpass oder obligatorische, sichtbare Warnungen auf Online-Marktplätzen – diese Maßnahmen werden verhindern, dass gefährliches Spielzeug in Kinderhände gelangt.

Und zugleich können wir für gleiche Wettbewerbsbedingungen für unsere europäischen Spielzeughersteller sorgen und insbesondere kleine und mittlere Unternehmen, die einen Großteil von diesen ausmachen, durch maßgeschneiderte Hilfen und reduzierte Bürokratie unterstützen.

Liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen, lasst uns ein klares Zeichen für den Kinderschutz und den europäischen Wirtschaftsstandort setzen! Ausgestattet mit einem starken Mandat werden wir in den kommenden Verhandlungen eine effektive, kohärente und zeitgemäße Verordnung über die Sicherheit von Spielzeug verabschieden können.

Herzlichen Dank an alle Schattenberichterstatter und alle, die mitgeholfen haben! Wir sind das unseren Kindern schuldig.

8.9 Ändring av direktiv 2008/98/EG om avfall (A9-0055/2024 – Anna Zalewska) (omröstning)

8.10 Ett enda ansökningsförfarande för ett kombinerat tillstånd för tredjelandsmedborgare att vistas och arbeta på en medlemsstats territorium och en gemensam uppsättning rättigheter för arbetstagare från tredjeland som vistas lagligen i en medlemsstat (omarbetning) (A9-0140/2023 – Javier Moreno Sánchez) (omröstning)

8.11 Europeiska gränsöverskridande sammanslutningar (A9-0062/2024 – Sergey Lagodinsky) (omröstning)

8.12 Rapporteringskrav inom vägtransporter och luftfart: förordning (A9-0033/2024 – Jan-Christoph Oetjen) (omröstning)

8.13 Rapporteringskrav inom vägtransporter och luftfart: beslut (A9-0034/2024 – Jan-Christoph Oetjen) (omröstning)

8.14 Minimikrav på minimigränser för raster och dygns- och veckovila inom sektorn för tillfällig persontransport (A9-0370/2023 – Henna Virkkunen) (omröstning)

– Before the vote:

Henna Virkkunen, rapporteur. – Madam President, I want to thank all the rapporteurs, shadows and all the committees who have been working with this very important report. This legislation gives now more flexibility for our tourist buses, and in the same time, we are also taking care of our single market and about our safety of transport. So I want to thank everybody and I think we find a balanced agreement with the Council, and I hope that everybody can support this result.

8.15 Fastställande av unionens tullkodex och inrättande av Europeiska unionens tullbyrå och upphävande av förordning (EU) nr 952/2013 (A9-0065/2024 – Deirdre Clune) (omröstning)

– Before the vote:

Deirdre Clune, rapporteur. – Madam President, I won't take two minutes, but with our vote today, Members, we can move to establish a single customs authority for the European Union – one agency responsible for overseeing our customs code, coordinating customs authorities across the EU, and providing support to our national customs authorities who supervise all goods entering and leaving the customs union 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. And with the exponential rise in e-commerce, these declarations are also increasing.

So we need to have a coordinated, risk-based approach to our customs controls, and this new authority will identify risks and carry out controls to ensure that our EU rules are enforced and support national authorities in their work. The proposal will also establish an EU customs data hub, a centralised repository for Union customs data, thus allowing businesses to implement their declarations once to a single window rather than multiple times to different Member States, and so make it easier and more efficient to trade in and out of our European Union.

I ask you to support this proposal to make our customs union fit for the digital age, give better protection to our consumers from unsafe and illegal products, support our national authorities in their work, and contribute to a more efficient single market.

8.16 Ändring av förordning (EG) nr 223/2009 om europeisk statistik (A9-0386/2023 – Johan Van Overtveldt) (omröstning)

President. – This is the last vote, so a reminder to stay in the Chamber if you are participating in the next debate.

(The sitting was suspended at 12.40)

ΠΡΟΕΔΡΙΑ: ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΟΣ ΠΑΠΑΔΗΜΟΥΛΗΣ*Αντιπρόεδρος***9. Återupptagande av sammanträdet**

(Η συνεδρίαση επαναλαμβάνεται στις 12.44)

10. Justering av protokollet från föregående sammanträde

Πρόεδρος. – Τα συνοπτικά πρακτικά της χθεσινής συνεδρίασης και τα κείμενα που εγκρίθηκαν κατά τη συνεδρίαση αυτή έχουν διανεμηθεί. Δεν υπάρχουν παρατηρήσεις, κατά συνέπεια τα συνοπτικά πρακτικά εγκρίνονται.

Προχωρούμε τώρα στις συζητήσεις σε συνέχεια της εγκεκριμένης ημερήσιας διάταξης.

11. Anklagelser om korruption och missbruk av EU-medel i Spanien under pandemin (debatt om en aktuell fråga)

Πρόεδρος. – Το επόμενο σημείο στην ημερήσια διάταξη αφορά τη συζήτηση σχετικά με επίκαιρα θέματα, σύμφωνα με το άρθρο 162 του Κανονισμού, και το θέμα μας αυτή τη φορά είναι:

Ισχυρισμοί περί διαφθοράς και κατάχρησης κονδυλίων της ΕΕ στην Ισπανία κατά τη διάρκεια της πανδημίας.

Θα ήθελα να υπενθυμίσω ότι για τη συζήτηση αυτή δεν θα γίνουν δεκτές παρεμβάσεις με γαλάζια κάρτα και δεν θα υπάρξει διαδικασία «catch-the-eye».

Dolors Montserrat, autora. – Señor presidente, señor comisario, en la política española suceden a diario cosas que en el resto de Europa serían absolutamente incomprensibles e inadmisibles. Pero, lamentablemente, en España, la acumulación de escándalos socialistas se ha convertido en algo cotidiano. Sánchez ha indultado gravísimos delitos de corrupción de sus socios condenados y rebajado las penas por malversación. Sus socios —investigados por este Parlamento por turbios vínculos con Putin y por los tribunales españoles por terrorismo— son los primeros europeos a los que la corrupción y todos los demás delitos les van a salir absolutamente gratis.

Ya saben: mientras en Europa se pide endurecer las penas por corrupción, investigar conexiones con Rusia y prohibir amnistías a corruptos, en España, Sánchez amnistía por terrorismo, por corrupción y por golpe a la democracia. Ese es su triple regalo al prófugo de la justicia que le mantiene en el poder. Esto no es progresismo de ningún tipo. Esto es una vergüenza nacional y europea que perseguirá al Partido Socialista siempre.

Y por si esto fuese poco, la Fiscalía Europea investiga el caso PSOE, conocido como «caso Koldo»: presuntos delitos de malversación, prevaricación y tráfico de influencias en contratos millonarios usando fondos europeos. Unos contratos que se firman en pandemia en ministerios y gobiernos regionales socialistas. Y, miren, la actual tercera autoridad del Estado —entonces presidenta socialista del Gobierno balear— tardó tres años en reclamar a la trama el dinero pagado por el material sanitario. Unas mascarillas, por cierto, que resultaron no ser lo que aparentaban. Hablamos de fondos europeos, señores eurodiputados. Una trama incansable.

Porque, además de todo ello, semanas antes, recibían en el aeropuerto de Madrid las maletas de la vicepresidenta de Maduro, Delcy Rodríguez, sancionada por Europa. Y, cómo no, el expresidente socialista español Rodríguez Zapatero se reunía ayer con ella en plena polémica por el rescate de Air Europa y por las maletas de Delcy. Ser blanqueador de la tiranía es una marca del PSOE. Por cierto, señores socialistas, ¿qué traía Delcy en sus maletas? Respondan. Cada día más informaciones conectan el caso Koldo con el caso Delcy y ambos tienen un denominador común: el Partido Socialista.

Comprendo su desesperación y nerviosismo. Ahora encienden el ventilador socialista para esparcir basura y desviar la atención. Lo hemos visto hoy en el Congreso de los Diputados de España, con un presidente del Gobierno que, en vez de atacar a la oposición, debería dar explicaciones no solo a los españoles sino también a todos los europeos y hacer lo mismo que hizo el primer ministro portugués Costas: dimitir.

«Implacables ante la corrupción», dicen los socialistas. Pero si la estáis amnistiando. Ataques al líder de la oposición, hablando de narcos. Pero si abrazáis a la vicepresidenta de la narcodictadura venezolana. Dimisión de la presidenta de la Comunidad de Madrid, dicen. Pero si la trama nace en el seno del Partido Socialista Obrero Español. Se usan fondos europeos, se rescata una compañía aérea con muchas incógnitas y las dudas rodean al entorno político y muy personal de Sánchez.

Sigan, sigan con su campaña de ataques sincronizados para tapar sus escándalos. Pero la realidad es que el PSOE llegó a la Moncloa con las alforjas repletas de ejemplaridad y pronto saldrá de ella con las maletas llenas de mentira, traición y corrupción.

Hadja Lahbib, *Présidente en exercice du Conseil*. – Monsieur le Président, honorables parlementaires, cher Commissaire, chers membres de la Commission, tout d'abord, je remercie le Parlement de nous donner la possibilité de ce débat, et je voudrais d'ailleurs rappeler que, au-delà du point débattu aujourd'hui, les institutions européennes et les États membres ont une responsabilité commune dans la défense des valeurs et des principes fondamentaux érigés dans nos traités, notamment en ce qui concerne la protection de l'état de droit.

Il est important de rappeler que, dans ce type d'affaire, il incombe aux autorités répressives de mener les enquêtes en vue d'établir si des infractions pénales ont été commises, et je note à cet égard que le Parquet européen a récemment lancé une enquête concernant des contrats, en Espagne, relatifs à la fourniture de masques. Le Parquet européen est devenu un acteur central dans la protection des intérêts financiers de l'Union et, dans ce cadre, de la lutte contre la corruption. Sa composition va prochainement s'étendre, puisque la Pologne rejoint la coopération renforcée, ce qui ne peut évidemment que consolider encore cet organe unique en son genre, il faut le rappeler.

Le Parquet européen est un des éléments auxquels le Conseil attache une grande importance. Ce n'est évidemment pas le seul instrument que l'Union européenne peut mobiliser. La présidence belge a ainsi fait du renforcement du cadre juridique de la lutte contre la corruption une de ses priorités, et notre objectif est d'obtenir, avant la fin de notre présidence, une position du Conseil sur la proposition de directive sur la corruption présentée par la Commission.

Un autre aspect de la lutte contre la corruption est la menace que fait peser la criminalité organisée sur l'intégrité du système de sécurité et de justice des États membres. La présidence a organisé, pas plus tard que la semaine dernière, au Conseil, un débat entre les ministres de la justice sur cette question. La lutte contre la corruption, la protection des intérêts financiers de l'Union et celle de l'état de droit sont un combat permanent, qui requiert une approche globale au niveau européen comme au niveau national.

Permettez-moi aussi de rappeler l'attachement du Conseil à l'état de droit, aux valeurs démocratiques de l'Union européenne et à la protection des intérêts financiers. Ces questions sont d'une importance capitale. Il est en effet primordial, surtout au regard des élections qui approchent, de maintenir la confiance des citoyens européens dans nos institutions.

Johannes Hahn, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, dear Minister, honourable Members, thank you for inviting me to this debate. Like all of you, I have seen the media reports on the Koldo case and the investigations by the Spanish national authorities that concern the procurement of face masks during the COVID-19 pandemic.

I also take note of the public announcement by the European Public Prosecutor's Office that the EPPO are also investigating the matter given the alleged criminal element and potential link to EU funds. The main thing I can say today is that we await the outcome of this investigation. It is important that we let the investigators do their work at this time, so that they can shed light on whatever fraud, of any kind, was committed against Union funds in the case we are discussing today.

The European Commission continues to follow the matter closely and will report any information that can be useful to the investigations, as we always do. We remain in touch with the relevant authorities and stand ready to support their work as needed. The European Commission has zero tolerance for fraud. It is key that any suspicions of irregularities or fraud are properly looked into. Protecting the Union's budget means protecting the money of European taxpayers and protecting our future as Europeans. No sector area of activity is safe from corruption risks.

To further address corruption risks, the Commission presented a new anti-corruption package in May 2023 and I really welcome the statement of the minister that the Belgian Presidency will do its utmost to finish these negotiations still during its presidency.

This package includes a proposal for a directive on combating corruption that will provide police and prosecutors with better tools to fight corruption. It will also map corruption-related risks in high-risk sectors by the end of next year. The Commission reports annually on developments regarding the prevention of and the fight against corruption in each Member State, while issuing concrete recommendations within the Rule of Law Report cycle.

The fifth EU Rule of Law Report will be published in July 2024 and the fight against fraud is very much a joint effort from all levels, from citizens to public authorities, be they local, regional, national or European. I always greatly appreciate the steady interest and support by this House for the protection of the Union Budget and together we will make the best barrier against fraud of any kind and thank you so much for raising this issue today and be reassured we are tough on it.

Monika Hohlmeier, *im Namen der PPE-Fraktion*. – Herr Präsident, Herr Kommissar, liebe Ratspräsidentschaft, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Es macht schon besorgt, was man da so aus Spanien im Koldo-Fall mitbekommt. Es dreht sich wohl um Größenordnungen, bei denen europäische Fonds in Höhe von bis zu knapp 18 Millionen betroffen sind – und das ist schon eine ganze Menge Geld. Und ich habe jetzt drei ganz konkrete Forderungen.

Als Erstes: Die spanische Regierung sollte deutlich enger und besser mit der Europäischen Staatsanwaltschaft zusammenarbeiten. Es kann nicht sein, dass die Europäische Staatsanwaltschaft es nicht von der spanischen Staatsanwaltschaft bekommt, sondern durch Journalisten und durch Whistleblower – das ist inakzeptabel. Wir haben die Europäische Staatsanwaltschaft zum Schutz der finanziellen Interessen der Europäischen Union, und es gibt eine gesetzliche Verpflichtung, solche Fälle an die EUSTa weiterzugeben. Ich erwarte, dass die spanische Regierung dem nachkommt.

Die zweite Frage, die sich für mich stellt, kommt von der Delegation, mit der wir nach Spanien gereist sind: Wir wollen die Endempfänger wissen. Und wir wollen nicht von der spanischen Regierung oder auch von anderen Regierungen lesen, dass das Transportministerium so und so viele Millionen für Mobilität bekommt. Oder dass man in Bezug auf eine Agentur, die bereits durch Korruption aufgefallen ist, nur die Information erhält: Sie erhält 957 Millionen oder 954 Millionen – keinerlei Projekt, keine Firma, kein Endempfänger. Ich erwarte, dass wir endlich die Endempfänger zu lesen bekommen und nicht die Zwischenstationen, die weiterverteilen.

Und letzter Punkt: Untreue darf sich nicht lohnen. Gesetzgebung muss Untreue und Betrug bestrafen, anstatt es amnestiefrei zu stellen.

Nicolás González Casares, *en nombre del Grupo S&D*. – Señor presidente, la cuestión es si cuando morían setecientas personas al día se puede contratar con tu hermano y recibir 286 000 euros. Eso que les suena lo dijo Pablo Casado antes de que le cortaran la cabeza por denunciar a la presidenta de la Comunidad de Madrid. ¿Y qué ha pasado? Que tenía razón. Y ayer mismo, en el entorno de la señora Díaz Ayuso, volvía a aflorar un nuevo fraude de cientos de miles de euros en plena pandemia. Sí, mientras en Madrid se impedía enviar a los hospitales a miles de ancianos con COVID-19, y se morían en las residencias, todos en su entorno se forraba con la pandemia. No sé si la fruta, pero le gusta la pasta. La pasta le gusta bastante. La de todos, con avaricia. Y mientras el señor Feijóo protege a la señora Díaz Ayuso, siente el filo que ejecutó al señor Casado.

Exigimos la dimisión de la señora Díaz Ayuso. Sí, su dimisión. Y el señor Feijóo, por credibilidad, debería exigirla igual.

Miren, la pandemia fue terrible. Miles de personas perdieron la vida. Y como sanitario, sé del valor de una mascarilla esos días. ¡Cómo se cuidaban! Había pocas. Por eso sentimos asco, auténtico asco. Y repudiamos a quienes se aprovecharon del dolor. En Grecia, en Holanda, en Alemania en el partido del señor Weber —que se ha escapado—, ahora hay casos similares de desalmados que vendieron a precio de oro material sanitario o cometieron auténticas estafas.

Por eso queremos que se investigue. Ante la corrupción los socialistas tomamos decisiones contundentes y ejecutamos responsabilidades políticas y en el PP, ¿qué hacen? Cortan la cabeza de quien denuncia la corrupción. Esa es la gran diferencia.

Si quieren credibilidad y traer estos debates aquí, señores del PP, exijan la dimisión de la señora Díaz Ayuso.

President. – Before Mr Vázquez Lázara takes the floor, I want to make a remark.

Πρόεδρος. – Είναι ολοφάνερο, κυρίες και κύριοι συνάδελφοι, ότι σε αυτή τη συζήτηση θα ακουστούν διαφορετικές απόψεις. Αυτό που θα ήθελα να σας ζητήσω εκ μέρους του Προεδρείου είναι να ακούμε τη διαφορετική άποψη και να περιμένουμε τον ομιλητή που θα εκφράσει μια άποψη με την οποία είμαστε πιο σύμφωνοι. Παρακαλώ να σεβόμαστε όλους τους ομιλητές, χωρίς διακοπές ή αποδοκιμασίες από κάτω. Να σεβαστούμε τη συζήτηση έτσι όπως εισήχθη και όπως διεξάγεται. Θα ακουστούν οι διάφορες απόψεις· δεν χρειάζονται ούτε αποδοκιμασίες, ούτε διακοπές από κάτω, γιατί δεν τιμούν το Ευρωπαϊκό Κοινοβούλιο.

Adrián Vázquez Lázara, en nombre del Grupo Renew. – Señor presidente, ¿se acuerdan de esto? (*El orador muestra una mascarilla*). Durante muchos meses, una mascarilla como esta era la diferencia entre enfermar o no, entre contagiar o no, un símbolo de protección en mitad de una de las mayores crisis sanitarias, económicas y sociales que hemos vivido.

Hoy, tristemente, esta mascarilla está empezando a convertirse también en un símbolo de corrupción. Corrupción de la más indignante porque sacaban tajada de los más vulnerables en nuestro momento más delicado. La misma mascarilla que antes era esperanza, hoy es vergüenza. Y lo es y lo debatimos aquí porque la Fiscalía Europea ha abierto una investigación a España por una trama que presuntamente se extiende ya a distintos ministerios y distintos Gobiernos autonómicos socialistas, por la compra fraudulenta de mascarillas en mal estado a cambio de suculentas comisiones personales. Contratos que además han sido pagados con fondos europeos y que, por lo tanto, interpelan a toda la Unión. Unos fondos que construyen Europa y que nos ha costado mucho conseguir como para permitir que unos miserables puedan manejarlos.

Será la Justicia quien tenga la última palabra. Y desde aquí solo pido una cosa: que se investigue todo, que se investigue hasta el final, y que caiga quien tenga que caer.

Niklas Nienaaß, im Namen der Verts/ALE-Fraktion. – Herr Präsident, meine sehr verehrten Damen und Herren! Ich muss sagen, ich bin sowohl genervt als auch schockiert. Ich bin schockiert davon, dass wir über Fälle von Korruption reden müssen, weil es widerlich ist, dass Menschen Geld, was genutzt werden soll, um Menschen zu schützen, zweckentfremden, sich in die eigene Tasche wirtschaften. Ich bin aber auch ein bisschen genervt, dass wir hier teilweise spanischen Wahlkampf im europäischen Haus machen. Weil diese Fälle hat es europaweit gegeben, und ich hätte es gut gefunden, wenn wir darüber mehr reden würden und sie wirklich europaweit aufrollen.

Ich sage aber auch: Mich nervt auch die Tatsache, dass wir uns hier eine Stunde Zeit für einen speziellen Fall in Spanien nehmen – nicht zu Unrecht, will ich sagen, nicht zu Unrecht –, aber dass wir gleichzeitig die Mittel, über die wir hier reden, nicht ein einziges Mal in diesem Haus diskutiert haben; wir haben 380 Milliarden Euro Fördermittel, wovon wir gut 10 % für CRII+ flexibilisiert haben – das sind die Mittel, mit denen hier diese massiven Deals passiert sind. Und über diese Maßnahmen haben wir nicht ein einziges Mal in diesem Haus gesprochen.

Wir täten gut daran, im Vorhinein zu überlegen, wie wir das Geld einsetzen wollen, wie wir strategisch planen wollen, wie wir Flexibilisierung zweckmäßig nutzen – während wir Korruption im Vorhinein verhindern –, und das hier vernünftig zu diskutieren, anstatt im Nachhinein sich darüber aufzuregen.

Und da müssen Sie nicht so schwierig gucken; es wäre nämlich wirklich vorteilhaft, wenn sich alle Fraktionen daran beteiligen würden, diese strategische Planung zu machen. Denn das ist das, was diesem Haus fehlt. Flexibilisierung führt uns zu genau diesen Problemen, vor denen wir hier stehen – die müssen aufgeklärt werden. Ich schließe mich den Forderungen der Ausschussvorsitzenden hier zwar an, aber bitte, anstatt effekthascherisch Skandalen hinterherzulaufen, lassen Sie uns gute Politik im Vorhinein machen!

Jorge Buxadé Villalba, *en nombre del Grupo ECR*. – Señor presidente, la historia criminal del PSOE es más larga que la genealogía de Abraham: robos, secuestros, golpes de estado, cohecho, malversación o asesinato. Al parecer, el Partido Popular lo ha descubierto ahora porque se ha encontrado una trama de corrupción política, de contratos con sobreprecio para el trinquete. ¿Han trincado? Pues que actúen los jueces con toda la fuerza de la ley y de la razón. Y el que se lo ha llevado crudo, a prisión.

Pero no se puede estar aquí clamando contra la corrupción en el uso de los fondos europeos mientras a la misma hora se tiene a González Pons reunido con Bolaños —el *consigliere* del *don*, que es Sánchez— pactando a escondidas el gobierno de los jueces y, encima, aceptando un mediador extranjero. Eso sí que es corrupción, porque es pactar la soberanía de la nación.

Millones de españoles saben que la peor corrupción socialista no es la del dinero. Esa se juzga, se condena y punto. Peor corrupción es la que se produce por la descomposición de un cuerpo vivo que es la nación. Corrupto es el que roba, pero más el que miente o traiciona la lealtad de un pueblo. Corrupto es pactar con golpistas y enemigos de España, la nación más antigua de Europa, una ley de amnistía para la impunidad de los peores delitos contra la nación —rebelión, sedición, terrorismo y traición— a cambio de un puñado de votos. Pero también es poder pararla en el Senado y no hacerlo.

Corrupción es permitir que miles de jóvenes en edad militar entren ilegalmente en territorio nacional sin identificarlos y proceder a su deportación inmediata, es regalar la nacionalidad española a quienes ni la merecen ni la respetan, metiendo en cinco años a medio millón de inmigrantes que ni trabajan ni padecen. Corrupción es permitir que dos guardias civiles mueran vilmente asesinados por las mafias del narcotráfico procedente de Marruecos y al día siguiente ir a ver al *capo di tutti i capi*, que es el rey de Marruecos, a decir que va a regalarle 45 000 millones de euros.

Corrupción es sentarte a negociar con quienes han asesinado a tus compañeros. Corrupción es alimentar ese negocio de las mafias de trata de seres humanos ofreciendo vivienda, hoteles y recursos ilimitados a inmigrantes ilegales mientras cientos de miles de españoles tienen que decidir entre ir al supermercado o encender la luz. Corrupción es promover la participación de menores en actos sexuales que violan su inocencia.

Corrupción es golpear y humillar a agricultores y ganaderos, destruir centrales térmicas y demoler el plan nuclear o la industria del automóvil, llevando al paro a miles de españoles a cambio de unos fondos sin control presupuestario previo que organizó Von der Leyen. Lady Devastación no ha dejado piedra sobre piedra. Es su jefa y es amiga de Sánchez. Es un escándalo lo que los socialistas han hecho en España, pero no lo es menos lo de las vacunas en Bruselas. Todos callan. Lo contrario de corrupción es honradez e integridad. Y eso ya solo queda en Vox.

Virginie Joron, *au nom du groupe ID*. – Monsieur le Président, allégations de corruption et détournements de fonds de l'Union en Espagne pendant la pandémie: je vous remercie d'avoir ajouté ce point à l'ordre du jour. Mais allons plus loin que l'Espagne et les masques. Certains individus au sein des cabinets ministériels seraient soupçonnés de corruption. On nous parle de socialistes, on nous parle de 53 millions d'euros de masques anti-COVID-19 attribués selon la procédure d'urgence à une entreprise qui ne connaissait rien au secteur. On connaît la musique.

Aujourd'hui, vous êtes tous d'accord pour parler de ces 53 millions d'euros pour des masques, mais pas des contrats pour des vaccins anti-COVID-19 à 71 milliards d'euros, pour 4,6 milliards de doses à jeter. Personne ici n'a envie d'en parler, ni la gauche «Qatargate», ni la droite caviar, ni les ayatollahs verts, et surtout pas M^{me} von der Leyen. Les soupçons de corruption, les conflits d'intérêts touchent l'Espagne, mais quid de Bruxelles? J'ai demandé à la Commission où étaient les doses; elle vient de me répondre qu'elle n'était pas en mesure de formuler des observations sur le nombre de vaccins anti-COVID-19 ayant été livrés et administrés dans l'Union européenne en 2023. Or, le 16 janvier dernier, elle a commandé 146 millions de doses. Des scandales de ce type, malheureusement, vous allez en avoir à la pelle.

Eugenia Rodríguez Palop, *en nombre del Grupo The Left*. – Señor presidente, señores del Partido Popular, me temo que han elegido un mal día para este debate, aunque para ustedes ninguno hubiera sido bueno: casos Bárcenas, Gürtel, Púnica, Palma Arena, Lezo, Erial, Kitchen, Taula, Tandem... Se me acaba el minuto.

Hoy tienen en Madrid a la señora Díaz Ayuso, que es un auténtico prodigio: su padre, su madre, su hermano y ahora su novio se han visto envueltos en irregularidades relacionadas con la Administración que ella misma preside. ¿Van ustedes a cuestionarla?

Está claro que la pandemia fue un desastre para todos y un botín para unos pocos. Pero ¿por qué el Partido Popular rechaza una comisión en el Congreso que investigue todos los casos? ¿Y para qué los traen a un Parlamento desde el que no se puede hacer nada?

Miren: corruptos fuera. Ni unos ni otros, ni escaños para protegerse, ni jueces a su servicio, ni indultos de amiguetes. Organismos independientes y mecanismos que controlen la contratación pública y el uso de los fondos europeos. Investigación, juicios y leyes exigentes que se apliquen con contundencia.

Y háganse un favor: desháganse de sus golfos, sus chorizos y sus saqueadores.

Mislav Kolakušić (NI). – Poštovani predsjedavajući, mi danas raspravljamo o 18 milijuna eura zloupotrijebljenih sredstava EU fondova u Španjolskoj. Pa toliko hrvatski Alibaba, premijer u odlasku Andrej Plenković, sa svojim jatcima zamraču u jednom danu.

Međutim, zahvaljujući Uredu javnog tužitelja i našoj heroini Lauri Codruți Kövesi, koja gotovo svaki tjedan uhvati u zloupotrebi europskih sredstava nekog od Plenkovićevih ministara, oni će većinom završiti u zatvoru.

Ideja osnivanja Ureda europskog javnog tužitelja i davanje dovoljnih sredstava za rad, za što sam se itekako osobno zalagao jer prva sredstva su trebala biti samo milijun eura, taj ured danas otkriva zloupotrebe i strpat će u zatvor brojne lešinare diljem Europske unije i hvala joj na tome.

Javier Zarzalejos (PPE). – Señor presidente, cuando en Andalucía estalló el mayor caso de corrupción con fondos públicos de ayuda al empleo, desde el Partido Socialista se dijo que este era un asunto de cuatro golfos. Pues bien, ese asunto de cuatro golfos se convirtió en un fraude de casi setecientos millones de euros, diez juicios celebrados hasta ahora, diez sentencias condenatorias y treinta y cinco condenados, entre ellos los dos expresidentes del Partido Socialista y expresidentes de la Junta de Andalucía.

Hoy hablamos de una trama de corrupción en el Gobierno y en el Partido Socialista de cientos de millones de euros que afecta a los intereses financieros de la Unión y que tiene que ser investigado con todo rigor. Supongo que los socialistas dirán también que en este caso tampoco tiene recorrido. Pues bien, para no tener recorrido el caso, de momento ha llegado a Bruselas, en forma de investigación de la Fiscalía, y ha llegado a Venezuela. Porque hay constancia de que el anterior Gobierno socialista de Baleares cargó a fondos europeos una partida de mascarillas absolutamente inservibles de más de tres millones de euros. Y a Venezuela porque hay sospechas más que fundadas de que esta misma trama corrupta facilitó el incumplimiento de las sanciones que pesan sobre el régimen de Maduro y, en concreto, sobre su vicepresidenta Delcy Rodríguez.

Por no hablar de las actividades académicas de una persona muy próxima al presidente del Gobierno, generosamente patrocinadas por una compañía aérea a la que el Gobierno después rescató con cuatrocientos setenta y cinco millones de euros.

Señores del Partido Socialista, tienen ustedes una forma muy curiosa de luchar contra la corrupción que consiste en abaratar el delito, en amnistiar a malversadores y en calumniar a quienes han resultado inocentes después de las investigaciones que ustedes han querido promover.

Matthias Ecke (S&D). – Herr Präsident, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Der spanische Koldo-Fall reiht sich in eine Serie von Skandalen bei der Beschaffung von Masken ein. Italien, Spanien, Rumänien, Deutschland – überall haben Gierge die Not und Dringlichkeit während der Corona-Pandemie ausgenutzt.

Nur hören wir von der EVP nur sehr ausgewählte Kritik. Wo war denn ihre Empörung in der Maskenaffäre der Union, als Frau Hohlmeier ihre Freundin Andrea Tandler an Gesundheitsministerien in Bund und Ländern vermittelte? Kontakte, mit denen Tandler Millionenprovisionen machte und auch noch an der Steuer vorbeischleuste? Warum schwiegen Sie denn, als die Unions-Abgeordneten Nüßlein, Sauter, Löbel Provisionen für die Vermittlung von solchen Masken-Deals erhielten? Wir kümmern uns jetzt darum in Deutschland, dass solches Verhalten künftig strafbar ist. Und wo war denn Ihre Klarheit beim konservativen Maskenskandal in Madrid?

Meine Damen und Herren, wenn es Ihnen um die Sache ginge, den wirklich wichtigen Schutz öffentlicher Gelder, dann hätten Sie all das heute vorgetragen. Aber es geht Ihnen doch offensichtlich nur um spanische Innenpolitik, mit der Sie andauernd dieses Europäische Parlament ermüden. Sie haben den Verlust der Wahl in Spanien immer noch nicht ertragen.

Eva Maria Poptcheva (Renew). – Señor presidente, mientras que en España morían más de 120 000 personas por COVID-19 amontonadas en los pasillos de los hospitales y solas, algunos aprovechaban para meterse dinero público en los bolsillos. Mientras que en Europa nos uníamos en un esfuerzo gigantesco de solidaridad para que los fondos europeos ayudaran a salvar vidas, Ábalos, Armengol, Torres y a saber quién más vieron una oportunidad para enriquecer a sus matones de partido.

La delegación de Ciudadanos fuimos los primeros en denunciar esto ante la Fiscalía Europea, que ya ha iniciado una investigación. Y lo hicimos porque nos da vergüenza. Nos da vergüenza la incompetencia y la desidia con la que algunos políticos de nuestro país tratan las oportunidades que nos da Europa.

I feel ashamed, dear European friends. You showed unconditional support and solidarity with us during the toughest times, and this is what you get – corruption. I apologise to all of you on behalf of the Spanish Socialist Party, as I know they want.

Hermann Tertsch (ECR). – Señor presidente, la presidente von der Leyen quiere volver a presidir la alianza de izquierdas de Partido Popular, Socialistas y Verdes, de la que tanto presume un conocido miembro de su partido, el señor González Pons. Esa alianza que está destruyendo la agricultura, la ganadería, los patrimonios familiares, la subsidiariedad, la libertad de España y la de todas las naciones. Para alimentar esta siniestra alianza, la Comisión ha entregado a Pedro Sánchez, el jefe del Gobierno ultraizquierdista de España, decenas de miles de millones con tanta frivolidad como en su día ella, en la pandemia, compró y pagó vacunas por cientos de miles de ellos.

Hoy no se sabe dónde está gran parte del dinero, pero se sospecha. No pasa un día sin nuevas revelaciones de una brutal corrupción que apuntan al PSOE, al Gobierno y hasta la mujer de Sánchez, con conexiones corruptas a países de dictaduras narcocomunistas que mantienen relaciones privilegiadas con el Gobierno extremista de Sánchez.

La mayor garantía de que los fondos europeos no se nieguen, como hasta ahora, por arbitrariedad ideológica, a países como Hungría y a Polonia, ni se regalen a favoritos como Sánchez, que además de enemigo de la libertad, gobierna hundido en la corrupción de su Gobierno y de su partido, es que von der Leyen se vaya a su casa.

Siegfried Mureşan (PPE). – Mr President, dear colleagues, corruption needs to be investigated everywhere, not hidden. And those who are investigating corruption, they need to be protected, they need to be supported, not threatened or intimidated. This should be valid everywhere, in every single corner of the European Union.

Now let me say very clearly that the European Parliament is very concerned with the recent developments in Spain and the dangerous direction that the current Spanish Government is taking.

Firstly, the amnesty law. The amnesty law is an attack upon the rule of law and it is also a breach of an electoral promise made by the government. And secondly, this new corruption case. Three top government officials very close to the Prime Minister are involved in accusations on misuse of European funds. And let me say very clearly that the European Union has zero tolerance for corruption and zero tolerance for misuse of European funds.

To the Spanish people, I say very clearly that the European Union understands that you are disappointed. The European Union understands what is happening, and the European Union is concerned about the recent developments in Spain. The people of Spain should say loud and clear that they do not accept the use of their own money. While the European Union was fighting since the beginning of the pandemic to help Spain, while the people of Spain were making sacrifices, the government was misusing the funds. This needs to be clarified.

It is right that the European Commission will be investigating the amnesty law, and it is right that the European Public Prosecutor's Office will be investigating this corruption case. The misuse of EU funds, the misuse of all taxpayers' money, is unacceptable and should be investigated.

Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D). – Señor presidente, sí, ya lo sabemos, señoras y señores de la derecha española. No les gusta la ley de amnistía que requiere para su aprobación la mayoría absoluta del Congreso de los Diputados: todos los grupos menos el PP y su extrema derecha. Y no les gusta el Gobierno de España, que ha reducido a un mínimo histórico el independentismo, el apoyo al independentismo, cuando ustedes lo tuvieron en un máximo, con dos declaraciones unilaterales de independencia.

Y tienen el descaro de traer aquí un debate sobre corrupción con su historial de sobresueldos, de dinero negro, de caja B, con cuatro exministros del Partido Popular hoy mismo sentados ante la justicia penal, además de los que ya han sido condenados y han pasado por la cárcel, incluido el gerente de su partido. Y sin pedir hoy mismo la dimisión de Isabel Díaz Ayuso, la presidenta de la Comunidad de Madrid. ¡Qué cara más dura! Galope de Gish, enormidades y falsedades cansinas.

Pero yo les hago una pregunta ¿qué harían ustedes con España de estar en el Gobierno? Además de la corrupción que derrocharon en su tiempo de gobierno, además de meter en la cárcel a todos esos cientos de funcionarios y trabajadores que tienen alguna relación con los hechos de 2017 y cuyas familias están arruinadas por las responsabilidades civiles. Yo se lo diré. No tienen ni idea de qué hacer con España porque ni la aceptan ni la entienden. Solo les obsesiona regresar al Gobierno de España.

Y déjenme decirles, la realidad de España puede no ser la que a ustedes les gusta y a lo mejor tampoco es exactamente la que me gustaría a mí, pero es la que está representada en el Congreso de los Diputados, cuya mayoría absoluta les rechaza... *(el presidente retira la palabra al orador).*

Jordi Cañas (Renew). – Señor presidente, la pregunta es si mientras setecientas personas morían al día se puede contratar a dedo a una empresa sin ninguna experiencia para comprar mascarillas a cambio de millonarias mordidas y comisiones ilegales, compras que iban a ministerios, empresas públicas y administraciones socialistas. Esto se hace a través de un intermediario que pasó de portero de prostíbulo a consejero de empresas públicas y a asesor del ministro de Transportes.

Luego una buena agenda de teléfonos para llamar: «cómprame de lo mío, cómprame de lo mío». Titán de los desahucios, gigante de la militancia, corazón comprometido, referente político, ejemplo de la militancia, socialista de raíz: así llamaba Pedro Sánchez a Koldo, el que pone nombre a esto, al caso Koldo.

La pregunta es: ¿por qué los ciudadanos que sufrieron la COVID-19 pagaron la corrupción además de sufrir la COVID-19? Esa es la gran pregunta. Y les pagaron ustedes. El «y tú más» no sirve.

La COVID-19 era inevitable; la corrupción, no. Yo no sé si sabremos algún día quién era el paciente cero de la COVID-19. Lo que sí que es cierto es que sabremos que el paciente cero de la corrupción es el Partido Socialista Obrero Español. El caso Koldo es el caso Partido Socialista Obrero Español. Y les voy a decir una cosa, esta vez no se van a poder autoamnistiar.

Rosa Estaràs Ferragut (PPE). – Señor presidente, el Gobierno de las Islas Baleares, presidido por la socialista Armengol, ocultó a Bruselas que las mascarillas pagadas con fondos europeos eran fraudulentas. Se compraron mascarillas sin ningún expediente de contratación por 3,7 millones de euros públicos a una trama organizada, la misma que se reunió con Delcy en el aeropuerto de Barajas. El Centro Nacional de Medios de Protección certificó que eran «ultrafake». Siete días después de detectar el fraude se pagan a una velocidad inusitada. Las avalan para financiar la trama, a sabiendas de que eran falsas. Las cargan a fondos europeos y esconden a las autoridades europeas el certificado de que eran inservibles y de que eran de mala calidad y que eran «ultrafake». Se oculta también esta información a la Guardia Civil y a la Fiscalía y tardan más de tres años en reclamar una mercancía que iba caducando y que, a día de hoy, está en cajas apiladas en un almacén. La señora Armengol dijo que su Administración era lenta.

La Dirección General de Fondos Europeos activó el protocolo de lucha contra el fraude y la Fiscalía Europea ha abierto diligencias por presuntos delitos de malversación de caudales públicos, tráfico de influencias y prevaricación.

Todo apunta al Partido Socialista Obrero Español y al Gobierno del señor Sánchez. El causante del daño no puede ser quien lo corrija. El señor Sánchez no combate la corrupción, la amnistía. Necesitamos Europa. España está enferma del Gobierno del señor Sánchez. Europa, actúa.

Margarida Marques (S&D). – Senhor Presidente, Conselho, Comissão, hoje, o Parlamento Europeu decidiu fazer um intervalo no seu trabalho, nas suas competências. Temos tolerância zero com a corrupção. Somos pela transparência absoluta, pela colaboração com a justiça, pela não obstrução. Somos a favor do Estado de direito, do princípio da presunção da inocência e de que as investigações e os julgamentos se fazem nas instâncias próprias, e estão a fazer-se – Parlamento espanhol, Procuradoria Europeia, OLAF – para determinar se estão fundos europeus em causa.

O Partido Popular Europeu precisa mesmo de olhar para dentro, para os casos do CDU/CSU na Alemanha, do PP em Madrid, das Baleares no governo de Rosa Estaràs, de Valência... Têm muito por onde olhar, por onde trabalhar dentro da vossa própria família política.

Mas não se deixem contaminar. Resistam e não alimentem o populismo – degrada a democracia, degrada as Instituições europeias.

Andrey Kovatchev (PPE). – Mr President, dear colleagues, the left part of this Chamber – Socialists, Greens, Communists – are using every opportunity they get to attack EPP governments about perceived breaches of rule of law and misuse of power and positions. However, Portugal and Malta, which are governed by socialists, as well as these recent revelations about the Spanish Government, are the latest example of blatant corruption and disregard of rule of law coming from within your ranks, colleagues on the left.

Corruption allegations within a socialist Spanish party and a proposed amnesty law are two very alarming developments. We are confronted with the misuse of millions of euros paid on ill-gotten commissions during the pandemic. Some of this might have even come from European funds. There are allegations of conflict of interest all the way up to the Spanish Prime Minister, the dismissal of officials cooperating with the judiciary, and the questionable bailout of an airline, as well as a secret meeting and exchange of 40 suitcases between a former Spanish minister and the Venezuelan Maduro Vice-President Rodríguez, who is subject of EU sanctions since 2018.

These all are unacceptable acts of misuse of power and must be investigated. I call on the EU to investigate these grave allegations. The integrity of our EU institutions demands this.

Isabel Benjumea Benjumea (PPE). – Señor presidente, señores del PSOE, se les nota absolutamente desesperados. Y yo lo comprendo porque el caso que hoy estamos debatiendo es un caso repugnante, porque se dio en plena pandemia cuando los ciudadanos eran más vulnerables.

Es indigno e inmoral que algunos aprovecharan aquellos difíciles momentos para cobrar esas comisiones ilegales por la venta de mascarillas inservibles. Hubo dirigentes responsables del Gobierno del señor Sánchez que miraron para otro lado, taparon y, por tanto, colaboraron con esa repugnante corrupción. Dirigentes socialistas que incluso mintieron en documentos públicos validando ese material a sabiendas de que era defectuoso, para poder imputar así el gasto a los fondos europeos.

Europa debe lanzar un mensaje alto y claro llegando hasta el fondo de la cuestión. Del mismo modo que tenemos que saber, a la luz de las nuevas informaciones, si el Gobierno de Sánchez ayudó a eludir sanciones sobre dirigentes del régimen venezolano, en concreto la señora Delcy Rodríguez.

La corrupción en el seno del Gobierno de Sánchez la vamos a pagar todos los españoles porque vamos a tener que devolver estos fondos. Tolerar esto y permitir que los responsables queden impunes sería una traición no solo a la ciudadanía sino a la solidaridad de la Unión Europea.

Gabriel Mato (PPE). – Señor presidente, señor comisario, malversación de fondos públicos, prevaricación y tráfico de influencias en los contratos firmados durante la pandemia. Pongamos que hablamos de Canarias, bajo la presidencia del entonces presidente del Gobierno socialista, y hoy ministro de Pedro Sánchez, Ángel Víctor Torres. Mientras unos morían, otros se enriquecían gracias a la trama. Mascarillas millonarias, más de dieciséis millones de euros, con los mismos protagonistas de siempre. Hoy es Koldo. Ayer era el tito Berni o las maletas de Delcy. Pero siempre corrupción y un denominador común: los socialistas.

Estamos ante un fraude en el que el Gobierno socialista de Canarias anuló y rehizo el contrato con la trama para pagarlo con fondos de la Unión Europea y por ello la Fiscalía Europea y la Oficina Europea de Lucha contra el Fraude les están investigando.

En Canarias necesitamos fondos europeos, los necesitamos para la agricultura, para la ganadería y la pesca, para los puertos y aeropuertos, para mejorar la conectividad y para fomentar el empleo juvenil, pero no para que la trama socialista los utilice para hacerse ricos. Eso no.

Johannes Hahn, Member of the Commission. – Mr President, honourable Members, I think there are two common elements in your interventions: your strong engagement against any kind of fraud that could affect EU funds, and the firm belief that any suspicions of fraud must be duly investigated. And here I fully agree.

The European Commission has zero tolerance for fraud. European money belongs to European taxpayers and it is our common duty to protect it. The European Commission works at all levels, from prevention and anti-fraud strategies to controls and fraud reports to the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) and the European Public Prosecutor's Office whenever we detect a suspicious situation.

We work closely, of course, with the national authorities who are in the first line of defence when it comes to protecting the Union budget from fraud and irregularities. Also, in this case there are investigations by the Spanish national authorities and by the European Public Prosecutor's Office, and I expect that there is a good cooperation between the two institutions, because finally, it is in the interest of us, of you, European taxpayers, that everything is clarified and duly investigated.

Hadja Lahbib, President-in-Office of the Council. – Mr President, honourable Members of the Parliament, thank you very much for this debate, which demonstrates, once again, our common determination to safeguard our democratic values and in particular the respect of the rule of law. Some of you have wondered whether it is appropriate to hold such a debate in the European Parliament. Others stressed the importance of close cooperation with the European institutions in corruption cases such as this one. I strongly believe that this debate is essential, and I repeat, it is essential to protect European investment and to fight against all forms of corruption.

The Council remains firmly committed to carrying out efforts in this direction, whether on the legal framework for criminal offences, as well as the development of the European Public Prosecutor's Office. We owe it to the citizens who will vote on 9 June, and who must be able to do so with confidence. I thank you very much for your cooperation.

Πρόεδρος. – Η συζήτηση έληξε.

Γραπτές δηλώσεις (άρθρο 171)

Enikő Győri (NI), írásban. – Spanyolországban a szocialista kormány korrupciós ügyek tömkelegébe keveredett, uniós pénzek tűntek el. A nemzeti igazságszolgáltatás és az Európai Ügyészség vizsgálódik. Pedro Sanchez csökkenti a hűtlen kezelés és sikkasztás miatt kiszabható büntetési tételeket, s igyekszik felmenteni a nemzeti igazságszolgáltatás által elítélt politikusokat. Mindeközben üzletelnek a Maduro-féle diktatúrával. A visszaélések által okozott becsült kár 321,7 millió euró.

Magyarország és korábbi, jobboldali kormány által vezetett Lengyelország esetében sosem volt ilyen türelmes a Bizottság. A hazánknak járó helyreállítási forrásokat teljes egészében, a kohéziós pénzeket részlegesen visszatartják. Ahogy Ursula von der Leyen is beismerte, a migráció és a gyermekvédelmi törvény miatt. Ez politikai zsarolás, nem az unió pénzügyi érdekeinek védelme. Az EU vezetői a februári csúcson emlékeztették is a Bizottságot, hogy a jogállamisági feltételrendszer-mechanizmust pártatlanul, a tagállamokkal szembeni egyenlő bánásmódot biztosítva kell alkalmazni. Magyarország teljesítette vállalásait, a Bizottság mégis csak részlegesen reagál, s az Erasmus programból is kizárja a magyar diákokat. Immár négy hónapja válasz nélkül hagyja a kormány megoldási javaslatait.

Mi ez, ha nem kettős mérce? A spanyol ellenzék joggal kritizálja a kormányát, de egyetlen képviselőjük sem szorgalmazza hazája megfosztását az uniós pénzekről. A magyar dollárbaloldal viszont napi szinten követeli, hogy Magyarország egyetlen eurócenthez se jusson hozzá. Nincs is nagyobb szégyen ennél rájuk nézve.

12. Den europeiska planeringsterminen för samordning av den ekonomiska politiken 2024 – Den europeiska planeringsterminen för samordning av den ekonomiska politiken: sysselsättningsprioriteringar och sociala prioriteringar för 2024 (gemensam debatt – den europeiska planeringsterminen)

Πρόεδρος. – Το επόμενο σημείο στην ημερήσια διάταξη αφορά την κοινή συζήτηση σχετικά με το Ευρωπαϊκό Εξάμηνο με την έκθεση του κ. René Repasi με θέμα: Ευρωπαϊκό Εξάμηνο συντονισμού των οικονομικών πολιτικών 2024, εξ ονόματος της Επιτροπής Οικονομικής και Νομισματικής Πολιτικής (A9-0063/2024)

και

την έκθεση του κ. Dragoș Pîslaru με θέμα: Ευρωπαϊκό Εξάμηνο συντονισμού των οικονομικών πολιτικών: προτεραιότητες όσον αφορά την απασχόληση και κοινωνικές προτεραιότητες για το 2024, εξ ονόματος της Επιτροπής Απασχόλησης και Κοινωνικών Υποθέσεων (A9-0050/2024).

René Repasi, Berichterstatter. – Herr Präsident, Herr Kommissar, verehrte Ratspräsidentenschaft, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Die Herausforderungen für die europäische Wirtschafts- und Haushaltspolitik sind enorm. Wir müssen vor allem unsere Wirtschaft fit machen für den Kampf gegen den Klimawandel – einschließlich der darin auch bestehenden Chancen. Wir müssen unsere Wettbewerbsfähigkeit sichern in einer Welt, in der alle anderen Wirtschaftsräume den Steuergeldhahn öffnen, um ihre Industrien zu unterstützen. Gleichzeitig müssen wir angesichts der Drohungen aus dem Osten und des Rückzugs unserer Partner im Westen unsere Verteidigungsfähigkeit verstärken oder in Teilen wieder aufbauen.

Das alles vor dem Hintergrund, dass die Menschen unter gestiegenen Lebenshaltungskosten aufgrund von Inflation und zynischen Mitnahmeeffekten von dominanten Unternehmen leiden. Es gibt viele Haushalte, die sich fragen, wie sie die gestiegenen Preise, Hypotheken und andere Kosten überhaupt noch schultern können.

Der Ruf nach einem handlungsfähigen Staat wird immer größer – und hier genau kommt das Europäische Semester ins Spiel. Nur durch ein gutes Ineinandergreifen von mitgliedstaatlicher Wirtschafts- und Haushaltspolitik verhindern wir das Entstehen von makroökonomischen Ungleichgewichten, die unseren Euro unter Druck setzen.

Und wenn wir uns das anschauen in dem Europäischen Semester, dann gibt es doch einige Fragezeichen. Die Europäische Kommission selbst schätzt, dass es einen Investitionsbedarf von 700 Milliarden Euro jährlich gibt, nur um den grünen und den digitalen Umbau hinzubekommen. Wie soll das denn gelingen? Staaten, die es mit ihren eigenen öffentlichen Mitteln könnten – wie mein Heimatstaat Deutschland –, dürfen es nicht, weil wir uns mit einer absurden Schuldenbremse selbst in den Fuß geschossen haben. Staaten, die es dürften, können es aber nicht, weil sie gar nicht über die fiskalische Kapazität verfügen.

Die Reform der Fiskalregeln wird daran gar nichts ändern. Was wir brauchen, ist ein dauerhafter europäischer Investitionsfonds, der gerne auch aus neuen Eigenmitteln finanziert ist. Die Finanztransaktionssteuer liegt hier auf dem Tisch – die Mitgliedstaaten müssen nur mal ihre Hand heben.

Gleichzeitig stellen wir fest, dass das Europäische Semester es sich sehr leicht macht. Es hat eine soziale Schieflage. Die länderspezifischen Empfehlungen, mit denen die Kommission die Politik der Mitgliedstaaten adressiert, beschränken sich selbst auf die Durchsetzung der nationalen Aufbau- und Resilienzpläne. Und das soziale Scoreboard hat immer weniger Relevanz. Die Anzahl der sozialen Empfehlungen ist leider zurückgenommen.

Das muss anders werden, denn wenn die soziale Schieflage größer wird, wachsen die ökonomischen Ungleichgewichte, und dann müssen wir noch mehr Mittel in Anspruch nehmen, damit der Euro nicht unter Druck gerät. Das Semester wird deswegen nach der Reform der Fiskalregeln noch einmal wichtiger werden, als es jetzt schon ist.

Ich rufe daher die Kommission auf, dieses neue Instrument, wie wir es jetzt in den Fiskalregeln ändern werden, noch mehr zu nutzen, auch die soziale Schieflage mit dem Einfügen der sozialen Dimension des Semesters anzupacken. Und ich rufe uns auf als den Gesetzgeber: Machen wir den Weg frei für einen dauerhaften europäischen Investitionsfonds, der die öffentlichen Mittel mobilisiert, die wir brauchen, damit uns der grüne und der digitale Umbau unserer Wirtschaft gelingt und wir gleichzeitig alle Menschen dabei mitnehmen können!

Dragoș Pîslaru, rapporteur. – Mr President, dear Executive Vice-President Dombrovskis, dear Valdis, dear Commissioner Schmit, dear Nicolas, dear Minister, as we move towards a renewed Parliament and Commission, we must think about the legacy that we leave to our colleagues. The European Semester is a cornerstone of what the European Union does good for citizens. It monitors the progress of the Member States and issues recommendations in order to achieve economic and social convergence, territorial and social cohesion, and, in general, a better life for our youth and children, for our citizens across Europe.

This year in particular, the report on the European Semester was written in the context of the review of the EU economic governance mechanism, and we tackled many challenges in this mandate and we made innovative steps in terms of European financial instruments. Therefore it was only a question of time before adapting the economic governance to the new realities. The same has to happen with the European Semester.

The report that I am presenting I am presenting on behalf of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, and I want to thank very much my colleagues. We really acted as a team this mandate. We delivered for our citizens, and together with the Commission and the Council, we set important steps in order to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights. We are not there yet. A lot of many things to do, but let us go first on how to understand the current challenges in the context of the Semester.

First, how the uncertain economic outlook influences the cost of living, how the ongoing geopolitical conflicts are exacerbating poverty and social exclusion, how the green and digital transition can have a significant impact on the environment, economy and the people. How demographic trends such as ageing and brain-drain magnify disparities and contribute to skills and labour shortages. So this is the context that we are talking about.

Second, the Semester can help through concrete and specific recommendations, and it is clear that we need the modernisation of several aspects of the labour market, as we have right now skill mismatches, labour market shortages, as well as great potentials and risks of the twin transition. Therefore the European Semester should look more specifically at innovation, in up-to-date monitoring, the data of the labour market and supply and demand for skills, creation of good quality jobs and implementation of retention strategies – as these are the best way to attract a skilled workforce, improving access to quality employment in society – especially for those groups at high risk of poverty and social exclusion, and further EU action to protect workers and ensure a decent level of income and the need for technical support – in particular for SMEs and start-ups – for training and recruitment of new skilled and qualified employees in line with national policies and capacities.

Third, the Semester needs and we are talking about adapted financial instruments, and how can we ensure that all these recommendations can be put into practice if we don't have the increased funding that we have been advocating for, dedicated to social objectives and promotion of future-oriented investments. It is necessary that all financial instruments at all levels must become less fragmented in their management, less bureaucratic and more blended and bundled. It is time to think about the introduction of social conditionality in the allocation rules of EU funds, as part of the Financial Regulation covering the EU general budget, and also the possibility to design more flexible individual adjustment paths for Member States, allowing them the fiscal space to undertake social investments and reforms needed for socially fair, green and digital transition.

And last but not least, we need a democratic, a more democratic, accountable, transparent European Semester. We welcome the social convergence framework, an early warning system used for the first time in the 2024 multilateral surveillance procedure. And this can encourage the correction of risk related to social convergence. We need to fully integrate the framework into the Semester process from 2025.

I will conclude with a final call for the future: we need a bigger role for the European Parliament in the European Semester. We launched the possibility to create a special working group in the European Parliament that should ensure dialogue with representatives of Member States, regional and local authorities, as well as stakeholders who should be also essential actors in the European process.

Margarida Marques, *relatora de parecer da Comissão dos Orçamentos*. – Senhor Presidente, Senhora Ministra, Senhores Comissários, o Semestre Europeu vai viver, em 2024, um ano de transição entre as atuais e as novas regras de governação económica. Por isso, temos de preparar o futuro, e o futuro passa pela criação de um instrumento de investimento permanente ao nível da União Europeia, como defendemos no parecer da Comissão dos Orçamentos.

Queremos que este instrumento permanente apoie os investimentos estratégicos, seja um mecanismo rápido de resposta a crises inesperadas e um suporte para a eficácia do próximo quadro de governação económica e Semestre Europeu. Este novo instrumento permanente deve ser financiado por receitas próprias e não pode ser criado ou financiado à custa de políticas estratégicas e fundadoras da União Europeia, como é o caso da política de coesão.

As novas regras de governação económica irão tornar o Semestre Europeu mais flexível, com uma abordagem caso a caso e com prioridades de investimento definidas na área social, ambiental, digital e da defesa.

Hadja Lahbib, *Présidente en exercice du Conseil*. – Monsieur le Président, honorables membres du Parlement, chers membres de la Commission, je vous suis reconnaissante de nous donner cette occasion de discuter du Semestre européen, auquel le Conseil accorde une très grande importance. Cette année, le Semestre européen va évoluer grâce aux accords intervenus, notamment, avec ce Parlement. Tout d'abord, je tiens à vous remercier pour votre soutien de la réforme de nos règles budgétaires, laquelle aboutira à des finances publiques plus saines et plus viables tout en promouvant une croissance durable et inclusive dans les États membres grâce à des réformes et à des investissements.

Le 10 février, le Parlement européen et le Conseil sont parvenus à un accord sur la réforme du cadre de gouvernance économique de l'Union européenne. Après le vote du Parlement, prévu pour la deuxième plénière d'avril, c'est le Conseil qui l'adoptera, ce qui permettra de mettre en place le nouveau cadre de gouvernance économique dès cette année. Au vu des multiples défis qui se présentent à nous, nous n'avons évidemment pas de temps à perdre. Il est en effet temps de mettre en place les nouvelles règles budgétaires, qui amélioreront considérablement le cadre existant et garantiront des règles efficaces et applicables à tous les pays membres de l'Union européenne.

Les nouvelles règles feront en sorte que les finances publiques soient équilibrées et viables, elles mettront davantage l'accent sur les réformes structurelles et favoriseront les investissements, la croissance et la création d'emplois dans l'ensemble de l'Union européenne.

C'est de l'emploi et des aspects sociaux de notre société que je souhaite à présent vous parler, en commençant par le marché du travail. La situation est en fait plutôt positive. L'Union est en passe d'atteindre le grand objectif qu'elle s'est fixé en matière d'emploi à l'horizon 2030: 78 % de la population âgée de 20 et 64 ans devrait avoir un emploi. Cependant, il est impératif de prendre des mesures adéquates pour combler les pénuries de main d'œuvre et de compétences. Ces insuffisances risquent de mettre en péril la compétitivité de l'Union et de retarder les transitions numérique et écologique.

Contrairement à l'objectif d'emploi, l'objectif de compétences à l'horizon 2030, reste, lui à améliorer. C'est d'ailleurs pour cette raison que le sommet social tripartite du 20 mars prochain sera consacré à ces sujets. Je vous rappelle que, l'année passée, nous avons adopté une décision relative à l'Année européenne des compétences pour promouvoir des investissements dans la formation, afin d'améliorer les perspectives professionnelles et personnelles de nos citoyens.

Un autre aspect, moins positif, est que, malgré l'augmentation des salaires nominaux, les salaires réels ont quant à eux diminué dans presque tous les États membres. Il est donc nécessaire d'avoir des mécanismes de fixation des salaires équilibrés. Cela peut se faire à travers un dialogue social fort et sur des négociations collectives efficaces, conformément aux pratiques nationales. Je vous donne deux exemples: en juin dernier, le Conseil a adopté la recommandation sur le renforcement du dialogue social; et un autre outil dont nous nous félicitons est la directive relative à des salaires minimaux adéquats, qui peut servir à protéger le pouvoir d'achat des travailleurs à bas salaire et à réduire la pauvreté de nos citoyens.

Enfin, Mesdames et Messieurs, le Semestre européen reste la pierre angulaire de la coordination efficace de nos politiques économiques et budgétaires. La compétitivité de l'Union est évidemment un objectif important. Pourtant, il est primordial de s'assurer que les objectifs sociaux de l'Union en matière de formation et de réduction de la pauvreté seront poursuivis avec autant d'ambition et d'énergie. Ensemble, avec nos collègues espagnols, nous avons d'ailleurs suggéré de mettre l'accent sur les éléments sociaux dans le Semestre européen, notamment sur l'analyse des potentiels obstacles à la convergence sociale ascendante dans chaque État membre. Je sais que le cadre de convergence sociale est un sujet que vous avez suivi et dont vous avez encouragé la mise en place, c'est pourquoi nous poursuivrons certainement notre débat avec vous sur ce sujet.

Valdis Dombrovskis, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – Mr President, Madam Minister, Commissioner, honourable Members, first of all, I would like to thank our rapporteurs for the two reports that cover the key relevant issues for the coordination of economic and social policies in the EU.

The European Semester plays a central role to coordinate Member States' policies in those areas. It has been proven to be an effective and agile instrument throughout the recent challenging years. Its four dimensions – productivity, fairness, macroeconomic stability and environmental sustainability – remain fully relevant.

The regular dialogue with this House is a crucial moment within the European Semester cycle and I am glad that in the context of the provisional agreement reached on the new economic governance framework, the dialogue with the Parliament has been further reinforced.

This year, the semester will have a particular focus on addressing long-standing structural problems, including weak productivity, demographic issues – including ageing – and challenges linked to the green and digital transitions. If left unaddressed, these challenges may drag on growth, competitiveness and social cohesion for years to come. It requires tackling a variety of bottlenecks, more private and public investment, as well as structural reforms, amongst others, to make it easier for companies to finance themselves, to ensure that education and training systems equip workers with the right skills needed in the labour market, to make product services and labour markets more efficient, to improve business environments for companies, including by reducing the administrative burden.

This year's European Semester, with a deeper analysis on territorial and social disparities, will also inform the mid-term review of the cohesion policy funding expected by next year. This will provide an opportunity to assess the cohesion policy programmes and tackle areas where there are pressing needs and emerging challenges. It will also pay attention to complementarity between the RRF and cohesion policy and maximise their synergism.

With public debt levels having risen substantially over the past years, and in the context of still high inflation, ensuring fiscal sustainability remains crucial. Debt and deficit levels need to be gradually reduced. As demands on public finances have simultaneously increased, particular attention should be paid to the efficiency, composition and quality of public finances. In particular, Member States should prioritise investments that support sustainable and inclusive growth. The recent provisional agreement reached between co-legislators on the new economic governance provides a strong anchor for Member States' fiscal and structural policies. It focuses on improving debt sustainability, as well as on promoting sustainable and inclusive growth, contributing to the achievement of common Union priorities. Its swift implementation is now a key priority.

A final word on the Recovery and Resilience Facility, which will continue to be closely tied to the European Semester. A full and timely implementation of recovery and resilience plans remains key to address structural challenges. Our recent mid-term evaluation shows that the RRF is helping to make our economies and societies more sustainable, more competitive and more resilient. It also shows how the RRF has produced a step change in the implementation of the country-specific recommendations and key EU priorities thanks to the combination of reforms and investments.

At the same time, the mid-term evaluation has uncovered some areas for improvement and lessons to be learned, on which we need to reflect further, also with Parliament's help. Thank you, Nicolas will complement this and other aspects.

Nicolas Schmit, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, honourable Members, dear rapporteurs, dear shadows, let me first thank you for your very rich report. It stresses the importance of creating quality jobs with adequate wages and working conditions, fostering the right skills for today and tomorrow, fighting poverty and reducing inequalities.

We stand fully behind your pledge that the European Pillar of Social Rights should remain our compass to drive actions that foster a strong social Europe. It is also a key part of the EU's economic and social policy coordination in the European Semester.

Parliament and the Commission are well aligned in underlining the importance of fostering upward social convergence in our Union. In this respect, the 2024 Joint Employment Report presents, for the first time, a stronger country-specific focus and analysis in line with the features of the social convergence framework. As a follow up, a deeper, second-stage country analysis is now being prepared by our services for those Member States for which potential risks to upward social convergence were identified in the Joint Employment Report.

Upskilling and reskilling are crucial to support our economies and it is all the more important in times of big transformations and challenges, including sizeable labour and skills shortages. We will soon put forward an action plan to reinforce the labour market integration of all groups and to foster the EU's inclusive and sustainable growth and this is also a way how Europe can improve its competitiveness.

The national recovery and resilience plans include important reforms and investments contributing to addressing labour market skills and social challenges. This includes measures that contribute to boosting skills, to make Europe fit for the green and digital transitions, strengthen active labour market policies and improve social protection, including with regard to healthcare and social services.

The forthcoming Semester Spring Package will also include important guidance on the mid-term review of cohesion policy programmes. In the context of the European Semester, which remains the central instrument to coordinate economic and social policies and the new economic governance, we will continue our efforts towards a strong implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the achievements of the 2030 EU headline and national targets on employment, skills and poverty reduction. Social policies and economic policies have to work hand in hand, as it was stressed by many yesterday at the Jumbo EPSCO-ECOFIN Council meeting.

The new and more integrated approach to reforms and investments and fiscal policies in the new medium-term fiscal structural plans paves the way to factor in fiscal sustainability and fairness as part of one single policy programme. To tackle the challenges of the twin transition and to respond to the current geopolitical scenario, sizeable investment and relevant reforms are needed in the EU. This is at the heart of the European Semester and is also a key element of the new economic governance. The effective involvement of social partners in identifying policy solutions remains key to quality policy design and strong implementation and also represents a key feature of the new EU governance framework.

Tomáš Zdechovský, za skupinu PPE. – Pane předsedající, dámy a pánové, vyjednávání evropského semestru je vždy náročné. Každá z politických stran se totiž snaží prosadit nejenom své sociální, ale i ekonomické priority pro nadcházející období. A ještě více je to náročné vždycky před volbami. V této každoroční zprávě je totiž klíčové, abychom našli rovnováhu mezi ekonomickými a sociálními prioritami. A to se nám letos podařilo.

Dámy a pánové, na jednu stranu totiž požadujeme vytváření pracovních míst, podporu středních a malých podniků a také snižování byrokracie. Ukazujeme, že nám záleží na evropských firmách a chceme pro ně nejlepší podmínky, aby mohly nadále růst a byly konkurenceschopné. Na druhou stranu chceme pomoci lidem, kteří se ocitli v těžké životní situaci, jako jsou lidé s různými formami postižení, matky samoživitelky nebo sociálně vyloučené skupiny. Velmi často jsme tady hovořili např. o Romech, kteří žijí ve velmi špatných podmínkách ve většině členských států Evropské unie.

Evropská unie za posledních pár let čelila řadě krizí a je nutné, abychom našim občanům nepřidávali další břemeno, ale naopak ukázali, že jsme tady pro ně a že jsme připraveni jim pomoci. Mokrát tedy děkuji kolegům z ostatních frakcí, se kterými jsme tuto zprávu vyjednávali. Bylo to dlouhé, ale férové jednání. Pevně věřím, že klíčové pozměňovací návrhy projdou tak, aby Evropská lidová strana mohla tuto zprávu podpořit.

Lina Gálvez Muñoz, en nombre del Grupo S&D. – Señor presidente, señores comisarios, señoras ministras, el Semestre Europeo debe establecer un marco de convergencia social aplicando los principios del pilar europeo de derechos sociales con un nivel adecuado de inversión pública que garantice un escudo social para nuestros ciudadanos y ciudadanas.

Y no valen solo palabras. Hay que avanzar también en mejores indicadores para la vigilancia y la evaluación no solo *ex post*, sino también *ex ante*, porque tanto las políticas macroeconómicas como todas las políticas económicas que ponemos en funcionamiento tienen efectos desiguales en personas que están en una situación desigual.

Para las y los socialistas este informe es un buen informe y agradecemos tanto a la Presidencia belga como a la Presidencia española que hayan hecho hincapié en los asuntos sociales. Pero desde la Comisión de Empleo y Asuntos Sociales aún se nos queda un poco corto y por eso hemos propuesto cinco enmiendas, cinco puntos básicos.

El primero y más importante, un protocolo social de progreso que garantice el no retorno a la austeridad; el segundo, atajar la crisis de vivienda; el tercero, la revisión de la Directiva sobre contratación pública para asegurar empleos de calidad y condiciones justas; el cuarto, buscar nuevos ingresos para luchar contra la desigualdad y promover la justicia social y la cohesión territorial; y el quinto, la reedición de NextGenerationEU y del instrumento SURE como mecanismos muy buenos para garantizar la resiliencia.

Stéphanie Yon-Courtin, au nom du groupe Renew. – Monsieur le Président, Messieurs les commissaires, l'Union européenne a été au rendez-vous face aux conséquences de la pandémie et de l'invasion de l'Ukraine par la Russie. Crise énergétique, inflation, faible croissance, menace sur les ménages et la compétitivité de nos entreprises: nous y avons répondu en Européens. Ce qui a compté à travers ces crises, c'est notre unité, l'unité dans la diversité, qui nous oblige à nous entendre sur un règlement intérieur de notre copropriété à 27, afin de continuer à pouvoir investir et à être crédibles sur la scène internationale.

Car oui, nous devons investir massivement pour mettre fin aux dépendances en assurant la résilience de notre économie, mais aussi pour la décarboner et la numériser. Comment? En mobilisant l'investissement public et privé, en luttant contre l'évasion fiscale et le blanchiment d'argent et en renforçant notre marché unique. C'est à ces conditions que nous remettons de l'ordre dans les finances publiques.

La confiance entre partenaires européens est tout aussi indispensable que celle des citoyens envers la parole politique. «Il n'y a pas d'amour, il n'y a que des preuves d'amour», c'est pourquoi la coordination de nos politiques économiques et sociales est la preuve concrète qui permet de fixer cette feuille de route commune pour répondre aux défis avec responsabilité et ambition.

Rasmus Andresen, im Namen der Verts/ALE-Fraktion. – Herr Präsident! Über 100 Millionen Europäerinnen und Europäer, die in Armut leben, eine breite Mehrheit der Bevölkerung, die in den letzten Jahren real an Einkommen verloren hat und Probleme hat, am Ende des Monats ihre Rechnungen zu zahlen, und auf der anderen Seite eine kleine Elite von Superreichen, die in den letzten Jahren nur dabei zusehen mussten, wie sie ihr Vermögen vermehrt haben. Gleichzeitig beschreibt die EU-Kommission, dass wir einen Investitionsbedarf für die Klimaziele haben von ungefähr 600 Milliarden Euro mehr an Investitionen. Europa funktioniert nicht für alle, und es ist eine politische Entscheidung, wie wir damit umgehen.

Und aus meiner Perspektive gibt es dafür gerade zwei Wege: Es gibt den Weg, den US-Präsident Biden geht, der sehr mutig ist, der mit mehr Investitionen in grüne Infrastruktur nicht nur das Land fit macht gegen die Klimakrise, sondern 15 Millionen neue Arbeitsplätze geschaffen hat und dafür sorgt, dass die Arbeitsplätze nicht nur entstehen, sondern dass es auch gute Arbeitsplätze sind mit guten Tariflöhnen. Statt Kürzungen bei Forschung und Entwicklung, so wie es die Staats- und Regierungschefs gemacht haben, investiert Joe Biden Rekordsummen in Forschung und Entwicklung.

Und dann gibt es auf der anderen Seite den konservativen Weg, den scheinbar auch die Kommissionspräsidentin Ursula von der Leyen gerade formuliert, der auf Haushaltskürzungen setzt, der auf fehlende Investitionen setzt, und der glaubt, dass wir unseren Kontinent gesundkürzen können.

Wir glauben das nicht; wir glauben, wir sollten mehr Mut beweisen. Wir wollen auch die Kommissionspräsidentin dazu auffordern, das zu machen, was sie in der Pandemie mal angefangen hat – mit dem Corona-Wiederaufbaufonds, mit dem SURE-Kurzarbeiterinstrument. Weniger Friedrich Merz, mehr Joe Biden – Frau von der Leyen, das ist hier die Devise.

VORSITZ: JAN-CHRISTOPH OETJEN

Vizepräsident

Eugen Jurzyca, za skupinu ECR. – Vážený pán predsedajúci, cieľom spoločných hospodárskych a fiškálnych pravidiel v Európskej únii má byť silný hospodársky rast.

Na podporu tohto cieľa bol pred vyše dekádou založený aj európsky semester, ktorý má dohliadať na poriadok v hospodárskej a fiškálnej politike členských štátov. V ostatných rokoch sa semester stal ale dosť preťažený. Do centra pozornosti sa dostali viac sociálne a zelené politiky na úkor dôrazu na hospodársky rast. Hospodársky rast pritom potrebujeme na zlepšenie aj v oblastiach sociálnych a zelených politík, nielen na rast zamestnanosti a plátov.

Európa sa trápi s pomalým rastom, zvýšenou infláciou a vysokými dlhmi. Tvorba európskych politík sa preto viac musí sústrediť na hospodársky rast.

Gunnar Beck, im Namen der ID-Fraktion. – Herr Präsident! Die Kommission erwartet für Deutschland dieses Jahr Stagflation und auch nächstes Jahr kaum Wachstum. Auch Deutschlands Inflation bleibt weiterhin über EU-Niveau und über den asymptotisch 2 %, die die EZB vorgibt anzustreben.

Tatsächlich hat Deutschland das niedrigste Wirtschaftswachstum aller OECD-Staaten, ausgenommen Argentinien. Selbst die Arbeitslosigkeit ist in Deutschland nur scheinbar niedrig, weil Millionen unvermittelbare Migrantinnen nicht als arbeitslos registriert sind.

In der EU allgemein ist die Wirtschaftslage kaum besser. Infolge der Russlandsanktionen und des Grünen Deals steigen die Produktionskosten, und die Binnennachfrage und der Lebensstandard sinken. Fiskalische Spielräume gibt es nicht, wegen unbezahlbarer Massenmigration und schuldenfinanzierter grüner Fantasieprojekte.

Die ganze Welt, sogar Großbritannien, blickt amüsiert auf Europa, den ersten sich freiwillig de-entwickelnden Kontinent. Ihre Politik zielt auf zivilisatorischen Rückschritt. Dass die deutsche Außenministerin eine politische Totalumkehr als 360-Grad-Wende bezeichnet, ist Beleg dafür, wie weit wir auf diesem Wege schon gekommen sind.

Enikő Győri (NI). – Elnök Úr! Az Európai Szemesztert eredetileg a tagállamok gazdasági folyamatainak összehangolására és a pénzügyi fegyelem biztosítására hoztuk létre még 2011-ben, a magyar elnökség alatt. A baloldálnak azonban ez nem prioritás: Évekig mindent elkövettek, hogy ideológiai elemeket erőltessenek bele a keretrendszerbe. A gazdasági kormányzás reformja során is azért küzdöttek, hogy a Bizottság még több, egyébként nemzeti hatáskörbe tartozó kérdésben kérje számon a tagállamokat. A jelentésnek is ez a legnagyobb hibája, még a rezsiárat is szeretné, ha Brüsszel határozná meg, amit el kell utasítani, s a szociálpolitika sem uniós hatáskör.

Azt javaslom, olvassák a szerződéseket. Az országspecifikus ajánlások továbbá nem készülhetnek egy kaptafára. Jobban figyelembe kell venniük a tagállami sajátosságokat. Erre kellene emlékeztetni a jelentésben a Bizottságot. A Parlament annak is megszállottja, hogy minél nagyobb befolyást szerezzen a gazdasági koordináció folyamataiban. Márpedig ez teljes szereptévesztés. Végezetül a szemeszter kiszámíthatóságot és a biztonságos tervezést kellene jelentenie a tagállamok számára. A Bizottság azonban idén későn publikálná az országspecifikus ajánlásokat, és makacsul elzárkózik a céldátum módosítása elől. Kérem, hogy ezen sürgősen változtasson!

Markus Ferber (PPE). – Herr Präsident, meine Herren Kommissare, Frau Ratspräsidentin, liebe Kolleginnen, liebe Kollegen! Das Europäische Semester ist das zentrale Instrument zur Koordinierung der Wirtschaftspolitik. Die europäische Wirtschaft ist in einem schwierigen Fahrwasser. Die Wachstumsaussichten sind mau, die Staatsverschuldung in den Mitgliedstaaten ist hoch, der Investitionsbedarf ebenso. Eine effektive Koordination der europäischen Wirtschaftspolitik ist deswegen dringender notwendig denn je.

Das Semester wäre eigentlich das richtige Instrument, wenn wir auch anerkennen, dass es in der Vergangenheit nicht sehr effizient war. Wir haben als EVP-Fraktion schon immer darauf hingewiesen: Man muss dann das Dach reparieren, wenn die Sonne scheint. Die Zeit mit Nullzinsen wurde nicht dazu genutzt, strukturelle Defizite abzubauen. Ganz im Gegenteil: Die Mitgliedstaaten haben zusätzliche Schulden aufgenommen – weil Geld hat ja nichts gekostet –, meistens in konsumtive Ausgaben gepumpt und wundern sich heute, wo die Zinsen angestiegen sind, dass sie nicht mehr in der Lage sind, die Dinge zu finanzieren. Und dann zu sagen: „Ja, dann lasst uns halt jetzt die Schulden auf europäischer Ebene aufnehmen, weil wir es national nicht mehr können“ – die Schulden der Europäischen Union sind die höheren Beitragszahlungen der Mitgliedstaaten morgen. Das wird nicht funktionieren!

Und dass ausgerechnet die von der Sozialdemokratie, von den Grünen, die dafür gesorgt haben, dass das größte und eigentlich wirtschaftlich stärkste Land der Europäischen Union heute das geringste Wachstum hat, eine Stagnation hat, uns erklären wollen, wie Wirtschaftspolitik funktioniert, das ist an Lächerlichkeit nicht mehr zu überbieten.

Agnes Jongerius (S&D). – Voorzitter, minister, commissarissen, er is een wooncrisis gaande in Europa. Als je nu een dak boven je hoofd moet vinden, is een fatsoenlijk huis de naald in de hooiberg. Er is een gebrek aan woningen, de huren zijn torenhoog of de woningen zijn slecht van kwaliteit.

Wij hebben een actief woonbeleid nodig, ook in Europa. Het is daarom essentieel dat de Europese Commissie en de lidstaten samen aan de slag gaan. Er is wetgeving nodig waarmee ervoor wordt gezorgd dat, als er nieuwe huizen gebouwd worden, ten minste 30 % hiervan beschikbaar is voor de lagere-inkomensgroepen en nog eens 30 % voor de middeninkomens.

Voor mij is het duidelijk: we kunnen het wonen niet aan de markt overlaten. We kunnen niet alleen beleid voeren op dakloosheid. Het recht op fatsoenlijke huisvesting is een mensenrecht. Het staat in de Europese pijler. We moeten hier voortgang maken.

Billy Kelleher (Renew). – Mr President, it seems that some groups have used this European Semester report to try to undermine the work done on finally reaching an agreement on the new economic governance framework for the EU itself. And this is clearly very disappointing. I actually believe that this is quite a good agreement, in the sense that it gives flexibility in terms of spending and ensures that we have sustainability and prudence as part of that particular package.

So the European Semester itself should not be used for that purpose. From an Irish perspective, we did need to have flexibility and the economic governance framework to ensure that we were able to address a few fundamental challenges that are inherently causing pressures in the Irish economy. They are, namely, the issue of housing in terms of supply of housing, building, but also soaring rents. And these are two significant issues that do need state intervention to stimulate our housing market, to ensure that we can house our people.

So I honestly believe that those that are making the argument to undermine the agreement that we have on the economic governance framework are doing it for reasons I simply cannot understand, other than playing absolute politics with it. But from my perspective, the Irish Government has an opportunity with the flexibilities in this economic governance framework to address the serious challenges of housing, both in terms of delivery and building, and also ensuring affordable rents for people.

Ville Niinistö (Verts/ALE). – Mr President, I am worried about the European governments' capabilities to do the necessary future investments that Europe needs to also increase its competitiveness and productivity in the coming years. If you look at what the Chinese and the Americans are doing, they are spending a lot on decarbonisation and the green goals.

More specifically, I would like to raise a question on spending on research and innovation. We will not have an increase of productivity in Europe and leadership in industries if we do not increase our research and innovation spending. On average, we are about 2.2% of GDP currently in Europe, and South Korea is spending 5% on research and innovation. So this has to be focused also in the European Semester, that European governments increase their spending on R&I and we increase the average in European level in the short term, already 3% of the GDP. This has to be the focus of the European Semester, also to increase productivity, but then also be a world leader on decarbonisation. We cannot do it by spending half the amount that the South Koreans are spending, and a lot less than the Chinese and the Americans are spending on a GDP comparison: we have to do better.

Pirkko Ruohonen-Lerner (ECR). – Arvoisa puhemies, eurooppalainen ohjausjakso on osa EU:n talouden ohjausjärjestelmää. Sen aikana EU:n jäsenvaltiot sopeuttavat budjettia talouspolitiikkaansa EU:n tasolla sovittuihin sääntöihin. Mielestäni on tärkeää pitää kiinni siitä, että ohjausjaksolla keskitytään keskeisimpiin talous- ja sosiaalipolitiikan kysymyksiin ilman, että prosessia kuormitetaan liikaa. Sosiaalipolitiikan on pysyttävä pitkälti kansallisissa käsissä.

Vastustan mietinnössä ehdotettuja uudistuksia, joilla pyritään vahvistamaan Euroopan parlamentin roolia ohjausjaksossa. En voi myöskään tukea mietintöön sisältyvää kehotusta lisätä sosiaalisiin tavoitteisiin tarkoitettuja EU-varoja aikana, jolloin EU ja monet sen jäsenmaat velkaantuvat huolestuttavaa vauhtia. Näiden seikkojen vuoksi tulen äänestämään mietintöä vastaan.

Gerolf Annemans (ID). – Voorzitter, ondanks – excuseert u mij, collega's – de blablabla in dit verslag, zoals bijvoorbeeld – en ik citeer –: “de opwaartse sociale convergentie” of de “architectuur voor economische governance” en nog meer van dat, is er van convergentie minder dan ooit sprake.

Het beste voorbeeld daarvan in dit Semester is de voorzitter van uw Europese Raad, namelijk het Koninkrijk België. België bungelt eenzaam onderaan de Europese staart met een tekort van in totaal 27,5 miljard of 4,6 % van het bruto binnenlands product. In 2029 zal dit volgens het Belgisch Planbureau opklimmen naar 39,4 miljard of 5,6 % en een totaalschuld van 117 %.

Deze morgen nog trok de Nationale Bank van België zelf in alle Belgische media aan de alarmbel. De onbestuurbaarheid van het land wordt door de cijfers almaar meer bevestigd. Als u convergeert, zou ik u dus willen suggereren om u voor te bereiden op een ordelijke opdeling van België.

Eugenia Rodríguez Palop (The Left). – Señor presidente, señor comisario, le pese a quien le pese, durante los últimos cuatro años hemos visto que hay vida más allá de los dogmas neoliberales. Frente a la austeridad y sus graves consecuencias sociales, la suspensión del Pacto de Estabilidad y Crecimiento ofreció oxígeno a nuestros Gobiernos para poder amortiguar las consecuencias de las sucesivas crisis.

Y, sin embargo, hoy constatamos que, a pesar de que la excepcionalidad se cronifica y de que las necesidades de inversión se multiplican, la Unión Europea ha decidido regresar a la cantinela de siempre. Ha vuelto el Pacto de Estabilidad y Crecimiento y nos ofrecen un nuevo marco económico de gobernanza que no es más que el mismo perro con diferente collar.

Por supuesto que apoyamos reformar el Semestre para que integre los principios del pilar social y evalúe los riesgos para la convergencia social. Pero precisamente por eso, insistimos en que, sin una transformación radical de las reglas de gobernanza económica, ese mecanismo seguirá siendo el palo con el que disciplinar a nuestras sociedades y tensionar nuestras democracias.

Es evidente que no aprendemos de nuestros errores.

Λευτέρης Νικολάου-Αλαβάνος (NI). – Κύριε Πρόεδρε, το Eurogroup προχθές, μπροστά στην οικονομική αβεβαιότητα και τη διαφαινόμενη καπιταλιστική κρίση, έσπευσε να δώσει διαβεβαιώσεις στους ομίλους που σπάνε κάθε ρεκόρ κερδών, ότι ευέλικτα θα ρεύσουν τα κονδύλια για εκείνους, ενώ ζήτησε κατάργηση ακόμη και εκείνων των επιδομάτων ψυχούλων για το ρεύμα, ώστε να μειωθούν τα δημοσιονομικά ελλείμματα. Στην Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση πλέον πεινάνε και αυτοί που εργάζονται. 40% δυσκολεύονται να τα φέρουν βόλτα, αλλά τα κράτη μέλη έδωσαν 78 δισεκατομμύρια για τη φωτιά του ιμπεριαλιστικού πολέμου στην Ουκρανία.

Στην Ελλάδα, Νέα Δημοκρατία, ΣΥΡΙΖΑ και Νέα Αριστερά, ΠΑΣΟΚ, Ελληνική Λύση, υπερψήφισαν αυτή τη στρατηγική που έχει σκληρά αντιλαϊκά προαπαιτούμενα. Αυτά υλοποιεί η κυβέρνηση της Νέας Δημοκρατίας. Υποχρηματοδότηση και περαιτέρω εμπορευματοποίηση της υγείας, ιδιωτικά πανεπιστήμια, καθηλωμένοι μισθοί που δεν βγάζουν τον μήνα.

Οι εργαζόμενοι βιοπαλαιστές αγρότες, οι αυτοαπασχολούμενοι, καταδικάζουν τις απαιτήσεις των μονοπωλίων και τις αντιλαϊκές επιλογές αστικών κομμάτων και Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης. Με τους μεγαλειώδεις αγώνες τους θέτουν στο επίκεντρο τις δικές τους ανάγκες, δηλαδή άμεσα μέτρα στήριξης του εισοδήματος ενάντια στην ακρίβεια, συλλογικές συμβάσεις, αυξήσεις στους μισθούς και τις συντάξεις.

Inese Vaidere (PPE). – Godātais sēdes vadītāj! Dārgie kolēģi ! Pērnais gads Eiropā bija smags – IKP kritums, liela inflācija. Nākotne ir neskaidra dēļ Krievijas brutālā iebrukuma un kara Ukrainā.

Ekonomikas vājums ir jāuzveic ar investīcijām modernā ekonomikā, kas ir vidi saudzējoša, resursus taupoša, kas balstās uz modernajām tehnoloģijām un mērķlīdzīgu intelektu attīstību. Lielas investīcijas nepieciešamas digitālajā sfērā un kiberdrošībā. Inovācijām enerģētiskā jaudrošina lēta un tīra enerģija. Eiropai ir pilnībā jāatsakās no Krievijas energoresursiem.

Ekonomiskā pārkārtošanās radīs papildu izdevumus, tādēļ finansiāli jāparūpējas par mazajiem un vidējiem uzņēmumiem, zemniekiem, trūcīgajiem iedzīvotājiem. Te ir svarīga reģionālā un sociālā politika – nevienu neatstājot novārtā Eiropas, tostarp manas Latvijas attālākajos reģionos.

Vairāk jāiegulda militārajā rūpniecībā, kam jābūt gudrai un inovatīvai. Tas dos pozitīvu stimulu arī ekonomikai un sekmēs vispārējo drošību.

Jonás Fernández (S&D). – Señor presidente, señores comisarios, señora presidenta en ejercicio del Consejo, debatimos este informe del Semestre en un momento clave de este mandato porque coincide con las discusiones sobre la revisión de la gobernanza económica de la Unión, y quería felicitar, en primer lugar, al ponente, René Repasi, por el trabajo que ha hecho para alcanzar estos compromisos.

Sin duda hemos resuelto algunos problemas y tenemos ante nosotros un proceso de consolidación fiscal equilibrado y moderado. Pero hay problemas de fondo que, como bien dice el informe, están pendientes de resolver. Y el esfuerzo de inversión que tiene que hacer la Unión Europea es extraordinario. La transición ecológica, la transición digital o los esfuerzos sociales necesitan de un pilar europeo que pueda ayudar a cofinanciar estos esfuerzos y que nos garantice una Unión con crecimiento, con prosperidad, pero también con igualdad y con equilibrio social.

Y para eso la revisión de NextGenerationEU o el mantenimiento del seguro de desempleo que Nicolas Schmit lideró en este mandato son esenciales.

Marie-Pierre Vedrenne (Renew). – Monsieur le Président, l'heure est venue de repenser nos politiques budgétaires. Tandis que des millions d'Européens sont affectés par les chocs économiques successifs et par la hausse du coût de la vie, nos concitoyens attendent de l'Europe des réponses concrètes à leurs préoccupations. Qu'avons-nous mis en place pour eux ces dernières années? Nous avons notamment garanti un salaire à chacune et à chacun pendant la pandémie de COVID-19 pour les soutenir avec le mécanisme SURE. Nous avons créé le Fonds social pour le climat pour accompagner les citoyens les plus vulnérables dans la lutte contre le dérèglement climatique. Nous avons permis à nos entreprises d'investir davantage grâce à plus de flexibilité dans nos aides d'État. Maintenant, nous devons amplifier notre ambition.

Nous sommes sur la bonne voie pour réformer le pacte de stabilité et de croissance et pour l'accompagner d'un changement effectif du Semestre européen. Nous devons adosser à nos politiques économiques nos politiques sociales, en les plaçant au cœur de l'avenir de l'Europe. Pour une Europe forte, prospère et puissante, il nous faut une Europe juste et inclusive pour chaque citoyenne et chaque citoyen.

Johan Van Overtveldt (ECR). – Voorzitter, minister, commissaris, het Europees Semester is de cyclus waarmee het economisch en begrotingsbeleid op elkaar moeten worden afgestemd, welvaart en groei moeten worden bestendig en onze concurrentiepositie moet worden bewaakt. Dat zijn de grote doelstellingen.

Laten we dan ook de juiste beslissingen nemen. Te beginnen met de bescherming en versterking van de eengemaakte markt. Die eengemaakte markt kan bovendien nog veel performanter gemaakt worden, mits aangepaste en vereenvoudigde regelgeving. Om de vele innovatieve start-ups, die we inderdaad hebben, door te laten groeien, is het nodig dat de kapitaalmarktenunie vervolledigd wordt. Daar hebben we echt een concurrentieel nadeel ten opzichte van de VS. Ook moeten we de oneerlijke concurrentie van buiten de EU krachtadig buitenhouden. En *last but not least*: we moeten durven afstappen van de subsidiëmanie. Die lawine aan door de overheid gestuurde subsidies werkt versmachtend, om van fraude en misbruik van fondsen nog te zwijgen. Geef de privésector de stimuli en de ruimte om zelf aan de slag te gaan met innovatieve investeringen.

Dominique Bilde (ID). – Monsieur le Président, Monsieur le Commissaire, étant donné que la France est contributrice nette au budget de l'Union, nous refusons à la Commission le droit de fixer des règlements pour nous priver de notre argent. C'est pourtant exactement ce qui se joue actuellement. Non-respect des règles budgétaires, choix économiques contraires aux volontés européennes ou même violation du sacro-saint état de droit: l'Union se croit tout permis en bloquant et en débloquent notre argent en fonction de la tête du client.

Le dernier outil en date pour soumettre les nations s'appelle la conditionnalité sociale. En bref, si la politique d'un État ne correspond pas aux standards fixés par l'Europe, celle-ci pourra couper les aides afin de faire pression sur les gouvernements nationaux. Des politiques relatives à la sécurité sociale pas assez inclusives ou une politique de priorité nationale en matière de logements sociaux pourront nous attirer les foudres de Bruxelles.

Pour nous, c'est un non sans condition. Nous n'accepterons aucune compromission quand il s'agit de défendre la liberté de nos nations.

Ivan Vilibor Sinčić (NI). – Poštovani predsjedavajući, ekonomski semestar znači usklađenje gospodarskih politika zemalja članica. Kada će se te politike uskladiti, kada će siromašnije zemlje članice dostići standard bogatih zemalja članica? Nikada, dok se provode ovakve ekonomske politike.

Dobar primjer je moja Hrvatska. Dakle, zašto se u europskim institucijama vodi takva struktura da su dominantno zaposleni ljudi sa zapada i starih zemalja članica? Jesu li Hrvati zavlada li europskim tržištima ili je europska roba preplavila hrvatsko tržište? Jesu li europske kompanije kupile sve u Hrvatskoj ili su hrvatske u Europi? Koliko imate hrvatskih firmi koje rade akvizicije po Europi? Što smo mi to kupili? Tko kome uzima čije radnike, Hrvatska europske ili Europa hrvatske radnike?

Po svakom punoljetnom građaninu koji napusti zemlju Hrvatska gubi između 50 000 i 150 000 eura, ovisno o tome radi li se o kvalificiranom ili visokokvalificiranom radniku, a jedan je demograf čak predložio plaćanje odštete za ovakvo prisvajanje. Je li ova organizacija, Unija, razvojna organizacija ili služi za iskorištavanje velikih na štetu malih? U odnosu na hrvatski godišnji proračun neto EU fondovi su zapravo sitan novac.

Ili će se sve zemlje članice razvijati pravedno i podjednako ili će Unija pasti pod teretom sve većih nezadovoljstava koje vidimo po ulicama.

Eugen Tomac (PPE). – Domnule președinte, domnule comisar, stimați colegi, mă bucură faptul că acest raport ia în considerare legătura strânsă dintre creșterea economică și bunăstarea cetățenilor. De aceea este necesar să ne coordonăm la nivel european și să monitorizăm la nivel național promovarea acelor politici economice și sociale care sunt concentrate asupra combaterii sărăciei, reducerii inegalităților, asigurării unei educații performante pentru tineri și crearea de locuri de muncă decente.

Uniunea Europeană trebuie să rămână competitivă pe piața globală, chiar și în fața provocărilor curente, cum ar fi inflația ridicată, prețurile ridicate la energie, creșterea lentă a productivității, îmbătrânirea populației, precum și războiul din Ucraina. În acest sens, este pozitivă recomandarea Comisiei de a elimina obstacolele pentru investiții, sprijinirea unui mediu de afaceri favorabil și dezvoltarea abilităților necesare pentru tranziții verzi și digitale. Pentru bunăstarea tuturor întreprinderilor și familiilor noastre, au nevoie de un angajament politic solid și de măsuri economice și sociale puse în aplicare în mod responsabil.

Gabriele Bischoff (S&D). – Herr Präsident, werte Kommission, Frau Ministerin Lahbib! Viele Bürgerinnen und Bürger haben im Moment das Gefühl, dass wir in der EU so wie ein Schiff sind, das auf hoher See ist – Wellen sind da, Sturm im Anmarsch, und wir müssen uns bereit machen, wirklich auch politisch den Rahmen dafür zu setzen, damit wir hier gut durch diese verunsichernden Zeiten kommen. Und es ist deshalb gut, dass wir diesen Bericht haben, auch bevor wir eine größere Reform ja schon auf den Weg bringen.

Der Herr Kommissar Schmit hat gesagt: Wir haben die Säule sozialer Rechte als Kompass – das hilft, wenn man im Sturm ist. Und deshalb ist es auch wichtig – und da möchte ich dem Kommissar Schmit danken, aber auch der belgischen und der spanischen Ratspräsidentschaft –, dass wir Instrumente geschaffen haben wie den sozialen Konvergenzrahmen, damit wir wirklich auch Sicherheit geben können in einer solch herausfordernden Zeit.

Aber der Berichterstatter René Repasi hat es auch gesagt: Investitionen, Investitionen, Investitionen sind das Gebot der Stunde, und deshalb will ich mit einem früheren Präsidenten schließen: *It's the investments, stupid!*

Атидже Алиева-Вели (Renew). – Г-н Председател, днес, когато войната на Русия срещу Украйна задълбочи съществуващите неравенства, като доведе до енергийна, продоволствена, икономическа и социална криза; днес, когато ръстът на заплатите изостава спрямо високия темп на инфлацията, като намалената покупателна способност засегна най-много лицата с ниски доходи; днес, когато неравенството между половете на пазара на труда се отразява върху разликата в заетостта и заплащането между мъжете и жените; днес, когато младежката безработица остава почти три пъти по-висока спрямо тази на лицата в трудоспособна възраст; и днес, когато сме на прага на приемането на новата рамка за икономическо управление на Европейския съюз, ключовата дума, от която трябва да се ръководим с цел по-устойчиво и стабилно бъдеще, следва да бъде баланс.

Политиките за развитие на Съюза трябва да отразяват в еднаква степен икономическите, социални и екологични цели, да се справят с дисбалансите и да се превърнат в инструмент, насърчаващ развитието на икономиката, както и социалноикономическото сближаване на държавите.

France Jamet (ID). – Monsieur le Président, descriptif et contradictoire: descriptif parce que ce rapport sur le Semestre européen se borne simplement à faire une description des aspects économiques ayant entraîné une détérioration des conditions de vie dans l'Union européenne, aspects que nos concitoyens avaient déjà compris – ils vivent cette détérioration au quotidien, avec un niveau de vie et un pouvoir d'achat qui s'effondrent et une hausse des prix persistante, qui ne donne pas de signe positif pour demain –; contradictoire, puisque l'on affirme par exemple vouloir renforcer l'efficacité énergétique de l'Union pour mettre fin à la dépendance vis-à-vis du gaz russe sans remettre en question la politique de l'Union européenne qui a méthodiquement saboté notre filière nucléaire française, pourtant gage d'une énergie abondante, abordable et performante.

Le drame, c'est que ce sont les forces vives de notre pays – nos PME, nos agriculteurs, nos pêcheurs – qui font les frais de ces choix politiques qui servent les délires de Bruxelles, du mondialisme et des multinationales.

En conclusion, il faut changer la règle. Il faut remettre l'économie au service des hommes et non le contraire.

Mario Furore (NI). – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, sogno un'Europa in cui al posto dei vincoli di bilancio ci siano i vincoli sociali, e al posto dei criteri da rispettare ci sia il rispetto delle persone.

Per anni Bruxelles ha imposto tagli e manovre, lacrime e sangue, massacrando il ceto medio e alimentando le ingiustizie sociali.

Noi vogliamo archiviare tutto questo e sogniamo un'Europa che imponga il salario minimo, in cui ogni cittadino percepisca un reddito per arrivare alla fine del mese. Un'Europa in cui gli stipendi tengano il passo dell'inflazione e i mutui siano accessibili per tutti. Un'Europa in cui i rider hanno un contratto vero, con ferie pagate e una copertura sanitaria. Un'Europa giusta, in cui la riforma del patto di stabilità non sia scritta per accontentare i mercati finanziari, ma per aumentare investimenti e nuovi posti di lavoro.

È forse chiedere troppo? No, un'alternativa è possibile e alle prossime elezioni europee lo dimostreremo.

Pedro Marques (S&D). – Senhor Presidente, Senhores Comissários, Senhora Ministra, Caros Colegas, com as novas regras da dívida e do défice recentemente acordadas conseguimos melhorar a flexibilidade para gerir as contas públicas de uma forma sustentável e para promover o investimento e o emprego. Mas, hoje, com os riscos de estagnação a ameaçarem a nossa economia, já ouvimos vozes – ainda hoje o ouvimos aqui outra vez – a defender os erros do passado: cortes na despesa, austeridade, medidas pró-cíclicas para agravar a situação. Tivemos muito, hoje, disso aqui do PPE.

Este é, portanto, o momento de deixar um desafio concreto ao Conselho, mas também a todos nós, no contexto das recomendações anuais aos Estados-Membros. Onde está o investimento? Onde está a prioridade ao investimento? Onde está um instrumento comum de investimento? Digitalização, reindustrialização, segurança coletiva, mais coesão social e emprego? Objetivos que ficarão no papel, por falta de compromisso político e de investimento comum, se persistirmos nesta teimosia.

Não podemos ficar neste limbo. É preciso decidir e é preciso fazer.

Spontane Wortmeldungen

Barry Andrews (Renew). – A Uachtaráin, Guím Beannachtaí Lá Fhéile Pádraig ar gach aon duine. Seachtain na Gaeilge in Éirinn atá ann agus déanann a lán daoine a ndícheall ar fud an domhain i rith na seachtaine ár dteanga féin a úsáid. Ar dtús ba mhaith liom buíochas a ghabháil leis na Teachtaí a chuir an tuairisc seo le chéile. Is ábhar an-tábhachtach é i mo thuairim. An rud is tábhachtaí is ea, tá airgead Eorpach ar fáil chun cabhrú leis na costais atá ag ardú. Tá a lán teaghlach faoi bhrú ar an am seo. Ach cá bhfuil an t-iarratas ó rialtas na hÉireann ar an RRF? Cén fáth nár iarr siad an t-airgead? Cén fáth go bhfuil moill ar an iarratas ó Éirinn? Anois caithfidh deifir a dhéanamh.

Margarita de la Pisa Carrión (ECR). – Señor presidente, señor comisario, señores diputados, el Semestre Europeo es el marco en el que se coordinan las políticas económicas y presupuestarias de la Unión Europea.

Es una injerencia cambiar su naturaleza incluyendo materias en las que la Unión Europea no tiene competencias, como la llamada política social —por no decir política socialista—, con propuestas de mayor gasto público, mayor deuda y cultura del subsidio, cuando son las reglamentaciones aprobadas en esta Casa las que acaban con cualquier posibilidad de prosperidad y de crecimiento y matan la competitividad de nuestras empresas con cargas burocráticas imposibles y con la impuesta transición ecológica, destruyendo así millones de puestos de trabajo.

Se da la espalda a la unidad fundamental de la sociedad, que es la familia, cuando es en la familia donde se desarrollan la vida, los cuidados, la educación. Sabemos que es la mejor herramienta de integración social y de igualdad. No entorpecer la creación de empleo, apoyar a las familias y acabar con la ideología son las mejores y más sostenibles herramientas de bienestar social.

El socialismo genera los problemas y luego pretende aparecer como el salvador. No al nuevo marco de gobernanza que pretende apoderarse de nuestros recursos, de los recursos de nuestras naciones, para luego secuestrar nuestra libertad y nuestra soberanía.

Marc Botenga (The Left). – Monsieur le Président, écoutez, on vit en Europe un état d'urgence social. Nos écoles manquent d'enseignants, les hôpitaux manquent de moyens et de soignants, les transports sont soumis à de plus en plus de retards si ce n'est d'annulations, et, dans pareil contexte, quelle est l'idée brillante de l'Union européenne, célébrée par la présidence belge – le gouvernement belge ici présent? C'est d'imposer des coupes aux budgets nationaux! Non pas d'aller chercher l'argent chez les super-riches, ces millionnaires, ces multimillionnaires qui ne savent que faire de leur argent – non non, pas chez eux! –, mais chez les travailleurs, encore une fois! On va leur dire: «Écoutez, votre pension est trop élevée», «Votre salaire, vous savez? Cette indexation automatique? C'est pas très bon, on va couper là-dedans.»

Moi, je veux porter ici la voix des travailleurs et des syndicats qui étaient mobilisés hier à Bruxelles devant le bâtiment Schuman, en disant: «No way, we won't pay!»

João Pimenta Lopes (The Left). – Senhor Presidente, a degradação da situação socioeconómica em Portugal, pautada por um contraste estridente entre o aumento do custo de vida e os lucros dos grandes grupos económicos, no quadro das contas certas, é inseparável dos instrumentos da dita governação económica da União Europeia, que prejudicam a capacidade dos Estados responderem adequadamente aos problemas e necessidades sociais e económicas.

A revisão em curso do quadro de governação económica da UE agrava os instrumentos que limitam os Estados para investir mais nas suas infraestruturas e funções sociais ou nos serviços públicos. Como propusemos, é imperativo revogar o Pacto de Estabilidade, a legislação da governação económica e do Semestre Europeu, o Tratado Orçamental.

Rejeitando a institucionalização da política de desinvestimento e empobrecimento, exige-se a sua substituição por um pacto pelo progresso social e pelo emprego que consagre a promoção do pleno emprego e o reforço do trabalho com direitos, o reforço dos serviços públicos e funções sociais do Estado, o respeito pela soberania de cada Estado e a concretização dos princípios de coesão económica, social, territorial e da sustentabilidade ambiental.

(Ende der spontanen Wortmeldungen)

Nicolas Schmit, Member of the Commission. – Mr President, first, thank you for this rich and important debate. Our exchanges today show that the European Semester remains at the core of the EU's economic governance, providing integrated policy solutions, taking full account of the economic and social dimensions, while keeping a clear common sense of purpose in relation to the challenges of today and the ambitions for the future.

I just want to say that, besides the coordination of our budgetary policies, we need indeed a better coordination of our economic policy. This was a point that was always asked by Jacques Delors, who always insisted on the need for better and stronger coordination of our economic policies.

Now, policy efforts are importantly complemented by EU funding that supports Member States reaching these common policy priorities and ensuring upward economic and social convergence. The revised Economic Governance Framework should further support an integrated way of designing policy solutions, supporting sustainable and inclusive growth.

So a number of speakers have mentioned one of the major social crises in Europe – the housing crisis. Your report mentions that adequate and secure housing is becoming unaffordable for many in all Member States of the EU. Indeed, this critical social issue has an impact on income, on labour markets, on poverty. At a recent conference, Madam Minister, organised by the Belgian Presidency, there was a large consensus among Member States that the Union has to be more active to tackle this housing crisis. It is a key priority for us to ensure that the European Pillar of Social Rights and housing is also a principle – it is Principle 19, if I remember well, of the Pillar of Social Rights – that features prominently among the common EU priorities that will inform such an integrated approach. Due attention will continue to be paid to upward social convergence.

Let me also stress that, going forward, the continuous dialogue with this House will remain a particularly important element of the European Semester. Only with our joint efforts and commitments can we ensure that our European social market economy continues to be successful, both in Europe and on a global scale, and also in the context of the green and digital transformations and inspiring ideas of inclusiveness and social progress in other parts of the world.

Valdis Dombrovskis, *Executive Vice-President of the Commission*. – Mr President, colleagues, in the last few years Europe has endured one shock after another. Nonetheless, the European economy has shown remarkable resilience. Unemployment reached a record low, and employment stays at the highest level ever recorded. Europe's strong and coordinated policy response has been effective. Yet it has not been easy.

Growth has lost momentum last year in the context of high inflation, high energy prices, disruptions in supply chains and tighter financing conditions. While a moderate uptick is expected this year and next, challenges remain.

This year, the European Semester cycle will continue to focus on the most pressing policy issues in the economic and social area. It will provide analysis and advice to Member States to improve their competitiveness against the backdrop of green and digital transformations, as well as current geopolitical challenges.

A continued close interaction between the European Semester, the RRF and other EU funds will be ensured to facilitate consistent policy-making, considering country-specific challenges as well as common EU priorities. Also, the mid-term review of the EU's Cohesion Policy will ensure that our investments will remain focussed on the most pressing needs for the economic and social development in each and every region.

Finally, a swift implementation of the new EU fiscal rules, which I hope this helps to formally approve in the coming weeks, will be a key pillar on our policy coordination going forward. This will continue to take place within the context of the European Semester, which will remain a central tool for economic and social policy coordination in the EU. I look forward for a continued close dialogue with Parliament on these important matters.

Hadja Lahbib, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Mr President, dear Commissioner, dear Members of Parliament, let me once again assure you that the Belgian Presidency attaches great importance to the European Semester – the cornerstone of effective coordination of our economic budgetary policies.

You have made some key points today and your questions will make a valuable contribution to the discussion in the Council. I note that in the context of the European Semester, we share a common interest in going beyond purely economic aspects, such as the importance of making investment that will have a social impact and contribute to economic, social and territorial cohesion.

For the Belgian Presidency, this is really a priority. Yesterday we organised a special ECOFIN Council to debate on social investment and reforms for resilient economies, and another key event to renew our strong commitment to the European Pillar of Social Rights and to identify common priorities for its further implementation will be the high-level conference in La Hulpe on 15 and 16 April of this year. This conference is looking to identify what new legislative and non-legislative initiatives are needed for a just, green and digital transition and to support ambitious new strategies to ensure equal opportunities, gender equality and non-discrimination.

I am confident in our continued cooperation to work together on appropriate solutions to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

René Repasi, *Berichterstatter*. – Herr Präsident, wertee Kommissare, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Lassen Sie mich kurz auf ein paar Dinge aus dieser Debatte eingehen, zunächst einmal auf die Rolle des Europäischen Parlaments im Semester.

Ich finde es doch schon ein bisschen absurd, dass es tatsächlich gewählte Abgeordnete gibt, die sich dagegen verweigern, dem Europäischen Parlament mehr Einflussrechte zu geben. Wenn wir uns die Rolle des Europäischen Parlaments im Semester anschauen, dann werden wir zugeschmissen mit Informationen – fantastisch. Aber wenn wir da was finden, was uns nicht passt, haben wir keine Möglichkeit, irgendwelche Konsequenzen daran zu knüpfen. Das schärfste Instrument, was wir haben, ist diese Debatte hier und heute – und ich weiß nicht, ob Valdis Dombrovskis oder Nicolas Schmit jetzt gerade einen Milliliter Schweiß mehr produziert haben während dieser Debatte und jetzt in dieser Antwort hierauf.

Nein, das hat aber auch etwas mit uns selbst zu tun. Denn wir als Europäisches Parlament müssen uns dann mit dem, was wir haben, zumindest auch selbst ernst nehmen. Das heißt, dass wir aus unseren ideologischen Schützengräben rauskommen müssen, wenn wir unsere eigenen Anforderungen an die Kommission formulieren wollen. Daher danke ich ausdrücklich dem Wortbeitrag vom Kollegen Johan Van Overtveldt, weil er in seinem Vortrag gezeigt hat, wie wir hier über Rechts und Links hinaus eine gemeinsame Idee auf hohem Niveau formulieren können.

Jawohl, es geht um die Wettbewerbsfähigkeit, und wenn es um die Wettbewerbsfähigkeit geht, brauchen wir Innovation. Dann müssen Universitäten befreit werden vom neoliberalen Wahn, Drittmittelanträge zu schreiben, sondern echte Forschung muss getrieben werden. Privates Kapital muss in Ideen gebracht werden, damit sie marktreif werden und sich nicht im Shareholder Value verlieren. Wir brauchen eine Wettbewerbspolitik, die dann kleine Unternehmen davor schützt, dass sie von größeren übernommen werden, damit sie wachsen können, damit wir kreative Zerstörung in unserem Binnenmarkt schaffen können.

Und ja, dann brauchen wir auch eine Vollendung des Binnenmarktes. Ja, und das sage ich als Sozialdemokrat: Da gibt es mehr Potenzial durch mehr Liberalisierung. Dann sage ich aber auch gleich dazu: Wir reichen gerne der anderen Seite des Hauses die Hand, wenn wir gleichzeitig hohe Sozialstandards und hohe Schutzstandards schaffen. Dann finden wir uns auf dem höchsten gemeinsamen Nenner statt auf dem kleinsten, vor dem dann die Europäische Kommission auch echt keine Angst zu haben braucht.

Dragoș Pîslaru, Raportor. – Domnule președinte, semestrul european este moștenirea lecțiilor învățate după criza economică din 2008, când Uniunea a înțeles că este nevoie de o coordonare mai bună la nivel european a politicilor economice și sociale ale statelor membre dacă ne dorim cu adevărat ca toate țările să fie pregătite să depășească pericolele iminente. Discutăm aici împreună economic și social, nu separat, asta este foarte important.

De atunci ne-am confruntat cu o pandemie, am avut război, avem război la granițe, am avut ierni complicate, cu prețuri mari la energie, iar coșul de cumpărături al cetățenilor devine din ce în ce mai scump. Am reușit să le depășim, semn că semestrul european a fost util, însă cu consecințe mari, care sunt resimțite peste tot în Europa. Prin urmare, este evident că semestrul european trebuie îmbunătățit.

Parlamentul European a realizat prin acest raport, din partea Comisiei pentru ocuparea forței de muncă și afaceri sociale, și prin celălalt, din partea Comisiei pentru afaceri economice și monetare, că semestrul european poate fi adaptat realităților curente, dar acestea nu vor avea efect dacă nu schimbăm modul în care le analizăm și le luăm în calcul. De aceea revin și insist pe faptul că avem nevoie de o implicare mai structurată a Parlamentului în procesul semestrului european și un dialog recurent.

Propunem astfel crearea unui grup de lucru special în cadrul Parlamentului, prin care să avem discuții cu reprezentanții statelor membre, cu autoritățile locale și în special cu societatea civilă și partenerii sociali, cu actorii esențiali care fac ca semestrul european să treacă de la hârtie în practică. Un astfel de rol al Parlamentului ca instituție legitimă, care reprezintă democratic cetățenii, este vital.

Astfel, vom demonstra că dialogul și consultările cu cetățenii pe care le-am avut în dezbaterile privind viitorul Europei și le vom avea în continuare, sper, nu sunt doar un exercițiu pe care l-am bifat, ci un proces cu standarde de calitate pe care ar trebui să le urmeze toate instituțiile europene și naționale. Acesta este viitorul și cred în semestrul european și în rolul Parlamentului.

Der Präsident. – Die gemeinsame Aussprache ist damit geschlossen.

Die Abstimmung findet heute, am Mittwoch, 13. März 2024, am späten Nachmittag statt.

Schriftliche Erklärungen (Artikel 171)

Andżelika Anna Moźdzanowska (ECR), na piśmie. – Zgodnie z założeniem Semestr Europejski powinien skupiać się na kwestiach gospodarczych i budżetowych. Niestety, sprawozdanie praktycznie wyłącznie dotyczy zagadnień społecznych i kwestii polityki zatrudnienia, co mnie nie dziwi, bo w ostatnich latach staje się to powszechną praktyką.

Nie chodzi o to, że kwestie społeczne i zatrudnienia nie są istotne i są kompetencjami państw członkowskich. Ważny jest fakt, że Semestr ma służyć koordynacji polityk gospodarczych i budżetowych. Rozszerzenie go na zagadnienie społeczne stanowi wymówkę i uzasadnienie rozmywania kryteriów: tworząc nowe, łatwo uzasadnić niedociągnięcia w ramach pierwotnych.

Sprawozdanie sugeruje, że plany KPO w obszarze związanym z Zielonym Ładem należy kontynuować również po zakończeniu RRF. To kolejny krok do akceptowania przez Komisję nadmiernych wydatków budżetowych i rosnącego zadłużenia – jeżeli tylko służyłyby temu celowi. Mamy więc do czynienia z luźną polityką fiskalną, uzasadniając to potrzebą realizacji Zielonego Ładu – niezależnie od kosztów!

Choć słusznie podkreślamy konieczność uniezależnienia Europy od importowanych paliw kopalnych, nie wspominamy nic o energii jądrowej, która przecież powinna zostać w tym kontekście przynajmniej wymieniona.

Mamy więc do czynienia z kolejnym przykładem myślenia życzeniowego w kwestiach zielonej transformacji, nieliczenia się z kosztami oraz realizacji nadmiernych ambicji kosztem przyszłych pokoleń. A to my, Europejczycy, będziemy spłacać te długi!

Sirpa Pietikäinen (PPE), kirjallinen. – Eurooppalaisella ohjausjaksolla koordinoidaan EU:n talous-, finanssi-, työllisyys- ja sosiaalipolitiikkaa. Euroopan yleinen taloustilanne on huolestuttava. Heikko kasvu, kilpailukyky ja tuottavuus puhuttavat. Silloin, kun rahat ovat tiukassa, ne on käytettävä tehokkaasti. Pitää saada aikaan vähintään sama, ellei enemmän, vähemmällä. Nostan esiin kaksi tärkeää näkökohtaa: vihreä ja oikeudenmukainen siirtymä. ECON-valiokunnan mietinnössä ansiokkaasti nostettiin esiin komission vuotuinen selvitys kestävästä kasvusta – jäsenvaltioiden on poistettava asteittain fossiilisten polttoaineiden tuki. Aikaa ei ole hukattavaksi, vaan toimeen on ryhdyttävä välittömästi, eli sanoista on viimeinkin päästävä tekoihin. Samoin tarvitsemme sosiaalista taksonomiaa, josta olen vuosia puhunut. Beyond the GDP -ajattelu on tulevaisuutta – miksi emme ajattele niin jo nyt? Sijoituskohteita ja valtioiden varallisuutta ei pitäisi mitata pelkästään rahassa, vaan yhteiskuntaa pitäisi mitata esimerkiksi ottamalla huomioon ympäristöllinen tai sosiaalinen kestävyys.

13. Riktlinjerna för budgeten för 2025 – Avsnitt III (debatt)

Der Präsident. – Als nächster Punkt der Tagesordnung folgt die Aussprache über den Bericht von Victor Negrescu im Namen des Haushaltsausschusses über die allgemeinen Leitlinien für die Vorbereitung des Haushaltsplans 2025 – Einzelplan III – Kommission (2023/2220(BU)) (A9-0068/2024).

Victor Negrescu, rapporteur. – Mr President, dear Commissioner, dear colleagues, I will start my intervention today by saying very clearly, the European Parliament must have guidelines for the next European budget, and our priorities are important and must be taken into consideration by the Commission and the EU Council.

We have managed, after long discussions, to build a document that has clarity, that sets a vision for the upcoming EU budget and puts forward a clear direction for the negotiations that will take place between our institutions. I want to thank everyone involved and to reiterate my appreciation for the strong vote in favour of the report in the Budget Committee of the European Parliament.

Our institution must show unity in saying that we need to allocate adequate financial resources for the priorities that are important to our EU citizens, for the development of our businesses, for a fair Europe that does not leave anyone behind. We need to support the creation of quality jobs while protecting our industry. We must help our farmers and continue to invest in our rural areas. We can develop our infrastructure while preserving the quality of our air and of our forests, at the same time as – this is important – protecting people against floods and droughts.

For all of that, there are three key directions that need to be followed: using more effectively the funds that we have available; fighting against corruption; and focusing on the impact of our policies. We need to make full use of the unused funds from the previous financial period and allocate them to the beneficiaries and programmes that have a high absorption rate. We must allocate sufficient resources for our strategic priorities and for our new objectives. We need to make it happen. We can ensure adequate financial support for Erasmus students while investing in our economy.

Finally, we need to keep the democratic control over the EU budget with a strong role of the European Parliament in order to deliver what people expect from us, by better including our social objectives in funding our programmes, or developing, for instance, the Civil Protection Mechanism.

Sunt în mod particular mulțumit de introducerea în documentul nostru a unor aspecte care privesc direct zona pe care o reprezintă și mă refer aici la România. Mă refer la apelul nostru pentru suplimentarea fondurilor în vederea aderării complete a României și Bulgariei la spațiul Schengen. Intrarea pe cale aeriană și maritimă în zona de liberă circulație la finalul acestei luni o să fie un succes și ne dorim să folosim acest moment pentru o decizie favorabilă pentru o aderare completă până la finalul anului.

Totodată, subliniez importanța solicitării noastre privind sprijinirea sectorului agricol și a mediului rural. Trebuie să întărim programele de sprijin pentru fermieri, să îi ajutăm pe tinerii care activează în agricultură, să dezvoltăm satele folosind banii europeni și să ne asigurăm că subvențiile sunt distribuite echitabil și că ajung acolo unde trebuie. Toți cetățenii europeni trebuie tratați corect și trebuie să beneficieze de aceleași drepturi și oportunități. Am solicitat în document alocarea de fonduri suplimentare, astfel încât fiecare cetățean să aibă acces la tratamente și aparatură medicală de ultimă generație.

O Europă puternică își protejează cetățenii și este evident că doar împreună putem să ne asigurăm de acest lucru. O dimensiune importantă a acțiunii europene constă și în facilitarea mobilității cetățenilor europeni. Îmbunătățind transferul drepturilor sociale și al pensiilor, reușim practic să ajutăm și mai mult diaspora europeană chiar să revină acasă. În final, Parlamentul European este ferm în a spune că ne dorim un buget orientat către cetățeni, care să conducă la creșterea nivelului de trai și la îmbunătățirea infrastructurii din orașele și satele noastre.

Uniunea Europeană trebuie să utilizeze fondurile cât mai eficient, în așa fel încât să crească calitatea serviciilor medicale și educaționale, să se asigure că infrastructura devine un motor al dezvoltării și să faciliteze crearea de locuri de muncă bine plătite. Avem instrumente la dispoziție pentru a face acest lucru, dar este important să le folosim într-o manieră adecvată. Mesajul nostru către cetățenii europeni înaintea alegerilor pentru Parlamentul European trebuie să fie că putem să construim o Europă pe care ne-o dorim: democratică, socială și sustenabilă.

Finally, I want to express our discontent when it comes to the recent positions expressed by some of the political groups, in particular the EPP, on some key topics for the European Parliament, including border management. There is no excuse for not respecting the agreement reached at the committee level with everyone's support. We have one of the strongest languages on border management and security ever mentioned in the European Parliament budgetary guidelines. If we do not keep the line, if we do not keep the compromises, we cannot ensure a better and more secure Europe. I am confident that we are not going to lean towards the far right, but also focus – and this is a priority on the common – on the common objectives that are explicitly mentioned in the text.

Johannes Hahn, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, honourable Members, first I would like to thank the rapporteur and the shadow rapporteurs and the Budget Committee for the draft guidelines for the 2025 budget.

The 2025 budget will fully implement the recently adopted revision of the multiannual framework. So let me again stress how important the first ever revision of the MFF ceiling was. It provides a stable framework for support to Ukraine and provides reinforcement for the priorities identified, as well as a solution to the financing of the costs of the NGO borrowing.

Thanks to the Ukraine facility, we will continue providing a response to the constantly changing circumstances by supporting the suffering Ukrainian people while also preparing the country's reconstruction in preparation of the EU accession.

Overall, an additional EUR 21 billion was agreed to finance our common priorities. To mitigate the impact of the revision of the MFF on national budgets, it was agreed that the increases will be partly compensated by redeployments and reprioritisations within the Union Budget. We have already presented the first step of the implementation of this revision: the proposal for the draft amending budget No 1 for 2024, adopted on the same day the MFF revision entered into force. However, we will only be able to present the full impact of the MFF revision with the draft budget accompanied by a detailed financial programming for 2026-2027. There you will see how we propose to operationalise the MFF revision by programme, budget, line and year.

Looking ahead, next year's budget comes at a very challenging time for the Union. While the MFF revision has secured substantial additional funding for most of the Union's priorities and also increased the availabilities for special instruments, the room for manoeuvre to respond to unforeseen events is still very limited. High inflation and persistent uncertainty and risks mean that we all must remain vigilant and cautious. At the same time, we must ensure adequate resources for existing priorities to continue work on long-term projects, notably to strengthen the Union's strategic competitiveness and enabling the green and digital transitions. The Member States should swiftly make use of the available funding, both under NGEU and under the MFF, to deliver on the ground.

The Commission will focus the draft budget 2025 on the most effective and efficient use of our limited resources. Therefore, all institutions should very carefully assess their needs for 2025 and respect the rules, especially for non-salary expenditures, for which increases should be kept under 2% – and of course to respect the stable staffing principles. I would say reassessment and reallocation of resources are key words in that context.

I have noted that both the European Parliament and the Council in the guidelines stressed the need to ensure an adequate level of payment appropriations. I can assure you that the Commission monitors the needs on a permanent basis, and that an adequate level of payments will be proposed in the draft budget, taking into account the stage of the MFF cycle. 2025 should be a year when we finally reach cruising speed on all our programmes.

Let me now turn to our next steps. In the first trilogue on 9 April, we will discuss the calendar for the budgetary procedure for the financial year 2025. The Commission aims to adopt the Commission's statement of estimates on 12 June and to submit the full draft budget, of course in all language versions, on 8 July.

Honourable Members, we have succeeded over the past years to agree on many groundbreaking files that have changed the Union's budgetary and financial landscape, and therefore I trust that with our continued cooperation, dialogue and willingness finally to compromise, we will reach a timely agreement on next year's budget.

Andrzej Halicki, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, Mr Commissioner, at the very beginning, I would like to thank Victor Negrescu, who was the rapporteur, for the very good cooperation and the job, which was really a teamwork. And this is very good for ECAS, for the future, because it is the first step on the way to adopt the budget. But this first step is really done as a teamwork together with a very good – I think – result because the report is balanced.

The result is also unique because not one amendment was tabled from the main political groups. We have a lot of amendments from the radical left, radical right, radical right wing, but I think generally they are out of scope. So if we will go this way, I feel that we will have the opportunity to work together after the elections to adopt the particular budget for the next year.

This is a very important year because not only the first one after the elections, but also the year of the Polish Presidency, so I have in my heart also Polish priorities, and I have to say thank you, Victor, once more, that these priorities are also included.

We have very tough times, so of course, security is number one, and we have a lot of wording on that, including even military mobility. This is something completely new. But I would like also to emphasise from my Polish experience, our Polish experience, very important paragraphs focused on the rule of law: without rule of law, democracy doesn't exist. So the special programme dedicated to NGOs, citizens' rights and values – I was the rapporteur of that – is also emphasised in this report, which is very important.

Of course, many of the priorities are mentioned by Victor during his speech. I would like to, in the end, also say that we have to be very careful for the farmers' expectations. We have to have in mind that the many expectations from the citizens we have to fight also with the high cost of energy. A lot of things are mentioned in the end. Because Victor said something in Romanian, I would like also use this language: *Victor, mulțumesc*.

Margarida Marques, *em nome do Grupo S&D*. – Senhor Presidente, Senhor Comissário, Caros Colegas, o orçamento anual da União Europeia é o instrumento de financiamento da ambição europeia.

O debate do orçamento anual é o momento de colocar as pessoas no centro da decisão política europeia, de fazer uma diferença efetiva e tangível na vida dos europeus, garantindo que há financiamento adequado para as prioridades políticas europeias, que apoiamos os cidadãos na transição verde e digital, que as oportunidades como o Erasmus+ são para todos e não apenas para aqueles cujas famílias podem complementar as bolsas Erasmus+, que há mais e melhor investigação europeia. Não é um mero exercício de gestão de dívida, de corta aqui para coser ali. Para isso, aprovámos, na revisão do orçamento plurianual, um instrumento próprio, o Instrumento de Recuperação da UE (IRUE), o fim do túnel da chamada Cascada.

Finalmente, e sem hesitações, é claro que o relatório preconiza a proteção dos cidadãos e a segurança nas fronteiras externas da União Europeia, mas em circunstâncias nenhuma podemos aceitar que o orçamento da União Europeia financie a construção de muros. Mais uma vez, o que nos move são os valores europeus.

Katalin Cseh, *on behalf of the Renew Group*. – Mr President, dear colleagues, it is clear that Europe is facing unprecedented challenges. To address the climate crisis, the digital transition, to ensure our citizens' security we need substantial budgetary resources. And I'm very proud to say that Renew Europe was pressing very hard on these topics. We made sure that next year's budget is fully equipped to tackle these pressing needs.

Because let's remember, our budget is much more than just a financial plan: it is also our most powerful tool for advancing our shared values. And these values guided us as budget negotiators. Respect for the rule of law is a precondition for funding, and the EU must remain committed to this principle. We want our budget to be a tool to promote gender equality? We can fund programmes to combat domestic violence, or to ensure that women do not lose out in the digital transition. And our budget is also a tool to support local governments and civil society, the frontline warriors against climate change, poverty and social exclusion. They urgently need more direct funds and we will keep working for them to receive them.

Francisco Guerreiro, *em nome do Grupo Verts/ALE*. – Senhor Presidente, Senhor Comissário, Caros Colegas, gostaria de dizer que tivemos um trabalho fantástico na reunião que precedeu esta discussão e que hoje se vai finalizar com a votação, à tarde, das linhas orientadoras e políticas para o próximo orçamento. Tivemos um debate muito construtivo. Todos os grupos tiveram as suas sensibilidades inseridas no documento, e por isso é que tivemos uma aprovação com uma grande base de apoio na Comissão.

E, por isso, gostaria de parabenizar o relator, Victor Negrescu, pelo seu trabalho, pela sua sensibilidade em acolher todos os grupos, e especialmente também algumas das prioridades dos Verdes – no que toca à descarbonização; no que toca também à gestão inteligente dos recursos aquíferos, que para um país como Portugal é fundamental; em várias matérias sobre as quais nós conseguimos, muito dificilmente, chegar a um acordo; e também na questão da ajuda externa, e portanto tudo o que envolve o conflito que ocorre na Palestina, em Gaza. Conseguimos deste modo ter um texto harmonizado.

Infelizmente, mais uma vez – e esperemos que não seja o caso, como aconteceu no ano passado – podemos, hoje à tarde, na votação, mais uma vez ter estas linhas políticas consensualizadas rejeitadas por algumas alterações completamente radicalizadas de alguns Senhores Deputados que não participam na construção destas linhas comuns e que normalmente estão ligados a vertentes políticas muito extremadas.

Aliás, mais uma vez, friso que a extrema-direita não está aqui, não trabalhou, nunca está na mesa das negociações e, depois, apresenta alterações para rebentar, literalmente, com todo o trabalho que tem sido feito. Eu espero que os partidos da ala mais moderada e central não se deixem levar por esta estratégia, que serve muito bem para o TikTok mas, depois, para a vida diária dos cidadãos europeus, não funciona em absoluto.

Johan Van Overtveldt, *namens de ECR-Fractie*. – Voorzitter, commissaris, collega's, de begrotingsopmaak voor volgend jaar, en bij uitbreiding alle daaropvolgende, inclusief het meerjarig kader, zijn eigenlijk aan een paradigmashift toe.

We slepen onszelf voort van opmaak naar herziening, terwijl het overduidelijk is dat het huidige begrotingskader niet meer geschikt is om antwoorden te bieden op de vele reële uitdagingen waar de Europese Unie vandaag voor staat. We zijn er budgettair gewoon niet klaar voor.

Een paradigmashift in de uitgaven is noodzakelijk, een shift weg van wat ik de subsidiemanie noem – alles toedekken met door de overheid aangestuurde subsidies – naar het actief stimuleren van de particuliere sector, zodat toekomstgerichte investeringen alle kansen krijgen, zonder daarbij versmacht te worden door overheden en bureaucratie.

De Europese Unie hangt budgettair nog te veel vast aan de prioriteiten uit het verleden, zoals met name het cohesiebeleid, die daardoor een grote hypotheek leggen op de toekomst. Dat remt ons af en dat moeten we veranderen.

Δημήτριος Παπαδημούλης, *εξ ονόματος της ομάδας The Left*. – Κύριε Πρόεδρε, θα ήθελα να ευχαριστήσω τον εισηγητή μας, τον κ. Negrescu, γιατί με την εποικοδομητική συμβολή των σκιωδών εισηγητών από όλες σχεδόν τις πολιτικές ομάδες διατύπωσαμε ένα φιλόδοξο κείμενο, που ζητάει ισχυρότερο κοινοτικό προϋπολογισμό με αυξημένους ιδίους πόρους, για να μπορέσουν να υλοποιηθούν οι στόχοι που έχουν τεθεί, όχι μόνο από το Κοινοβούλιο αλλά και από την ίδια την Επιτροπή και το Συμβούλιο.

Η πρώτη μου παρατήρηση προς τον κ. Halicki είναι ότι οι απόντες ευρωβουλευτές της άκρας δεξιάς, από τους οποίους δεν είναι ούτε ένας παρών, έχουν καταθέσει ορισμένες ακραίες τροπολογίες, για να καταστρέψουν αυτή τη συναίνεση. Μην τις υπερψηφίσετε εσείς του ΕΛΚ, για να μην καταστραφεί αυτό που οικοδομήθηκε από τον κύριο Negrescu, όπως συνέβη πέρσι με την έκθεση του κυρίου Lewandowski, που ανήκει στην πολιτική σας ομάδα και την υπονομεύσατε, γιατί η πλειοψηφία του ΕΛΚ συνέπραξε με τους ακροδεξιούς, που δεν θέλουν ούτε ισχυρό προϋπολογισμό, ούτε ενωμένη δημοκρατική Ευρώπη. Επομένως, καλά κάνατε και τους ψέξατε τους απόντες, αλλά μην συμπλεύσετε μαζί τους στις ψηφοφορίες για να χαλάσετε την ισορροπία που έχει επιτευχθεί. Η δική μου πολιτική ομάδα λειτούργησε εποικοδομητικά.

Και η τελευταία μου παρατήρηση: Δεν είναι δυνατόν να υλοποιηθούν αυτοί οι στόχοι, κύριε Hahn και αγαπητοί συνάδελφοι, με έναν προϋπολογισμό της τάξης του 1% του ευρωπαϊκού ΑΕΠ. Χρειαζόμαστε πιο φιλόδοξο προϋπολογισμό με αυξημένους ιδίους πόρους.

Andor Deli (NI). – Elnök Úr! Az elmúlt időszakban számtalan alkalommal hangsúlyoztuk azt, hogy az Európai Unió költségvetését a jelenlegi háborús és súlyos gazdasági körülmények között nem szabad az eddigi, elhibázott módon tervezni. A nyugat-európai fővárosokat megrengető gazdatüntetések, a keleti határokat lezáró fuvarozók mind-mind változást követelnek. Mégis, amikor végigolvassuk a 25-ös évre vonatkozó parlamenti prioritásokat, még mindig ott szerepelnek olyan megosztó slágertémák, mint például a zöldítő csomagok változatlan végrehajtása, vagy az ukrán mezőgazdasági termékek korlátozás nélküli beengedése.

Láthatjuk, hogy ezek milyen károsan hatnak több meghatározó tagállam iparára és gazdasági teljesítményére, és megtapasztalhattuk az elmúlt hetek európai gazdatüntetésein azt is, hogy mi az európai termelők véleménye ezekről a túlzó és a mezőgazdasági termelést károsító javaslatokról. Az EU költségvetésének segítenie kell a problémák megoldását, ezért Brüsszelben változás kell, hogy olyan költségvetési prioritásokat lehessen meghatározni, amelyek valóban összhangban állnak az európai emberek és az európai gazdaság érkeivel.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE). – Senhor Presidente, Senhor Comissário, Caras e Caros Colegas, o orçamento da União Europeia, ainda que pequeno – cerca de 1 % do PIB da União Europeia –, dá um contributo importante para a competitividade, a coesão territorial, a produtividade e a sustentabilidade. É essencial que, em 2025, se apoiem as pequenas e médias empresas face ao contexto em que nós vivemos, os agricultores, os jovens, reforçando o Erasmus+.

Nunca nos podemos também esquecer do momento que vivemos e é importantíssimo que o orçamento forneça os meios necessários para apoiar a Ucrânia. É um investimento que fazemos na nossa própria defesa e nos nossos valores.

A autonomia estratégica da União Europeia é também ela essencial e, aprovado que está o STEP, é muito importante que se avance com este reforço da nossa autonomia estratégica. 2025 é também um ano crucial e é importantíssimo que os Estados-Membros não percam nem um centímo dos recursos que têm à sua disposição, e é preocupante olhar para a execução dos planos de recuperação e resiliência, olhar para a execução dos fundos da política de coesão, e verificar que há riscos de perdas destes montantes.

E em relação ao plano de recuperação e resiliência, era essencial que ele fosse prorrogado e que não houvesse um limite para a sua execução, que é a data de 2026. Era importante que fosse prorrogado pelo menos por um ano e, por isso, fica aqui o desafio e a pergunta à Comissão: está disponível para o prorrogar por um ano e para avançar com legislação nesse sentido?

Evin Incir (S&D). – Herr talman! Var är alla hjältar som sedan dag ett försvarat ukrainska folkets rätt och liv? Var är ni nu när över 30 000 palestinier har dödats och över 70 000 skadats på grund av israeliska bomber? Många av dem barn.

Var är ni nu? När över två miljoner Gaza-bor är i desperat behov av humanitär hjälp i en tid då den israeliska högerextrema regeringen svälter ihjäl befolkningen i Gaza genom att förhindra stödet att ta sig in. Det är ingen naturkatastrof vi talar om – det är en mänsklig katastrof, skapad av människor.

Extremhögern, högern, delar av den liberala gruppen och andra i Sverige och Europa har tittat på medan palestinska barn dödas och svälter ihjäl. Jag skäms över varenda en som konstant har röstat för att strypa stödet till UNRWA, inklusive representanter från de svenska högerpartierna.

Ni har nu chansen att ändra er så att vi kan säkra fortsatt EU-stöd till UNRWA. Ni kan inte rädda de 30 000 palestinier som har dött, men ni kan säkerställa att inte fler gör det. För ingen, inte ens Israel, står över internationell humanitär rätt.

Charles Goerens (Renew). – Monsieur le Président, merci au rapporteur d'avoir réussi à négocier un accord sur cette partie du budget. Cela étant, ne demandons pas l'impossible au budget actuel en particulier et au cadre financier pluriannuel en général. Le budget est l'instrument qui nous permet de répondre aux priorités dans l'immédiat ainsi qu'à moyen et à long terme.

Vu le caractère limité des fonds alloués à l'Union européenne, les États membres devraient s'entendre urgemment sur une mobilisation de fonds supplémentaires destinés à sauvegarder une vie civilisée chez nous et dans notre voisinage immédiat, et notamment en Ukraine. Je suis persuadé que nos concitoyens, avides de sécurité et de liberté, auront beaucoup de sympathie pour un effort budgétaire supplémentaire extraordinaire.

À cette fin, nos gouvernements, soucieux du bien-être de nos citoyens et conscients de leurs responsabilités, devraient s'entendre sur le lancement d'une euro-obligation dont la mission consisterait à signaler à Kiev que notre Union ne laissera pas tomber les Ukrainiens, et ce complémentairement aux efforts déjà déployés en la matière pour être en mesure de faire face à nos responsabilités.

Rasmus Andresen (Verts/ALE). – Herr Präsident! Extreme Hitze, Dürren und Waldbrände in Südeuropa, Überschwemmungen im Norden – kein Kontinent der Welt erwärmt sich schneller als Europa. Die Klimakrise ist ein Sicherheitsrisiko: Sie wird in der Zukunft zu mehr Kriegen, zu Migration und zu sozialen Konflikten führen. Deshalb ist gute Klimapolitik aktive Sicherheitspolitik, und es kann keine gute Sicherheitspolitik ohne eine aktive Klimapolitik geben.

Deshalb sollte eigentlich ein Aufschrei durch Europa gehen, wenn, wie gestern passiert, die Europäische Umweltagentur uns ins Stammbuch schreibt, dass wir viel zu wenig tun, um uns auf die Klimakrise vorzubereiten. Und das tun wir nicht, und auch hier im Haus sind viele Abgeordnete nicht dazu bereit, haushaltspolitisch die richtigen Konsequenzen zu ziehen. Wir investieren viel zu wenig in unsere Sicherheit und in nachhaltige Infrastruktur. Es ist richtig, dass wir auch in der Haushaltspolitik jetzt stärker über Verteidigungsfragen sprechen – das begrüßen wir Grüne.

Aber wir müssen mehr gemeinsam machen und auch klimapolitisch diese Herausforderungen angehen. Dazu hören wir wenig, weder von CDU noch von FDP, aber das erwarten wir, denn sonst werden wir in unserer Gesellschaft unsicherer werden.

Bogdan Rzońca (ECR). – Panie Przewodniczący! Panie Komisarzy! Debatujemy w sytuacji, kiedy jest duży niepokój w Unii Europejskiej. Wyborcy pytają, dlaczego firmy uciekają z Unii Europejskiej, dlaczego rolnicy protestują, dlaczego ubywa miejsc pracy, dlaczego ludzie nie mają pieniędzy na zapłacenie rachunków za prąd i za ciepło, dlaczego jest mniej bezpieczeństwa w Unii Europejskiej, i zanoszą się, że ten problem będzie się jeszcze bardziej poszerzał. No ale jakiś kompromis trzeba znaleźć. Myślę, że w części został on znaleziony.

Bardzo dziękuję za współpracę panu przewodniczącemu Negrescu, natomiast my jako ECR będziemy się tutaj wstrzymywać od głosu. Co prawda część naszych poprawek, poprawek ECR, znalazła uznanie – za co jeszcze raz dziękuję – ale są też takie zapisy, na które nie możemy się zgodzić. Myślę tutaj przede wszystkim o tych dużych decyzjach związanych z Zielonym Ładem, z prawem reprodukcyjnym i seksualnym, ale to nie są najistotniejsze rzeczy. Najważniejsze rzeczy są te, które są związane z gospodarką, i myślę, że w tej materii trochę za mało zrobiliśmy.

Karlo Ressler (PPE). – Poštovani predsjedavajući, nalazimo se nekoliko tjedana uoči europskih izbora koji će uvelike odrediti budućnost Europe. Takva budućnost mora uključivati, i zbog toga želimo to potvrditi i ovim smjernicama, Europu koja može poduprijeti Ukrajinu, Europu koja se može samostalno obraniti, Europu koja razvija svoju konkurentnost nasuprot nekakvim suludim ekonomskim eksperimentima.

Od sljedeće godine ćemo i značajnije snažiti institucionalne kapacitete država zapadnog Balkana, otvaranje pristupnih pregovora s Bosnom i Hercegovinom, u tom kontekstu je također od strateškog značaja, a sa šest milijardi eura koje bismo trebali osigurati kroz plan rasta za zapadni Balkan čitavu regiju dodatno želimo vezati uz Europu.

Naši finansijski ciljevi stoga moraju reflektirati naše ambicije, a ključno je stoga pametno iskoristiti ograničene resurse za korist naših građana, za korist našeg gospodarstva, za podršku brojnim istraživačkim projektima i razvoj nove tehnologije. Ove smjernice su korak u pravom smjeru.

Pierre Larroutou (S&D). – Monsieur le Président, mes amis, toutes les semaines, les marchés financiers battent de nouveaux records. À Paris comme à Francfort, l'argent coule à flots. L'an dernier, plus de 100 milliards ont été distribués aux actionnaires par le CAC 40 en France – 100 milliards, c'est 40 % de plus en quatre ans.

Mais, dans tous nos pays, les citoyens n'en peuvent plus de la flambée des prix et des coupes dans les budgets publics. Il n'y a pas d'argent pour les agriculteurs, pas d'argent pour les hôpitaux, pas d'argent pour l'éducation, pas d'argent pour le climat, alors que le nombre de milliardaires a triplé en quelques années. C'est obscène, et nous sommes des millions à nous le dire. Quand j'étais petit, le taux moyen d'impôt sur les bénéfices était à 50 % en Europe. De 50 %, il est tombé à 19 % seulement. Est-ce que cela profite à l'investissement et à l'emploi? Non, évidemment. L'Allemagne est en récession, et la France est presque en récession.

Mes amis, il est urgent de stopper cette course au moins-disant fiscal et social. Il est urgent de faire payer ceux qui ne payent jamais. Il faut choisir: est-ce que l'Europe est au service des milliardaires et des banquiers, ou est-ce que l'Europe est au service du bien commun? C'est à nous de le décider, lors des élections européennes du 9 juin.

Moritz Körner (Renew). – Mr President, dear colleagues, with the budget we set the right priorities for the future, for a stronger economy, but we also have to act along our values.

Over the last 30 years, the European Union has paid EUR 8 billion to Palestinian territories. Where did the money go? Ten per cent of the Palestinian budget goes to the so-called Martyrs Fund. This fund pays a monthly income to every Palestinian and their family who commits a terrorist act. The more people the terrorist kills, the more money the Palestinian Government pays. If we as the EU continue to finance that, we are idiots.

If we are brave enough to freeze funds for EU Member States such as Hungary and Poland we must also be ready to be tough with the Palestinian authorities now and say either the Martyrs Fund ends now, or EU funding ends now. We have to fight for peace. Yes, we have to support humanitarian needs, but we also have to act according to our values. We cannot finance terrorism from our European budget.

Janusz Lewandowski (PPE). – Panie Przewodniczący! Panie Komisarzu! Roczna procedura budżetowa składa się z kroków powtarzalnych, rutynowych. Ale to nie jest *business as usual*, zwłaszcza teraz, kiedy projektujemy budżety w czasach coraz mniej przewidywalnych, w cieniu wojny. Budżety narodowe będą się stopniowo militaryzowały. Niestety, na razie to się bardzo stopniowo przenosi na budżet wspólnotowy. Na tym etapie, na etapie wytycznych, istotna jest szeroka baza poparcia dla priorytetów budżetowych Parlamentu, co się udało, bo to wyznacza pozycję negocjacyjną w uzgodnieniach międzyinstytucjonalnych. To zasługa sprawozdawcy Victora Negrescu, ale także kontrsprawozdawców, którzy sprawili, że pewna przewaga kwestii socjalnych – zrozumiała z uwagi na afiliację polityczną pana Negrescu – została zrównoważona przez względy konkurencyjności, innowacyjności i obronności. Jest to więc dobra zapowiedź na następne kroki tej dosyć rutynowej procedury.

Ilan De Basso (S&D). – Herr talman! Europa står i ett avgörande skede av historien. Krig brinner på vår kontinent. Konflikter härjar runt om i världen. Högerextrema krafter försöker splittra och försvaga våra samhällen.

Ryssland har försökt knäcka sammanhållningen genom att trissa upp gaspriser och sprida desinformation. Matkassen blir dyrare och dyrare. Tio års reallöneökningar har nu ätits upp av inflationen. Det är i tider som dessa som EU måste fortsätta stå för stabilitet, säkerhet och styrka.

Vi tror på att de europeiska länderna och folken ska samarbeta i dessa frågor, där vi behöver varandra för att gemensamt lösa samhällsproblemen. EU:s budget måste bidra till ett Europa som håller ihop socialt, politiskt och ekonomiskt, till ett Europa som ökar säkerheten, bryter fossilberoendet och bekämpar gängkriminaliteten.

Monika Hohlmeier (PPE). – Herr Präsident, Herr Kommissar, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Ich glaube, dass wir in der Europäischen Union, auch wenn die Zeit von Krisen versehen ist, extrem viel Geld und eigentlich mehr Geld brauchen für Forschung und Innovation, für Horizont Europa. Ich bin eigentlich sehr traurig darüber, dass die Mitgliedstaaten immer bei allem grundsätzlich Horizont kürzen – das heißt Wissenschaft und Forschung, das, was uns unabhängiger macht, das, was uns stärker macht, das, was uns besser macht, das wird gekürzt von den Mitgliedstaaten. Das ist ein ziemlich frustrierender Vorgang, mit dem ich nicht einverstanden bin.

Zweitens: Wir müssen in der Tat mehr Geld für die Verteidigung investieren, für unsere Sicherheits- und für unsere Außenpolitik. Denn wir werden nur über den europäischen Haushalt auch für genügend Synergien sorgen können und der Ukraine die Unterstützung zukommen lassen können, die sie braucht.

Und auch noch ein Wort zum Palästinenserhilfswerk UNRWA: Natürlich brauchen wir ein Hilfswerk der UN, das dort vor Ort tätig ist. Aber ehrlich gesagt, reinzuschreiben in die *guidelines*, dass es angeblich keinerlei Indikatoren gäbe, die aufzeigen würden, dass es da Missbrauch gegeben hat, ist schlichtweg Unfug und die Unwahrheit. Wir müssen dafür sorgen, dass die palästinensische Bevölkerung adäquate Lebensmittel bekommt, Hilfe bekommt und Unterstützung bekommt. Und darauf sollten wir uns als Europäisches Parlament verständigen können.

Isabel García Muñoz (S&D). – Señor presidente, señor comisario Hahn, el presupuesto europeo es nuestra principal herramienta para mejorar la vida de los ciudadanos, para promover nuestros valores y para afrontar las crisis, como comprobamos con la pandemia, la guerra en Ucrania y las crisis energética y de seguridad alimentaria. Y para ello se ha demostrado que necesitamos cierta flexibilidad y mayor simplificación, acompañadas, por supuesto, de sólidos sistemas de control para evitar cualquier mal uso de los fondos europeos.

Pedimos a la Comisión que esté vigilante y que ponga todos los medios para proteger el presupuesto de cualquier uso indebido. Esto incluye dotar de recursos suficientes a la Fiscalía Europea y a la Oficina Europea de Lucha contra el Fraude. Animamos a la Comisión a que siga trabajando en la presupuestación con perspectiva de género y a que asegure por todos los medios el cumplimiento del Estado de Derecho.

El futuro de Europa necesita que el próximo presupuesto esté a la altura de los desafíos y que se adopten rápidamente los Reglamentos sectoriales que regulan políticas como la de cohesión, para que dé tiempo de absorber más y mejor y, sobre todo, que no se cuestionen aspectos tan importantes como la ayuda humanitaria cuando es más necesaria que nunca.

Spontane Wortmeldungen

Андрей Новаков (PPE). – Г-н Председател, право да си кажа, взех думата, защото не ми се слуша повече как трябва да харчим парите от европейския бюджет модерно и зелено. Истината е, че в тази сесия обсъждаме много все важни неща – от катализаторите при колите до изкуствения интелект.

Дневният ред в България обаче е друг, защото през последните дни нараснаха инцидентите с бежанци, а с това нараснаха и страхът, и недоволството, а това е последното, от което имаме нужда. Това, от което имаме нужда, е повече пари за охрана на границите, повече хора на границите, повече техника, за да се пазим.

Горд съм, че вчера лидерът на най-голямата партия в България, г-н Борисов, внесе законопроект, с който се укрепва не просто българската граница, а източната граница на Европейския съюз. Защото колкото по-укрепени сме на Изток, толкова по-спокойни ще сте вие на Запад. Призовавам да увеличим бюджета на Frontex, да имаме повече техника, повече персонал, които да отидат на най-невралгичните точки по нашите граници, където натискът е невиджан от десетилетия.

Nils Ušakovs (S&D). – Mr President, a couple of words about the walls at the borders and the European Union budget. In Latvia, the second largest city of Daugavpils is located roughly less than 30km away from the Belarussian border. Likewise, major cities like Ludza, Krāslava or Dagda are located within the same proximity to the Russian border.

Building walls or any other military or border control infrastructure will definitely increase security, but that comes at a cost. That will bring the level of investment in this region – the region of Latgale – basically down to zero. You cannot build walls, you cannot dig rows or put anti-tank defences and expect economic growth at the same time. It just doesn't work that way.

And that clearly means we need a stronger, proactive role of the European Union and its budget. EU money must be directed towards providing additional new support for both the regions, like Latgale, for economic and social development, to compensate the costs incurred by the war and the geopolitical situation.

Vlad Gheorghe (Renew). – Domnule președinte, avem nevoie de mai mulți bani în bugetul nostru pentru fermierii noștri, pentru transportatorii noștri, pentru oamenii care își plătesc taxele și au nevoie de ajutorul nostru. Ne plângem tot timpul că nu avem destui bani la buget ca să-i ajutăm. Hai să vedem, de ce nu avem destui bani la buget ca să-i ajutăm? Pentru că nu mergem să le luăm banii marilor evazionisti, infractorilor care fac milioane și milioane ilegal. Pentru că, dacă, să zicem, Mihai, care are o firmă mică de construcții lângă Paris, uită să își plătească 500 de euro taxe, se trezește instant cu popriri și cu toate instituțiile pe capul lui.

În schimb, avem o grămadă de milionari care fie donează și fac foarte mulți bani cu politicianii, fie le lasă mașini de lux politicianilor care merg așa, cu totul întâmplător, cu ele și care nu sunt deranjați de nimeni. Până când Europa nu o să înceapă să le ia banii acestor mari evazionisti și mari infractori, evident că nu o să avem banii de care avem nevoie ca să ne ajutăm cetățenii, așa că mesajul meu asta este: Europa, ia-le banii și așa o să avem pentru toată lumea.

Mick Wallace (The Left). – Mr President, this report takes time to condemn Hamas and Russia, but not a bad word about Israel. In fact, it says we should continue to build peace and stability in the region. What peace and stability? We can't even call for an unconditional ceasefire while EU Member States funnel endless weapons and financial aid to a regime openly perpetrating a genocide.

During Israel's genocidal campaign in Gaza, the European Investment Bank has signed off on 650 million in loans for Israeli infrastructure projects, with over 12 000 children killed, we now have children starving to death in Gaza as Israel imposes famine conditions on 2.3 million Palestinians, and still the right wing have the inhumanity to table an amendment calling for the suspension of funding to UNRWA.

The EPP have tabled an amendment to make all EU funds to the Middle East and North Africa conditional on a declaration of a recognition of Israel, while brazenly conflating opposition to the genocidal, settler-colonial, Zionist State of Israel with anti-Semitism. EU racism knows no bounds.

Cláudia Monteiro de Aguiar (PPE). – Senhor Presidente, Senhor Comissário, sob o lema «um orçamento centrado nas pessoas» é relevante colocar, neste debate do orçamento, a tónica num dos setores que mais contribuem para o crescimento e desenvolvimento da economia europeia. A indústria do turismo e viagens, mesmo após várias crises, incluindo a pandémica, continua a ser a potência motriz do crescimento económico e do desenvolvimento social de vários Estados-Membros e é uma realidade no meu país, Portugal – um turismo que corresponde já à dupla transição digital e ecológica de forma equitativa.

A Europa precisa de uma estratégia a médio-longo prazo que apoie as empresas, os destinos, as cidades e as pessoas que, diariamente, se empenham por este setor. O turismo é também um veículo de promoção de paz, de entendimento, de respeito entre os povos. Já o demonstrou ser em vários momentos da União e, acreditamos, terá também um papel fundamental, por exemplo na recuperação da Ucrânia.

Termino, pois, perguntando: Senhor Comissário, hoje que discutimos o orçamento, e em breve o próximo quadro plurianual, para quando uma política europeia de turismo e um financiamento...

(O Presidente retira a palavra à oradora)

VORSITZ: RAINER WIELAND

Vizepräsident

Maria Grapini (S&D). – Domnule președinte, domnule comisar, stimați colegi, sigur, noi discutăm liniile generale ale bugetului pe 2025. Altcineva va definitiva: o nouă Comisie, un nou Parlament. Nedumerirea mea este de ce, dacă tot timpul spunem că trebuie să avem coeziune socială în piața internă, că trebuie să sprijinim IMM-urile, că trebuie să sprijinim cercetarea și inovarea, de ce nu ajungem după atâția ani făcând bugete – totuși, IMM-urile sunt cele mai solicitate, costurile de operare ale IMM-urilor sunt cele mai mari, de inovare și cercetare nu pot beneficia IMM-urile, ci doar companiile mari, bancherii se îmbogățesc, polarizarea în societate este mare.

De aceea, cerința mea este ca, în viitor, bugetul într-adevăr să fie gestionat pe principiile care duc la coeziune socială, la creșterea numărului de IMM-uri, despre care spunem noi că sunt coloana vertebrală în Uniunea Europeană, și la scoaterea cetățenilor din sărăcie. Bani din bugetul european sunt banii cetățenilor și așa trebuie să gândim dacă vrem să avem liniște și coeziune în Uniunea Europeană.

João Pimenta Lopes (The Left). – Senhor Presidente, o que certamente não faz falta aos povos e aos trabalhadores que se confrontam com o agravamento das condições de vida é a mobilização de mais verbas para a militarização, para a guerra, para políticas migratórias xenófobas e construção de muros.

É preciso mais dinheiro, sim, mas para possibilitar aos Estados-Membros, como Portugal, alavancar respostas aos problemas concretos da população, aos défices estruturais que se agravam, promover o investimento na produção nacional, garantindo a soberania alimentar e a soberania e independência nacionais noutros domínios, impulsionar políticas de progresso social, a promoção do pleno emprego e a criação de emprego com direitos, o combate à pobreza e à exclusão social, promover políticas de desenvolvimento económico, dentro dos limites do ambiente e preservação da biodiversidade. Apresentámos alterações neste sentido, visando obter condições para a melhoria da situação económica e social.

Termino lembrando que, face ao genocídio em curso contra o povo palestino, o que este orçamento deve considerar é a suspensão do Acordo de Associação UE-Israel e o reforço substancial dos apoios à UNWRA.

(Ende der spontanen Wortmeldungen)

Johannes Hahn, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, honourable Members, I would like to thank you for your constructive and engaging debate today. The Commission takes good note of the positions and thoughts expressed in this meeting, and let me assure you that the Commission will act as an honest broker, and my services will do their utmost to prepare the ground for fair and well-informed negotiations in autumn. The Commission stands ready to facilitate the work of the budget rapporteur, to facilitate the work and, of course, try to reach an agreement in due time.

I would like to stress how important it is to remain flexible, to react to the evolving geopolitical situation, and to ensure that the 2025 budget is adopted in a timely manner in order to stimulate economic recovery, respond to the consequences of the war in Ukraine and provide adequate funding for the EURI interest line using the new cascade mechanism agreed in the MFF revision.

I trust that with cooperation, dialogue and an availability to compromise, we reach a timely agreement on a solid and good quality budget for 2025, which is – and this was expressed by many of you – extremely important. Nevertheless, on a very personal note, I count on this House that I don't have to lead the final negotiations on the side of the Commission, otherwise it would be my sixth budget negotiations.

Victor Negrescu, *rapporteur*. – Monsieur le Président, je remercie encore une fois mes collègues pour toutes leurs interventions. Cela démontre l'importance de ce débat pour le Parlement européen, mais aussi la complexité des sujets liés aux questions budgétaires. Il est clairement impossible d'avoir un budget suffisant pour couvrir tous les points. Toutefois, nous devons bien définir les priorités afin d'avoir le plus grand impact.

Comme beaucoup d'entre vous l'avez dit, la situation de l'Union européenne, et par conséquent notre budget, est influencée par les conflits qui se déroulent dans notre voisinage. Ce n'est pas nous qui avons déclenché la guerre en Ukraine, mais, si nous n'aidons pas l'Ukraine et la République de Moldavie, nos vies seront à jamais changées et menacées par l'attitude barbare des dirigeants de Moscou. On aide les Moldaves et les Ukrainiens non seulement pour sauver des vies, mais aussi pour sauver nos vies. Par conséquent, il faut continuer de montrer à la République de Moldavie, à l'Ukraine, à la Géorgie, aux pays des Balkans de l'Est que nous sommes là pour les aider à devenir membres de l'Union européenne.

La situation est tout aussi compliquée au Moyen-Orient, et, en effet, il n'y a pas de solution facile. Ce qui est clair, c'est que notre rapport a essayé de prendre en considération toutes les préoccupations de façon consensuelle afin de montrer que l'Union européenne est présente, sans toutefois se transformer en un débat de politique étrangère. Nous avons réussi ensemble à montrer que le dialogue restait la meilleure solution pour donner de la force à notre Parlement.

En approuvant les priorités cet après-midi, nous redonnons de la crédibilité à notre institution et démontrons, avant les élections, que nous sommes capables d'être au niveau des attentes justifiées de nos citoyens, de travailler avec eux, de travailler pour eux, de prendre des décisions sérieuses dans leur intérêt et dans celui des pays membres de l'Union européenne.

Der Präsident. – Die Aussprache ist damit geschlossen.

Die Abstimmung findet heute, am Mittwoch, 13. März 2024, im Anschluss an den nächsten Tagesordnungspunkt statt.

14. Typgodkännande av motorfordon och motorer med avseende på utsläpp och batteriers hållbarhet (Euro 7) (debatt)

Der Präsident. – Als nächster Punkt der Tagesordnung folgt die Aussprache über den Bericht von Alexandr Vondra im Namen des Ausschusses für Umweltfragen, öffentliche Gesundheit und Lebensmittelsicherheit über den Vorschlag für eine Verordnung des Europäischen Parlaments und des Rates über die Typgenehmigung von Kraftfahrzeugen und Motoren sowie von Systemen, Bauteilen und selbstständigen technischen Einheiten für diese Fahrzeuge hinsichtlich ihrer Emissionen und der Dauerhaltbarkeit von Batterien (Euro 7) und zur Aufhebung der Verordnungen (EG) Nr. 715/2007 und (EG) Nr. 595/2009 (COM(2022)0586 – C9-0375/2022 – 2022/0365(COD)) (A9-0298/2023).

Alexandr Vondra, *rapporteur*. – Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, today's vote is an important milestone for the automotive sector, an industry that has always stood as a pillar of innovation and economic prosperity in Europe.

Almost 17 months ago, the Commission published its original proposal. In short, it sets the common standard for approving motor vehicles, engines and related systems, components and technical units, but unlike the earlier EU regulations, covers light duty cars, vans and heavy duty trucks and buses, all within a single legal framework.

Its purpose was to streamline the rules governing vehicle emissions, tighten requirements on the tailpipe pollutants and, for the first time, add rules that will also affect electric cars, for example on the brake oppression and on tyres that release microplastics, as well as requirements concerning battery durability. I ordinarily welcome efforts to improve the legislation. However, as a parliamentary rapporteur, I strongly oppose the Commission's initial draft.

My main concern was the potential impact both on industry and customers. The Commission-proposed changes, particularly to vehicle testing requirements, would increase manufacturing costs and raise prices for small budget cars, which are essential for working people and rural communities. Higher prices would result in the market withdrawal of specific models and potentially in a 'Havana effect'. This could lead to people postponing new purchases or only buying second-hand vehicles, and would be disastrous for everyday consumers and the automotive sector.

It would also paradoxically redirect investment away from electrification. For that reason, it was crucial to find a good balance between the environmental growth and manufacturer and social interest. This was largely achieved with the adoption of Parliament's first reading mandate, following constructive and fruitful negotiations with the EPP, Renew, ECR and ID groups. Thankfully, the Council shared my concern and adopted a negotiating position close to that of Parliament.

An agreement was reached at the end of the Spanish Presidency – a deal that, in my opinion, represents a fair, reasonable compromise. For passenger cars and vans, it maintains the Euro 6 exhaust limits for buses and trucks, and introduced the stricter NO_x emission limits, a key pollutant affecting air quality in towns and cities. Crucially, however, Parliament and the Council recognise excessive costs that would be imposed on the sector if the existing testing conditions for vehicles were revised, as originally specified by the Commission.

Therefore, the testing parameters for light and heavy duty vehicles are unchanged from the Euro 6. The deal sets brake particle emission limits for cars and vans, and introduced the tyre abrasion limits in line with international adopted standards by the UN. It also sets the minimum performance requirements for batteries. The deal contains stricter lifetime standards up to 200 000 km/10 years, guaranteeing the better result, return of investment. Importantly, it also includes the phased implementation plan, providing the sector with credible and cost-effective lead-in times.

I believe that the interinstitutional agreement we have reached is a triumph of common sense over the entrenched ideology, and I urge you, my fellow parliamentarians, to support this deal.

Massimiliano Salini, *relatore per parere della commissione per l'industria, la ricerca e l'energia*. – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, noi siamo partiti da un testo molto complesso che ha costretto i negozianti a una strada in salita, il cui risultato finale però è soddisfacente.

In particolare siamo soddisfatti per l'accordo trovato sui tempi di attuazione; questo consentirà all'industria dell'automobile di adeguarsi, non divorando i presupposti su cui ha costruito negli anni la propria propensione innovativa e la propria capacità di investimento. Buona anche la decisione di tenere le condizioni di prova dell'Euro 6 che sono ancora valide.

Peccato per il mancato riconoscimento della definizione di carburante neutro, pilastro della battaglia che stiamo conducendo per la cosiddetta «neutralità tecnologica», cioè la possibilità che tutte le forme di trazione competano equamente: motore a combustione interna, elettrico, a idrogeno.

Non si è mai visto, in Europa, che l'innovazione e la sostenibilità fossero garantite da un'unica tecnologia, imposta dall'alto per legge.

Elisa Ferreira, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, dear rapporteur Alexandr Vondra, honourable Members of the European Parliament, I am intervening in the name of my colleague Thierry Breton, and I want to share with you that the adoption of the Euro 7 Regulation by Parliament and Council in this cycle is crucial to reduce pollution from motor vehicles and to give industry planning certainty for their investments.

The automotive industry is in a huge transformation process towards the zero-emissions vehicles. Uncertainty on emission rules would have affected investments, and our cities and our citizens have been waiting for updated rules to reduce air pollution from road transport given the strong impact on health.

Regardless of the different positions of political groups on certain elements of the regulation, there is a broad consensus on the objectives. Euro 7 needs to contribute substantially to improving air quality, while maintaining the affordability of vehicles and the international competitiveness of our industry. Therefore, the Commission is pleased that Parliament and Council found a provisional agreement at the end of last year. While the agreement is less ambitious than the Commission proposal regarding the exhaust emissions of cars and vans, it will overall provide a robust framework for the future. Euro 7 will notably reduce significantly the exhaust emissions of lorries and coaches, for which the potential for further air-pollutant emission reductions is particularly high.

The European Union has long been a global leader with regard to emission standards, providing our automotive industry with an important advantage on the global market. With the rapid shift towards electrification, non-exhaust emissions from brake and tyre abrasion will soon represent the lion's share of road-particle emissions in Europe. Euro 7 contains future-proof rules for emissions from brakes and tyres that will remain valid for zero-emission vehicles. The introduction of tyre abrasion limits is also essential to reduce microplastics in the environment. Euro 7 also introduces minimum performance requirements for battery durability, and this is important for the confidence of consumers in electric vehicles. I welcome the strong support from the Parliament on all these future-proof elements of the Euro 7 Regulation, as well as on the technology of the on-board sensor, in order to improve compliance of vehicles over their full lifetime.

The agreement gives us a tight deadline of 12 months to deliver all the relevant implementing acts for cars and vans. I can assure you that Commission services are fully mobilised to deliver on this secondary legislation on time.

Once again, I would like to thank the Parliament for your commitment and constructive approach during the codecision process.

Antonius Manders, *rapporteur voor advies van de Commissie interne markt en consumentenbescherming*. – Voorzitter, in de Commissie interne markt zijn wij het eens met de te behalen milieunormen en een verbetering van de luchtkwaliteit. Dat staat ook in ons advies. Wat we wel vinden, is dat de uitstoot moet worden gemeten over de hele levenscyclus van een auto. Als we het hebben over elektrische auto's, gaat het dus over het produceren van batterijen, het produceren van techniek, maar ook over het recyclen van batterijen.

We willen zeker niet een techniek voorschrijven, maar wel het einddoel. Dus hebben wij opgeroepen om zo snel mogelijk het verbod op verbrandingsmotoren in 2035 te herzien, om een van de meest succesvolle uitvindingen van de Europese Unie, namelijk de verbrandingsmotor, weer de mogelijkheid te geven om zo schoon mogelijk te zijn en de doelen te behalen die wij voorschrijven.

Het is wel heel bijzonder dat vandaag een Amerikaans onderzoek bekend is gemaakt, waaruit blijkt dat een hybride auto schoner is dan de gemiddelde elektrische auto.

Wij roepen op tot verbetering van de interne markt, ook voor auto's.

Marian-Jean Marinescu, *Raportor pentru aviz, Comisia pentru transport și turism*. – Domnule președinte, această propunere a Comisiei este extrem de importantă pentru că va avea un impact deosebit asupra industriei, dar și asupra societății. O abordare greșită în această propunere ar fi dus la consecințe extrem de negative, în primul rând asupra industriei producătoare de autovehicule, dar și asupra industriei în general, pentru că transportul este important pentru oricine, și asupra societății.

Cred că rezultatul negocierilor este un rezultat bun, echilibrat, are avantaje pentru toată lumea: administrația se poate pregăti, cetățenii, sper, vor putea cumpăra o mașină, industria nu cheltuie prea mulți bani, emisiile scad, deci totul este, cred, spre un bun rezultat. Îi mulțumesc raportorului că a preluat în textul final opinia Comisiei pentru transport și turism.

Jens Gieseke, im Namen der PPE-Fraktion. – Herr Präsident, Frau Kommissarin, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Die grüne Verbotspolitik ist allgegenwärtig: erst das Verbrenner-Aus, dann absurde Einschränkungen beim Führerschein inklusive Nachtfahrverbot für Fahranfänger, schließlich ein Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung der Natur, das unsere Landwirtschaft lahmlegen kann.

Wir sind in diesem Haus zunehmend damit beschäftigt, diese verbraucher- und industrie feindliche Politik zu korrigieren, eine Politik der Deindustrialisierung Europas, die unseren Wohlstand senkt und unsere Abhängigkeit von anderen Weltregionen erhöht. So geht globaler Umweltschutz nicht.

Aber entgegen der Meinung von Grünen und Sozialdemokraten sind der Schutz der Gesundheit, der Schutz unserer europäischen Industrie und der Schutz von Arbeitsplätzen kein Widerspruch – das Verhandlungsergebnis zu Euro 7 ist der beste Beweis dafür.

Das Ergebnis ist pragmatisch und realistisch, das aus drei Gründen: Die Luftqualität wird nachhaltig verbessert durch strengere Grenzwerte für Auspuffemissionen von LKW und Bussen, durch die erstmalige Regulierung von Emissionen aus Brems- und Reifenabrieb – das ist gerade bei der Elektromobilität wichtig –, aber auch dadurch, dass ältere Fahrzeuge durch Verbrenner der neuesten Generation ausgetauscht werden.

Die Industrie bleibt wettbewerbsfähig, die moderate Anpassung der Grenzwerte schafft die nötige Planungssicherheit für die Industrie. Das ist praxisnah und orientiert sich an der wirtschaftlichen Machbarkeit.

Und drittens und letztens: Die individuelle Mobilität bleibt bezahlbar. Strenge Grenzwerte und neue Testverfahren hätten Autos erheblich verteuert, aber nur wenig Zusatznutzen für die Luftqualität gebracht. Gerade in Krisenzeiten wie diesen müssen Autos für Bürgerinnen und Bürger auch bezahlbar bleiben.

Bei den Euro 7-Verhandlungen hat die Stimme der Vernunft gesiegt. Das Ergebnis ist ein Paradebeispiel dafür, wie Umwelt- und Industriepolitik Hand in Hand gehen können, wenn wir grüne Ideologie außen vor lassen.

Deshalb bitte ich Sie, morgen diesem Trilogergebnis zuzustimmen, damit wir wieder Politik mit Maß und Mitte gestalten können, denn kluger Umweltschutz mit der Industrie – das funktioniert, aber gegen die Industrie – das wird schwierig.

Christel Schaldemose, for S&D-Gruppen. – Hr. formand! Hvert år dør der mere end 300 000 europæere som følge af luftforurening. En del af denne luftforurening kommer fra vores transportsektor. Vi havde chancen for at gøre noget ved det, men vi har forpasset den chance. Vi kunne have haft en ambitiøs aftale. Det har vi ikke fået. Vi kunne have stillet færre krav til bilindustrien. Vi er endt med nærmest ikke at stille nogen til dem. Jeg synes, det er utroligt ærgerligt, at vi misser denne mulighed for at gøre noget ved det. Vi tager ikke med Euro 7-normerne det nødvendige opgør med vores luftforurening, og jeg frygter, at fordi vi ikke leverer her i huset, så ender vi med at lægge kravene over på vores borgmestre i de større byer i Europa. Det bliver simpelthen sådan i fremtiden, at det vil være svært at få lov at køre ind i en stor by med en benzin- eller diesebil, fordi vi ikke har fået strammet reglerne i tilstrækkelig grad. Så kommer de til at lukke af for det, og så har vi faktisk problemer med den frie bevægelighed. Vi kunne have løst det her, men vi valgte ikke at gøre det. Jeg tror, vi kommer til at se masser af miljøzoner i fremtiden, som så gør, at man lokalt i byerne trods alt prøver at gøre noget. Jeg er skuffet over dette hus, men jeg er i den grad også skuffet over Kommissionen. Kommissionen valgte ikke at kæmpe for sit eget gode forslag. De tog ikke kampen op. De accepterede bare, at bilindustrien endte med at syntes, at det her ville være så forfærdeligt. Jeg er dybt skuffet over, at Kommissionen ikke påtog sig sit ansvar. Jeg kommer til at stemme nej til aftalen, fordi jeg gerne vil støtte EU-borgernes helbred. Det gør vi ikke med denne lovgivning.

Susana Solís Pérez, *en nombre del Grupo Renew*. – Señor presidente, señora comisaria, después de largas negociaciones, por fin, vamos a aprobar hoy una norma Euro 7 con la que debemos estar todos muy satisfechos.

Una propuesta sensata con tiempos de implementación realistas y que mejora la calidad del aire. Se regulan por primera vez las partículas finas —las más perjudiciales para la salud— y también las emisiones de frenos y ruedas y la durabilidad de las baterías. Y esto sin que suponga más costes para los ciudadanos ni inversiones extras innecesarias; sin que suponga el fin de los coches pequeños y sin que suponga un impedimento a la competitividad europea, que está en juego, como hemos visto la semana pasada, por la competencia desleal de China.

Por tanto, les pedimos que apoyen esta propuesta porque la Unión Europea no puede dar más la espalda a los ciudadanos que necesitan sustituir sus coches viejos y contaminantes por otros limpios y asequibles. La Unión Europea no puede poner más palos en las ruedas a un sector que necesita transformarse muy rápido, invertir en tecnología y ganar la carrera de la electrificación. Hoy están en juego la salud, la economía, los empleos y nuestra autonomía estratégica.

Bas Eickhout, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – Mr President, colleagues, Commission, thank you, we are standing here for a pretty disappointing deal, to be very honest. We all know that the most effective way of dealing with pollution is source policies – making sure that at the source, we are reducing it, and we are hardly doing that in this deal.

First of all, and this is a question to the Commission on the cars, or the light duty vehicles: it is the same as Euro 6. So can you not just now already say that you are not going to use Euro 7 and just call it what it is? It's Euro 6. If not, then probably we need your green claims proposal because it will be greenwashing by pretending that we are cleaning up the cars more, although they are not. So let me be very clear on that.

But secondly, by failing at the European level with these very efficient source policies, we are pushing all the responsibilities to local communities and to local governments. In the cities, they will be forced to act on it, because it is the people that are breathing bad air in those cities and it is partly because of road transport. And this means that we are now pushing the responsibility to the local governments to put in 'Umwelt zones' and all that.

And then, of course, the same politicians here agreeing with this will start complaining about it. But that is the result of complacency here, we are pushing the responsibility to there where they can hardly act. And that is a failure of this proposal. So the Greens will vote against it.

Kosma Złotowski, *w imieniu grupy ECR*. – Panie Przewodniczący! Ambicje klimatyczne Unii Europejskiej mają swoją konkretną cenę i to dość wysoką, której ostatecznie nie zapłacą urzędnicy Komisji czy aktywiści klimatyczni, ale przedsiębiorcy i obywatele. Transport to jeden z najważniejszych sektorów gospodarki. Nie tylko sam tworzy miejsca pracy i generuje zyski, ale zabezpiecza dostawy dla przemysłu i handlu. Dla Polski to jedna z kluczowych branż sektora usług. Nowe normy emisji dla samochodów ciężarowych i pojazdów dostawczych to przede wszystkim koszt, który może być zabójczy dla małych i średnich firm zmuszonych do wymiany floty. Starsze pojazdy zgodne z normą Euro 6 będą z pewnością obciążane dodatkowymi opłatami i wypychane z dróg i miast. Dotyczy to także samochodów osobowych.

Skuteczność tego rodzaju przepisów sama w sobie też jest wątpliwa, czego dowiodła afera dieselgate i co zresztą widzimy z drugiej strony w klimacie, w którym pożądane zmiany oczywiście nie następują. Dzisiaj już wiemy, że za fasadą Zielonego Ładu kryją się ogromne koszty. Kryzys gospodarczy i uzależnienie Europy od produktów z ... (Przewodniczący odebrał mówcy głos)

Sylvia Limmer, *im Namen der ID-Fraktion*. – Herr Präsident! Es ist erfreulich, dass sich zum wiederholten Mal auch bei der Euro 7-Norm fraktionsübergreifend Mehrheiten formieren konnten, die anstatt grüner Ideologie und Visionen zumindest teilweise Maß und Mitte für die Autoindustrie wahren konnten und damit letztendlich auch verbraucherfreundlich sind, denn es wären gerade die Autos im niedrigen Preissegment gewesen, die mit dem ursprünglichen EU-Kommissionsentwurf eine massive Verteuerung erfahren hätten.

Und dass wir uns mit den strengeren Anforderungen an die Haltbarkeit von Antriebsbatterien durchsetzen konnten, ist ebenfalls ein Erfolg, und damit sind wir dem Ziel, die regulatorische Bevorzugung von E-Autos zu beenden, auch ein Stück näher.

Verpflichtende Bordüberwachungssysteme und strengere Grenzwerte für LKW und Busse lehnen wir zwar ab, aber es ist natürlich eine Tatsache, dass es im Grunde nicht wirklich um die Reduzierung von Schadstoffemissionen ging, denn die haben sich in den letzten 30 Jahren bei Stickoxiden um 70 % verringert, obwohl sich die zugelassenen Fahrzeuge verdoppelt haben. Ziel bei der Umsetzung der sogenannten Mobilitätswende des Grünen Deals war immer ein beschleunigtes Ende des Verbrennungsmotors.

Daher überwiegt bei dieser Abstimmung die Tatsache, dass mit der Zustimmung zu diesem Euro 7-Kompromiss die völlig realitätsfernen Grenzwerte der EU-Kommission vom Tisch sind, und wir werden diesem Vorschlag zustimmen.

Nikolaj Villumsen, for The Left-Gruppen. – Hr. formand! Kære kollegaer, som skyggeordfører må jeg sige det, som det er. Denne aftale, vi nu skal stemme om, er en falliterklæring! En falliterklæring i kampen for renere luft til europæerne. Den sætter bilindustriens kortsigtede profit over hensynet til sundhed og miljø. Det er ren greenwashing, at man uden reelle forbedringer til den 15 år gamle lovgivning nu vil kalde det Euro 7-standard frem for Euro 6. Det er falsk markedsføring. Så enkelt kan det siges. Men det handler desværre ikke kun om ord. Den triste sandhed er, at denne aftale vil koste menneskeliv i de europæiske storbyer. Denne aftale vil betyde, at mennesker mister livet, fordi bilindustriens interesser er sat over menneskeliv. Derfor stemmer jeg imod aftalen, og jeg vil opfordre jer alle til at gøre det samme. Vi kan gøre det bedre. Vi kan genforhandle denne aftale. Vi kan lave en Euro 7-standard, som reelt er en Euro 7-standard, som forbedrer luften i vores storbyer, som redder menneskeliv. Kære kollegaer, vi er nødt til at sætte menneskers liv og helbred over bilindustriens aktieafkast. Alt andet er et svigt!

Edina Tóth (NI). – Elnök Úr! Az Euro7 károsanyag-kibocsátási szabványokról szóló intézményközi megállapodás jelentős siker. Ebben az intézményben szinte csodával határos, hogy a jelentéstevő realista hozzáállása révén sikerült elérni, hogy a Bizottság és a baloldal korábbi drasztikus javaslatai kikerüljenek a megállapodás végleges szövegéből. Ami bizonyos, a baloldal által erőltetett célértékek miatt az autópálya már most is az alternatív hajtású járművek fejlesztésével van elfoglalva, új szabványokkal pedig még nagyobb nyomást gyakorolnak rájuk.

Ezt egyszerűen nem engedhetjük meg, nem veszélyeztethetjük az európai versenyképességet. A károsanyagcsökkentő intézkedések bevezetése sok esetben komoly beruházásokat igényel, amely az autópálya szereplőket terheli leginkább. A jelenlegi gazdasági környezetben mindent meg kell tenni, hogy az Európai Bizottság átgondolatlan szabályozássorozata ne röhasson felesleges terheket a polgárokra és az autópályáinkra.

Ljudmila Novak (PPE). – Gospod predsednik. Spoštovana gospa komisarka, kolegice in kolegi. Države s tranzitnim prometom so še posebej izpostavljene prekomernim izpustom in toplogrednim plinom.

Zaradi tega se spreminja naše podnebje in tudi okolje. Čedalje pogostejše so naravne nesreče, ogrožena so življenja, naši domovi in narava v celoti.

Zato pozdravljam začasni dogovor o pravilih Euro 7. To je korak bliže k razogljičenju prometnega sektorja in doseganju podnebnih ciljev.

Prometa ni mogoče ustaviti, zato pa moramo storiti vse, da zmanjšamo škodo zaradi izpustov, kolikor je le v naši moči. Pri tem računamo na razvoj novih tehnologij ne samo na področju izpušnih plinov, pač pa tudi na področju zmanjšanja emisij iz zavor in pnevmatik.

S temi ukrepi spodbujamo inovacije in trajnostne tehnološke rešitve v avtomobilski industriji, računamo pa tudi na izboljšave pri motorjih na notranje izžogevanje.

Tiemo Wölken (S&D). – Herr Präsident, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Wenn ich mir das Verhandlungsergebnis zur Euro 7-Überarbeitung anschau, muss ich sagen: Da wäre noch saubere Luft nach oben gewesen.

Wir müssen feststellen, dass die Grenzwerte in der Tat nicht ausreichen, um besseren Umweltschutz und besseren Gesundheitsschutz in Europa zu verwirklichen. Noch immer sterben Tausende Menschen an den Folgen schlechter Luft in Europa und auch in Deutschland.

Ich habe heute gehört, dass dieses Ergebnis wichtig für die Industrie sei. Fakt ist aber, dass gerade die Zulieferindustrie für die Automobilindustrie technische Lösungen entwickelt hat, dafür Geld investiert hat und diese Lösungen jetzt nicht gebraucht werden. Außerdem argumentiert die CDU/CSU auch immer: „Wir brauchen gar keine starke Euro 7-Norm, denn der Verbrenner wird ja eh abgeschafft. Warum jetzt also Unternehmen noch belasten?“

Gleichzeitig diskutieren sie in ihrem Wahlprogramm aber, das Verbrenner-Aus wieder abzuschaffen und den Verbrenner weiter laufen zu lassen. Deswegen ist die Gefahr umso größer, dass mit diesen schwachen Standards mehr Menschenleben riskiert werden.

Deswegen ist dieses Ergebnis so nicht ausreichend, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen.

Andreas Glück (Renew). – Werter Herr Präsident, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Die Automobilindustrie ist im Wandel und auf dem Weg hin zur CO₂-Neutralität, und das ist teuer. Der Vorschlag der Von der Leyen-Kommission war daher völlig fehl am Platz; es hätte bedeutet, dass Geld für die Transformation gefehlt hätte. Besonders unsinnig, weil Autos dadurch ja auch teurer geworden wären und die Flottenerneuerung somit zum Erliegen gekommen wäre. Und Euro 6-Fahrzeuge sind doch nicht das Problem – wenn, dann sind es doch allenfalls die älteren Fahrzeuge, die auf der Straße sind.

Der vorliegende Text ist besser, aber ein ganz zentraler Punkt fehlt mir, und das ist das Thema der CO₂-neutralen synthetischen Kraftstoffe. Bei Euro 7 hätte man genau das gesetzlich verankern können und verankern müssen. Wenn wir dem Klimawandel wirklich entgegentreten wollen, dann dürfen wir keine Technologien von vornherein ausschließen. Der Verbrenner ist weder gut noch schlecht; es kommt darauf an, was wir darin verbrennen. Und wenn es eben CO₂-neutrale Kraftstoffe sind, ist der Verbrenner nicht das Problem, sondern Teil der Lösung.

(Der Redner ist damit einverstanden, eine Frage nach dem Verfahren der „blauen Karte“ zu beantworten.)

Tomáš Zdechovský (PPE), otázka položená zvednutím modré karty. – Pane Glücku, chtěl bych Vám položit otázku. Rozuměl jsem správně, že připouštíte tedy, že by nemuselo dojít k zákazu spalovacích motorů, pokud by se našla technologie, která by odstraňovala z výfuků těchto motorů CO₂, jako to třeba prezentovala teď nedávno Toyota? Děkuji za odpověď.

Andreas Glück (Renew), Antwort auf eine Frage nach dem Verfahren der „blauen Karte“. – Sehr geehrter Herr Kollege, genau das ist das, wofür wir seit langer Zeit kämpfen. Wenn es Möglichkeiten gibt, dass wir eine bilanzielle CO₂-Neutralität hinbekommen – das heißt, wenn synthetische Kraftstoffe verwendet werden, für deren Zusammenstellung man ja CO₂ aus der Luft benötigt; nachher, bei der Verbrennung, wird wieder CO₂ frei, aber das ist ja bilanziell null –, dann bin ich der Überzeugung, und da ist auch meine Partei der Überzeugung, dass wir genau diese Technologien zulassen müssen. Dann ist es nicht Teil des Problems, sondern dann ist der Verbrenner Teil der Lösung.

Karima Delli (Verts/ALE). – Monsieur le Président, mes chers collègues, je dois vous dire ma colère. Il y a sept ans, au sortir du «dieselgate», nous étions tous d'accord. Nous avons dit: «Plus jamais ça! Plus jamais de véhicules poubelles!» Nous avons dit: «Nous, responsables politiques, législateurs, prenons la mesure du scandale sanitaire et prenons des mesures exemplaires pour nos concitoyens.»

On parle aujourd'hui de 300 000 victimes de la pollution de l'air chaque année – 300 000 personnes! Nous sommes sept ans plus tard, et l'éléphant a accouché d'une souris. Euro 7 est une norme au rabais, qui ne change rien ou très peu. Vous le savez comme moi, c'est la dernière norme des véhicules thermiques que nous aurons, vu que l'on arrête la vente des véhicules à essence et au diesel en 2035. Dans les faits, cela veut dire que, jusqu'en 2050, nous aurons encore 100 millions de véhicules poubelles.

Vous irez expliquer votre vote dans vos campagnes électorales dans vos pays. Vous ne trouverez en aucun cas mon soutien à un tel gâchis.

(L'oratrice accepte de répondre à une question «carton bleu»)

Jean-Lin Lacapelle (ID), question «carton bleu». – Chère Madame, je rappelle tout de même que vous êtes à l'origine de l'interdiction de la vente des moteurs thermiques en 2034, ce qui va peser bien sûr en Europe. Ce sont 275 000 emplois en moins, et nos familles françaises modestes qui vont être les plus touchées.

Mais cela ne vous suffit pas, il faut qu'en 2026 on continue à contraindre nos producteurs – alors qu'il s'agit d'une filière importante, une filière d'excellence chez nous – pour qu'ils modifient leur modèle de production. Cela ne vous suffit pas. Je rappelle tout de même que dans votre peu d'imagination, c'est vous qui avez, à un moment, et heureusement cela a été rejeté... *(le Président retire la parole à l'orateur)*

Karima Delli (Verts/ALE), réponse «carton bleu». – Monsieur le député, je vous réponds: nous ne sommes pas responsables de la pollution de l'air. La pollution de l'air, elle est causée par le diesel, et, comme le dit l'OMS, «le diesel est cancérigène».

Aujourd'hui, vous parlez de la France. La France est passée de 65 000 à 79 000 morts prématurés chaque année. Vous croyez qu'on va rester les bras croisés? Non.

Quant à notre industrie automobile, je le répète, elle n'est pas aussi performante qu'elle aurait dû l'être, parce que, justement, nous sommes en concurrence avec la Chine, nous sommes en concurrence avec les États-Unis, qui, eux, ont pris le virage de la transition, notamment avec des véhicules électriques.

(Le président retire la parole à l'oratrice)

Der Präsident. – Herr Kollege, ich habe Sie nicht verstanden, ich ahne aber, was Sie gesagt haben. Wir haben klare Regeln: Es gibt blaue Karten; im Ausnahmefall kann eine weitere Nachfrage gestellt werden. Die Frau Kollegin hat im Übrigen klar zum Ausdruck gebracht, dass sie keine weitere Nachfrage akzeptiert. Das hat nichts, Herr Kollege, nichts mit Demokratie zu tun.

Ангел Джамбазки (ECR). – Г-н Председател, уважаеми колеги, наред война, наред енергийна криза, предизвикана от неразумната Ви екологична, псевдозелена политика, в момента продължавате да унищожавате автомобилната индустрия, работни места, и продължавате да правите труден живота на европейците. Продължавате да натискате за това да бъдат произведени, продавани електрически автомобили, като се правите, че не забелязвате, че все повече и повече пазарът ги отхвърля. Забележете, нивата на закупуване на тези автомобили просто намаляват, защото никой не иска да ги купи, защото не са ефективни.

Продължавате да не казвате колко би струвало производството на тези батерии, какъв е отпечатъкът върху околната среда. Продължавате да не казвате колко време ще трябва да бъде зареден един камион, за да измине 30 или 300 километра. Това, което правите, уважаеми колеги, е да работите за враговете на Европа, за враговете на ЕС, защото водите талибанска псевдозелена политика, която унищожават индустрии, която прави труден живота на европейците, ограничавате правото им на придвижване и им отнемате свободата да се движат под формата на някаква много фалшива и много загубена, и много неразумна псевдозелена политика.

Marco Campomenosi (ID). – Signor Presidente, signora Commissaria, il periodo è particolare e complesso, veniamo da una legislatura che ha legiferato molto sui temi ambientali e spesso in maniera esagerata, ideologica, molto politica.

Io accetto il fatto che ci sia stata una maggioranza in questo Parlamento molto diversa da quella che avrei voluto io, questo lo accetto, ma riconosco che su questo tema, sull'Euro 7, siamo riusciti a migliorare molto un testo iniziale, che non era assolutamente positivo.

Però vi invito a una riflessione su alcuni aspetti, su quello che è anche l'impatto sociale che veicoli sempre più costosi possono causare, perché ormai tutti i cittadini associano questa categorizzazione in Euro 5, 6, 7 ai limiti che le città impongono e sarebbe un po' assurdo e ipocrita, è stato detto anche da sinistra, che magari qualcuno riceverà delle limitazioni alla propria mobilità, non perché l'Euro 7 diminuisce le emissioni ma per altre ragioni, che non vorrei siano magari di tipo industriale.

Lo ha detto anche qualcun altro, non abbiamo avuto il coraggio, la forza o i numeri per introdurre invece un'apertura definitiva al tema dei biocarburanti. Spero che nella prossima legislatura questo potrà essere fatto, perché il grande tema, anche se oggi qua parliamo di Euro 7, è la scelta di rinunciare alla neutralità tecnologica, di andare verso un'elettrificazione forzata. È quel bando del motore a scoppio entro il 2034 che va assolutamente eliminato nella prossima legislatura.

Jörg Meuthen (NI). – Herr Präsident, werte Kollegen! Ich erlaube mir, auf zweierlei hinzuweisen. Erstens: Seit der Einführung der Euro-Norm 1992 sind die Emissionen von PKW um 90 % zurückgegangen. Jede weitere Euro-Verordnung weist aber einen immer stärker abnehmenden Grenznutzen auf. Gleichzeitig wird der Erfüllungsaufwand immer höher, bis an die Grenze der technischen Unerfüllbarkeit.

Zweitens: E-Autos sind von der Verordnung nur unzureichend umfasst. Das E-Auto ist keinesfalls so sauber, wie stets behauptet wird. Die Emissionen des E-Autos sind durch dreckige Batterieproduktion und Rohstoffförderung nur zeitlich und räumlich vorverlagert. Eine korrekte vergleichende Ökobilanz muss das berücksichtigen.

Die Idee des sauberen, gar emissionsfreien E-Autos ist ein Märchen, nichts sonst. Die neuen Anforderungen an die Batterielebensdauer von E-Autos sind zwar zu begrüßen, treffen jedoch nicht den Kern des Problems.

Deshalb in aller Deutlichkeit: Eine immer noch weitere Verschärfung der Euro-Norm im Bereich der EU ist ein ökonomisch fatales und ökologisch ineffizientes Instrument für eine im Grunde richtige Zielsetzung, ebenso wie die voreilige Entscheidung des Verbrennungsmotoren-Verbots ab 2035. Beides sind Irrwege.

Tomáš Zdechovský (PPE). – Pane předsedající, vážená paní komisařko, vážené dámy, vážení pánové, děkuji vám za tuto rozpravu. Myslím si, že ukazuje ty emoce, které jsou spojeny s normou Euro 7. Norma Euro 7 je kompromis mezi ochranou přírody a zachováním konkurenceschopnosti evropského průmyslu. Zavedení podmínky testování podle normy Euro 6 a to, že zůstane zachována, čímž se předejde vysokým nákladům pro evropský průmysl, je dobrá zpráva. Na druhou stranu se však norma Euro 6 doplní o přísnější limity na dvě nejvýznamnější látky, které znečišťují ovzduší, a to je oxid dusičitý a pevné částice. Nikdo přece nechce žít ve znečištěném prostředí, které ničí tyto látky. Norma Euro 7 tak nebude pokusem Zelených o zničení automobilového evropského průmyslu a jsem rád, že v této zprávě zvítězil zdravý rozum nad ideologií. Kéž by tento Parlament pokračoval i nadále tímto směrem.

Mohammed Chahim (S&D). – Voorzitter, terwijl wij hier in Europa de afgelopen decennia al ons geld hebben ingezet op kleine benzine- en dieselauto's, richtte China zich op de technologie van de toekomst. Ondertussen verkopen één Chinees bedrijf en één Amerikaans bedrijf – los van elkaar – meer elektrische auto's dan alle Europese merken bij elkaar opgeteld.

Om mee te doen aan die Europese, elektrische toekomst moet de Europese auto-industrie weer gaan leiden in plaats van volgen, want met dit tempo zullen mensen straks geen Europese auto's meer kopen. Het lijkt erop dat deze wereldwijde verandering niet is meegenomen in de Euro 7-verordening.

Is dit het ambitieniveau dat we nodig hebben als signaal naar de auto-industrie? Is dit hoe we ervoor gaan zorgen dat de Europeanen weer leven in schone lucht? Is dit waarmee wij de inhaalslag gaan maken? Ik vrees dat, als we niet snel het roer omgooien, het antwoord op deze vragen niet heel positief is.

Ondřej Kovařík (Renew). – Pane předsedající, paní komisařko, norma Euro 7 je další pomník zelených ambicí této Komise a smutná vzpomínka na jejího bývalého místopředsedu Timmermanse. Z dnešního pohledu je norma Euro 7 pro emise automobilů regulace, kterou nepotřebujeme. Původní návrh Komise byl špatný, nerealistický a neproveditelný a po všech možných úpravách je z něj dnes text, který v podstatě kopíruje v současnosti platné normy Euro 6. Proč tedy regulovat něco, co již dnes platí? Mohli jsme alespoň využít příležitost a skrze toto nařízení napravit chybu, která nastala při schválení zákazu prodeje nových aut se spalovacími motory po roce 2035. Bohužel všechny návrhy na další pokračování spalovacích motorů, včetně těch na využití jiných druhů paliv, například CO₂ neutrálních, byly zamítnuty. A to je škoda. Namísto toho přicházíme s dalšími požadavky, které konečnou cenu aut v Evropě znovu navýší. Průmysl v Evropské unii, včetně toho automobilového, zatěžujeme stále více regulací a nahráváme tak konkurentům, třeba z Číny. Udělejme raději tlustou čáru za těmito nevydařenými pokusy a zaměřme se na to, jak evropský průmysl a jeho konkurenceschopnost raději posílit.

Michael Bloss (Verts/ALE). – Herr Präsident, sehr geehrte Damen und Herren! Das ist ein *loser*-Gesetz. Es ergibt Sinn, einen Standard zu haben, der anspruchsvoll ist, die Luftqualität spürbar verbessert, aber realisierbar bleibt. Das sind die Worte des Chefs des weltweiten größten Automobilzulieferers, Bosch. Und was auf dem Tisch liegt, ist nichts davon – es ist anspruchslos, es gibt keine Verbesserung der Standards und der Luftqualität.

Und es zeigt den Kern des Problems: Sie zweifeln, zögern, Sie halten an alter, fossiler Technologie fest, und wir verlieren den Anschluss. Damit geben wir den Vorsprung der europäischen Automobilindustrie auf, denn stehenbleiben heißt zurückbleiben. Bald werden die Standards in China gemacht und nicht mehr hier im Europäischen Parlament.

Wenn das Ihr *Industrial Deal* ist, dann gute Nacht. Wirtschaftspolitik heißt nicht, die Hände in den Schoss legen, Wirtschaftspolitik heißt, Erfindergeist ermöglichen, Neues fördern, modernisieren und vorne bleiben. Sie verpassen unsere Chance!

Philippe Olivier (ID). – Monsieur le Président, l'Union européenne devait être une organisation entre les nations. Son Parlement est devenu le bureau des normes d'un État unitaire centralisé. Après l'interdiction des voitures thermiques en 2035 et le bannissement des véhicules dans les zones urbaines, la Commission européenne avait projeté, avec cette norme Euro 7, un nouveau tour de vis prétendument écologique et en réalité dirigé contre notre industrie automobile. Votre jusqu'au-boutisme aurait signifié un surcoût de 2 000 euros pour les voitures et de 12 000 euros pour les véhicules lourds. Il aurait contraint le groupe Renault à la fermeture de quatre de ses usines.

Sous la pression des Verts, en effet, vous avez adopté une logique «décroissantiste». Vous promettiez l'Europe-puissance, vous ne proposez que l'Europe-décroissance. Une décroissance que l'instinct de vie des peuples les pousse à refuser. Devant les oppositions qui s'expriment, y compris maintenant dans votre propre majorité, vous êtes obligés d'édulcorer ce texte. Nous nous en félicitons. Mais, tout comme la révolte agricole en Europe, vous devez voir dans ce repli imposé un avertissement solennel.

Петър Витанов (S&D). – Необходимостта от допълнителни мерки за намаляване на въглеродните емисии и подобряване на качеството на въздуха е безспорна. Въздухът в моя роден град е един от най-замърсените в Европейския съюз, което води до стотици смъртни случаи всяка година. Законодателството Евро 7 предлага строги стандарти за емисии за превозни средства, целящи борба със замърсяването на въздуха и смекчаване на ефектите от изменението на климата.

Въпреки че амбицията за тази цел е похвална, ние трябва да гарантираме, че тези разпоредби не натоварват непропорционално онези, които вече едва се борят да свържат двата края. Липсата на адекватни мерки за подкрепа по пътя на зеления преход може допълнително да изостри социалноикономическите неравенства. Не можем да пренебрегнем и потенциалното въздействие на разпоредбите Евро 7 върху малкия бизнес, особено този в селските райони, където достъпът до обществен транспорт е силно ограничен.

И докато напредваме с новите стандарти Евро 7, нека чрез доклада изпратим сигнал, че амбициозните, но и необходими цели за намаляване на емисиите трябва да бъдат постигнати по адекватен начин, изграждащ по-устойчиво и справедливо бъдеще за всички граждани.

Jutta Paulus (Verts/ALE). – Herr Präsident, Frau Kommissarin, meine Damen und Herren! Lieber Sascha, herzlichen Glückwunsch! Sie haben es geschafft, die wahrscheinlich letzte Chance, die europäische Automobilindustrie wenigstens noch ein paar Jahre wettbewerbsfähig zu halten, abzuräumen. Denn einer der wichtigsten Absatzmärkte – China – hat längst strengere Grenzwerte verabschiedet, womit die mit dem wunderbaren neuen Euro 7-Standard ausgezeichneten Autos in China unverkäuflich sein werden.

Und an CDU, CSU und FDP, die dieses Trauerspiel mitmachen: Sie haben argumentiert, man dürfe ja der Industrie jetzt keine neuen Standards setzen, weil 2035 ja ohnehin nur emissionsfreie Neuwagen auf den Markt gebracht werden dürften und sich die notwendigen Investitionen ja dann gar nicht amortisieren würden. Das klingt erst mal plausibel.

Jetzt haben Sie aber letzte Woche die Katze aus dem Sack gelassen und ein Programm beschlossen, dass Sie das Verbrenner-Aus rückgängig machen wollen. Und wenn Sie jetzt immer noch dieses grandiose *greenwashing* hier veranstalten – denn Euro 7 ist ja nicht besser als Euro 6 –, dann zeigen Sie, dass Ihnen die Gesundheit der Bürgerinnen und Bürger und auch die Probleme der Städte egal sind, weil die Städte werden dann wieder Fahrverbote verhängen müssen, um die Grenzwerte einzuhalten. Es versteht sich von selber, dass wir ...

(Der Präsident entzieht der Rednerin das Wort.)

Spontane Wortmeldungen

Maria Grapini (S&D). – Domnule președinte, doamnă comisar, stimați colegi, cred că s-a plecat de la o premisă greșită, Comisia a plecat de la o premisă greșită: că protecția mediului, *Green Dealul*, este în opoziție cu politica industrială. Nu, nu trebuie să fie nici politica industrială împotriva politicii de mediu și nici invers. Totuși, trebuie să ținem cont că trecerea de la o tehnologie la alta are nevoie de o perioadă de tranziție și faptul că vrem să facem monocolor – o singură tehnologie – va duce la o problemă enormă în piața internă și la cetățeni, care nu-și vor putea cumpăra noile mașini scumpe, și la industrie.

Comparația pe care o fac colegii aici cu China – cine poluează mai mult, Uniunea Europeană sau China? China da, trebuie să ia măsuri să diminueze poluarea, Statele Unite trebuie să ia măsuri, India. Uniunea Europeană poluează cel mai puțin și nu putem distruge o industrie. Avem și o strategie de politică industrială. De ce nu se ține cont de această strategie de politică industrială? Cred că corectarea pe care a făcut-o Parlamentul cu Consiliul este de echilibru.

Silvia Sardone (ID). – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, tutto il settore delle moto e delle auto italiano contribuisce alle emissioni di CO₂ nel mondo per lo 0,4 %.

Con questo provvedimento Euro 7 chiedete maggiori investimenti e nuovi costi, che finiranno sui consumatori; si stima già un aumento di circa 2 000 euro di costi per ogni autovettura. Inoltre, nuovi limiti di accesso nelle nostre città. Questa non è sostenibilità ambientale, è suicidio.

L'elettrico è una delle possibilità, ma non è l'unica; noi siamo per la libertà di scelta. L'Europa chiede sacrifici enormi al settore delle auto, mentre la Cina si prende fette di mercato con auto e batterie elettriche, fatte come? Fatte in centrali a carbone. Ecco, io chiederei semplicemente un po' più di coerenza anche a quest'Aula.

Andrey Novakov (PPE). – Mr President, I think that we can finally vote in favour of environmental related legislation with a clear conscience, because finally this report is balanced and taking into consideration the position of the industry and those who are employed there. Millions of jobs are affected by this legislation.

So I believe, thanks to the EPP shadow rapporteur, this report was balanced and takes into consideration what is possible and what is not. This Parliament voted in favour of banning petrol and diesel engines in 2035. And a few years before that, we have a proposal to create even higher requirements for these engines, while we can use this technology for a few years and we cannot get enough profit to cover the research and innovation necessary for this technology to be invented.

So I think a good balance was reached, and I call colleagues to support it because we cannot be clean and ask the people to be poor because of that.

Isabella Tovaglieri (ID). – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, cinque anni fa un'utilitaria a benzina costava 15 000 euro, oggi l'equivalente elettrica ne costa 40 000.

Tra le tante eurofolle votate da questa maggioranza di sinistra, sicuramente lo stop ai motori endotermici nel 2035 è la più iniqua impopolare ed ingiusta. È una misura elitaria che potranno permettersi solo pochi privilegiati che vivono nelle ZTL tanto care alle amministrazioni di sinistra.

Ma la realtà, cari colleghi, è ben diversa fuori da quest'Aula. La maggioranza dei cittadini, infatti, usa l'auto come un bene necessario e primario, senza il quale non può andare al lavoro.

Ebbene, colleghi, qui ad essere inquinata purtroppo non è l'aria a causa delle emissioni delle auto, ma solo l'atteggiamento ideologico che sta portando a smantellare l'intera nostra manifattura e con essa migliaia di posti di lavoro in favore di paesi stranieri come la Cina, che grazie a questi miopi politiche ci invaderanno di auto elettriche e anche a motore endotermico prodotti senza... *(il Presidente toglie la parola all'oratrice)*

(Ende der spontanen Wortmeldungen)

Elisa Ferreira, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, honourable Members of Parliament, on behalf of the Commission I wish to thank you for this debate.

Let me repeat and insist on the importance of this regulation and how critical it is for it to have a smooth adoption so that it can enter into force very soon. We need Euro 7 to deliver on our zero pollution objectives, while maintaining the competitiveness of our automotive industry and providing our citizens with improved air quality in cities and affordable mobility – and we need it now.

Alexandr Vondra, *rapporteur*. – Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much. It was very interesting debate. Just I noticed there were three different areas of remarks. One deals with the healthcare and the impact on the health in the cities, that this proposal, which we modified from the original proposal by the Commission, does not contribute to improving of the air quality. And that's not true, because it introduced the stricter NO_x limit for the buses and heavier cars. And this is the largest source of the problem.

On the contrary, if we accept the original proposal, it would have even paradoxically devastating impact on the environment and the air quality, because the poor people, who would not have enough money to purchase new electric cars, and the automotive industry would squeeze out from the fleets the combustion cars already now, then this famous Havana effect will show up.

Second remarks relates to the issue of technological neutrality, synthetic fuels, etc. Yes, I was in favour of including this, but simply there was a matter of fact that in this building there was not a majority for this. And even we had not the majority in the Council. So if you ask me as the rapporteur, I would wish to include this because I'm in favour of developing the combustion cars further with synthetic fuels and following the path of the technological neutrality. But to complete the job, we need a different Parliament.

So let me conclude again that, despite all those doubts, I urge you to vote in favour of this, because this is the reasonable compromise which guarantees the balance between the environment and the interest of the industry, as well as the interest of the customers.

Der Präsident. – Die Aussprache ist damit geschlossen.

Die Abstimmung findet heute, am Mittwoch, 13. März 2024, statt.

(Die Sitzung wird um 16.44 Uhr unterbrochen.)

PRESIDÊNCIA: PEDRO SILVA PEREIRA

Vice-Presidente

15. Återupptagande av sammanträdet

(A sessão é retomada às 17h01)

Karen Melchior (Renew). – Mr President, colleagues, you may remember that, in December 2021, Daria Navalnaya was received in this Parliament to receive the Sakharov Prize on behalf of her father. Together with her, she had Leonid Volkov, the chief of staff of Alexei Navalny. Yesterday evening, you may have heard that he was brutally attacked by a thug outside his house with a hammer, trying to break his leg and break his arm. Fortunately, Leonid Volkov is unrestricted by fear and is continuing his work.

We cannot allow Russian thugs to threaten and attack opposition politicians in Europe. Europe must be a place of freedom and protection for opposition politicians and activists from the world. Our Member States must up the protection of activists and political refugees in Europe against Russian interference and Russian attacks. We will not be made afraid!

(Loud applause)

16. Omröstning

Presidente. – Passamos agora à votação.

16.1 Typgodkännande av motorfordon och motorer med avseende på utsläpp och batteriers hållbarhet (Euro 7) (A9-0298/2023 – Alexandr Vondra) (omröstning)

16.2 Tillfälliga handelsliberaliseringsåtgärder som kompletterar de handelsmedgivanden som är tillämpliga på ukrainska produkter enligt associeringsavtalet mellan EU/Euratom och Ukraina (A9-0077/2024 – Sandra Kalniete) (omröstning)

– Before the vote:

Johannes Hahn, Commission. – Mr President, honourable Members, I wish to thank the rapporteur, Ms Kalniete, and the shadow rapporteurs for their constructive approach to the Commission proposal.

The Commission believes its proposal strikes the right balance between continuing our unwavering trade support for Ukraine, while safeguarding the interests of farmers in the European Union.

The proposal notably includes a significantly strengthened safeguard mechanism for the imports of products covered by the regulation, including an emergency brake for eggs, poultry and sugar, stabilising imports at average levels imported in 2022 and 2023.

Furthermore, to provide further reassurance to concerns as regards the strong increase of grains from Ukraine, the Commission wishes to make the following statement on the monitoring of the imports of grains from Ukraine: Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has disrupted pre-existing supply chains. The EU is providing support to Ukraine to resume normal flow of grain and other goods, especially through the Solidarity Lanes, and to ensure that exports of grain can reach the destination, including in particular in third countries and third markets, to support global food security.

The Commission is committed to supporting Ukraine while also preserving the interests of the EU grain producers and ensuring a proper functioning of the grain market in the European Union. Given the importance of grain production and grain markets, the Commission will pay particular attention to the monitoring of imports of grain. In its regular dialogue with Ukraine, the Commission will address any issues brought to light by the monitoring.

The Commission recalls that imports from Ukraine can be subject to surveillance under Chapter IV of Regulation (EU) 2015/478 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2015 on common rules for imports, which can take the form of import licensing, if the trend in imports threatens to cause injury to Union producers, and if the interests of the Union so require. In this regard, the Commission will be ready to use the tools at its disposal as needed.

The Commission will continue to report regularly to the Member States on the results of the regular dialogue with Ukraine. For products covered by autonomous trade measures, the Commission recalls that the regulation also provides for a reinforced safeguard mechanism and is ready to activate it in the event of adverse effects on the market for one or several Member States.

This statement will be included in the minutes of the plenary part-session. By supporting this file, the Union will send a strong message of continued support to Ukraine in these difficult times.

Commission statement

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has disrupted pre-existing supply chains. The EU is providing support to Ukraine to resume normal flow of grain and other goods, especially through the Solidarity Lanes, and to ensure that exports of grain can reach their destination, including in particular in third markets, to support global food security.

The Commission is committed to supporting Ukraine while also preserving the interest of the EU grain producers and ensuring a proper functioning of the grain market in the EU.

Given the importance of grain production and grain markets, the Commission will pay particular attention to the monitoring of imports of grain. In its regular dialogue with Ukraine, the Commission will address any issues brought to light by the monitoring. The Commission recalls that imports from Ukraine can be subject to surveillance under Chapter IV of Regulation (EU) 2015/478 of the European Parliament and the Council of 11 March 2015 on common rules for imports, which can take the form of import licensing, if the trend in imports threatens to cause injury to Union producers and if the interests of the Union so require. In this regard, the Commission will be ready to use the tools at its disposal as needed. The Commission will continue to report regularly to Member States on the results of the regular dialogue with Ukraine.

For products covered by ATMs, the Commission recalls that the Regulation also provides for a reinforced safeguard mechanism and is ready to activate it in the event of adverse effects on the market of one or several Member States.

Bernd Lange, *Chair INTA*. – Mr President, I would ask the House to refer it back to the committee to start negotiations with the Council.

Sandra Kalniete, *rapporteur*. – Mr President, I would like to strengthen what the Chair of the INTA Committee said and to request the matter of the amendments to be referred back to the committee pursuant to the Rule 59(4).

Presidente. – Yes, thank you very much. The same request has already been made by our colleague Bernd Lange. In fact, it was already voted as well.

Sandra Kalniete, *rapporteur*. – Mr President, I'm more precise because the president of the committee asked for the negotiations with the Council. We still need to go back to the committee.

16.3 Tillfälliga handelsliberaliseringsåtgärder som kompletterar de handelsmedgivanden som är tillämpliga på moldaviska produkter enligt associeringsavtalet mellan EU/Euratom och Moldavien (A9-0079/2024 – Markéta Gregorová) (omröstning)

16.4 Den europeiska planeringsterminen för samordning av den ekonomiska politiken 2024 (A9-0063/2024 – René Repasi) (omröstning)

16.5 Den europeiska planeringsterminen för samordning av den ekonomiska politiken: sysselsättningsprioriteringar och sociala prioriteringar för 2024 (A9-0050/2024 – Dragoş Pîslaru) (omröstning)

16.6 Riktlinjerna för budgeten för 2025 – Avsnitt III (A9-0068/2024 – Victor Negrescu) (omröstning)

16.7 Resolutionsförslag – Närmare förbindelser mellan EU och Armenien och behovet av ett fredsavtal mellan Azerbajdzjan och Armenien (RC-B9-0163/2024) (omröstning)

Presidente. – O período de votação está encerrado.

(A sessão é suspensa às 17h47.)

17. Återupptagande av sammanträdet

(The sitting resumed at 17.50)

18. Finansiella regler för unionens allmänna budget (omarbetning) (debatt)

Presidente. – Segue-se o debate sobre o relatório da Deputada Monika Hohlmeier e do Deputado Nils Ušakovs, em nome da Comissão dos Orçamentos e da Comissão do Controlo Orçamental, sobre a proposta de regulamento do Parlamento Europeu e do Conselho relativo às disposições financeiras aplicáveis ao orçamento geral da União (reformulação)

(COM(2022)0223 - C9-0179/2022 - 2022/0162(COD)) (A9-0180/2023).

Monika Hohlmeier, rapporteur. – Mr President, Commissioner, colleagues, at the beginning, I would like to thank all my colleagues first; Nils Ušakovs is my colleague who has worked together with me as Co-rapporteur excellently, thank you very much, and all the shadow rapporteurs.

The Financial Regulation is a single rulebook for budget implementation and can be considered one of the backbones of the EU budget. The recast of the Financial Regulation was necessary to provide more flexibility, offer simplified cost options, reduce administrative burden for small and medium-sized companies and grant applicants, and build on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic.

We also saw that there is a strong need to increase transparency about beneficiaries, and lay down the foundation for an IT system that allows the tracking and tracing of EU funds appropriate for the 21st century. It also was the time to expand the level of protection to shared management, making sure that criminals and fraudsters cannot easily apply in one Member State and then try it in another one.

The negotiations were not easy at times, and may I say thank you very much to the Commissioner and to General Director Stéphanie Riso who supported strongly the Parliament and the negotiation team to get to finalise the talks. Let me go a bit into the detail of what we have achieved.

First, it is the interoperable IT system. The first step is the mandatory data feeding of ARACHNE in an interoperable IT system for targeted data search, tracking of funds and risk assessment for programmes. The use of the system remains voluntary; however, many Member States are already using the system, so in a few years they will provide the required data for the practical reasons. The administrative burden on Member States' authorities will decrease a lot, bringing transparency up and allowing the Commission to effectively track beneficiaries.

Simplification was a second goal, introducing a very low value grant up to EUR 15 000 with simplified documentation, and reducing significantly documentation for small grant requests. We are asking the Commission to implement it quickly.

Then the EDES system, a targeted extension of the EDES system to shared management as of 1 January 2028. It was astonishing that the Member States were so reluctant to support this idea.

Secondly, the next point was increased transparency in Article 38 by expanding the financial transparency system, explicitly stating the respect of the values of the EU Charter Article 2 in the horizontal principles, in Article 6 when implementing the EU budget. While this should be an obvious point, it has been missing from the Financial Regulation.

Then, the last point – recital on ‘gold plating’ – we have so much bureaucracy created by Member States because they are overregulating and their over-bureaucratisation.

On a final note, I want to stress that some of these changes will only apply from the new MFF onwards. But it is really a good step in the right direction. Thank you again to the Commissioner and Stéphanie Riso for the support and for the really qualitative, very good work.

Nils Ušakovs, rapporteur. – Mr President, dear Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, since the beginning of this parliamentary mandate, we have been preparing the work on this file and eagerly awaited this moment to finally adopt a revised Financial Regulation.

Let me be clear: this revision was long overdue. It is remarkable that it took so much time. Parliament was united and ready from the very beginning. The multiannual financial framework is in place. We see substantial increase in funds, Corona reconstruction funds, NextGenerationEU. That is why our vision on what is needed to be done was so clear: transparency spending such large sums of money.

However, despite our clear commitment, we have encountered hesitation from Member States, it seems, when it comes to strengthening the control of these enormous funds, expanding special control systems like the early-detection and exclusion system to be fully applicable to all funds without exception.

Member States are reluctant both to empower the Parliament to fulfil its role as budgetary and budgetary control authority, and to trust the Commission, who is in charge of the implementation of the programmes. This needs improvement, and I can assure you that Parliament will keep insisting on being granted a role in structuring the EU budget, but also for obtaining full control over how funds are allocated.

Despite several points of contention with the Council, we could significantly advance in this legislation. One such achievement is emphasis on decent working conditions and the protection of workers' rights. Social standards in the Financial Regulation are a novelty and a monumental step forward. Now any entities seeking funding from EU programmes must uphold the right to decent working conditions in accordance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights. To put it simple, businesses that fail to respect workers' social rights will not receive any money from Europe. You pay wages in envelopes. No EU money.

We do not tolerate grey economies at the expense of taxpayers and their welfare, and we refuse to support shameful labour practices with European taxpayers money. This is a new general standard applicable to all European funds and not just specific programmes. There are millions of working people across our Union earning hard their money, and protecting their rights should be equally important as environmental or economic goals.

Another significant step forward in strengthening our financial framework was to ensure alignment with the Rule of Law Conditionality Regulation. By aligning with the Rule of Law Conditionality Regulation and emphasising the importance of respecting Union values and fundamental rights, we are reinforcing our commitment to accountability, transparency and the rule of law. We aim for a legislation that is uniform and loophole-free to maintain the trust of our citizens in a democratic European Union.

Through the revised Financial Regulation, we send a clear message: whoever fails to comply with rule of law conditionality will face consequences. We do not give money to those who do not respect our values and fundamental rights.

I would like to close this address with gratitude to my co-rapporteur Monika Hohlmeier. It was really fantastic experience. I would like to thank Commissioner Hahn for the work you've done as an honest broker, getting us with the Council and Member States and getting this revision done. And, of course, thanks to your fantastic team and to the director. I would like also to express gratitude to the Spanish Presidency, which is not right now in the plenary, but we managed to do this.

Johannes Hahn, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, rapporteurs and honourable Members, first of all, I would like to thank you on your great cooperation and flexibility for reaching political agreement on the revision of the Financial Regulation. It was really a team effort, and we should be proud of what we have achieved. It was not always an easy road, but in the end we reached this goal together and it was set by the two rapporteurs.

In that particular so-called trilogue there was an unusually close cooperation between Parliament and the Commission to convince very often the Council on what is necessary, what is possible, what is feasible and what is finally necessary in order to make things happen and to improve also the situation when it comes to financial matters.

Therefore, I think we should take a moment to look at the major advances that were agreed. The Commission proposal contains several hundred changes to the Financial Regulation and finally we managed indeed to find common ground on most of them. The final text contains very important improvements for EU citizens, beneficiaries and partners of the Union budget. We will better protect the Union budget because one of the biggest achievements, and it was already mentioned by Monika Hohlmeier, has been reached due to the extension of the early-detection and exclusion system – the famous EDES – to shared management starting from 1 January 2028. This date is definitely a compromise. It is not the date we wanted to have, but we have to accept it.

The 70 % of the Union budget not covered by this protection tool today will also be protected from going to beneficiaries convicted for fraud, corruption and other serious misconducts. We closed a very important loophole of the old system.

Another very important achievement is the compulsory feeding of the data-mining and risk-scoring tool for audit and control purposes as from 1 January 2028. The improved data-mining tool significantly reinforces the protection of the Union budget. However, let us not forget the next step for taking this protection to an even higher level to also make the use of the improved tool compulsory in the next MFF.

We will have more transparency for the public on who gets Union funding, because our improved financial transparency system means that information on beneficiaries of Union funding will no longer be fragmented over different websites, but concentrated in a single place. This ensures that citizens will be able to easily find information on the use of the Union budget. There will be less administrative burden for beneficiaries of Union funding and implementing partners. We achieved a lot of simplifications for grants and direct management. One such achievement is the introduction of a new category of very low value grants, following the Parliament's request.

We will have clear rules for handling financing in crisis situation. Public procurement rules in cases of crisis will allow us to react more quickly, including on behalf of Member States, and rules to avoid professional conflicting interests make our procurements more credible.

We have also replied to many of this Parliament's requests. For instance, the financial regulation will include a clear reference to respect EU values and new definition of non-governmental organisations is added. And we also agreed to include new references to gender and social rights in the context of programme performance.

There are many other important achievements, such as the agreement for deducting from competition fines that are confirmed the compensation to companies seeing a competition fine annulled by the European courts.

We also have a clear legal framework for Union participation in global initiatives in areas such as health, climate and education. So once again, my services are already working to ensure that everything will be ready once the recast will enter into force. And on this particular file, again, I would like to thank the Parliament for its extremely dedicated cooperation in this issue and the things we have achieved finally together.

IN THE CHAIR: KATARINA BARLEY

Vice-President

Daniel Buda, *Raportor pentru aviz, Comisia pentru dezvoltare regională*. – Doamnă președintă, domnule comisar, doamnelor și domnilor colegi, dați-mi voie, în primul rând, să felicit raportorii pentru munca depusă. Cu toții ne dorim ca bugetul Uniunii Europene să fie cheltuit în mod eficient și responsabil, conștienți fiind de faptul că modificarea normelor financiare creează adesea incertitudini pentru beneficiari. Plecând de la lecțiile învățate din pandemia de COVID-19, Comisia propune adaptarea normelor financiare pentru a permite unei instituții a Uniunii Europene să achiziționeze bunuri și servicii în numele statelor membre în situații de criză. De asemenea, este propusă actualizarea definiției crizei pentru a include situațiile de urgență de sănătate publică.

Salutăm propunerea Comisiei, care își dorește modificarea specifică cu scopul de a se ajunge la un echilibru adecvat, axându-se pe schimbările care sunt cu adevărat necesare, astfel încât instrumentele noastre financiare să fie adaptate și eficiente, dar și să fie în măsură să răspundă provocărilor și să asigure în același timp transparența cheltuirii fondurilor europene. Așadar, aceste propuneri nu sunt doar niște ajustări tehnice, ci reflectă angajamentul nostru comun față de solidaritate, responsabilitate și protejarea intereselor cetățenilor europeni, dar și garanția că Uniunea Europeană este pregătită să facă față oricăror provocări viitoare.

Isabel García Muñoz, *en nombre del Grupo S&D*. – Señora presidenta, señor comisario, felicito a los coponentes por la gran labor realizada con la revisión del Reglamento Financiero de la Unión. Desde la Comisión de Control Presupuestario damos la bienvenida a las mejoras orientadas a la protección de los intereses financieros de la Unión, la gestión de crisis y la reducción de la carga administrativa para los beneficiarios.

Los cambios adoptados, que hemos exigido repetidamente en este Parlamento, reforzarán el control y la auditoría del presupuesto europeo y permitirán que se detecten mejor los posibles casos de fraude, corrupción y conflictos de intereses.

Destacamos que será obligado un único sistema informático con los datos de todos los beneficiarios de fondos europeos y que, además, se excluirá de cualquier procedimiento de contratación pública y de la obtención de fondos europeos a personas o entidades que hayan cometido delitos financieros graves y también a aquellas que inciten al odio o a la discriminación.

Y algo muy importante, un logro del Grupo Socialista: el presupuesto europeo, además de respetar los valores y derechos fundamentales de la Unión, deberá aplicar normas mínimas en materia social. Una buena gestión presupuestaria debe ir de la mano de una buena política social.

Moritz Körner, *im Namen der Renew-Fraktion*. – Frau Präsidentin, Herr Kommissar, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Eine Diskussion über die Haushaltsordnung gehört vielleicht nicht zu den emotionalsten Debatten, die hier im Parlament geführt werden. Aber es ist doch eine der wichtigen Debatten, denn das Grundregelwerk für unseren Haushalt muss sicherstellen, dass die Steuerzahlergelder auch da ankommen, wo sie hingehören. Das haben wir in den Verhandlungen sehr erfolgreich geschafft, deswegen möchte ich mich bei den Berichterstattern ganz herzlich bedanken.

Mit der neuen Haushaltsordnung gibt es mehr Erleichterungen auch für Empfänger von EU-Geldern, aber auch mehr Barrieren für die Betrüger bei EU-Geldern. Wir stärken somit den Rechtsstaat, wir stärken die Rolle des Parlaments, und wir stärken die Wirkungskraft des EU-Haushalts insgesamt, auch wenn Viktor Orbán darauf keine Lust hat.

Dennoch müssen wir uns fragen, ob die nächste Reform der Haushaltsordnung nicht noch substanzieller sein muss. Deutschlands Haushaltsordnung ist mit 31 Seiten eigentlich noch relativ überschaubar. Die EU-Haushaltsordnung ist mit über 200 Seiten meist recht schwer verständlich. Deshalb muss unsere Devise sein: endlich Bürokratie abbauen und dadurch einen Mehrwert schaffen – auch wenn das Ursula von der Leyen nicht möchte.

Daniel Freund, *im Namen der Verts/ALE-Fraktion*. – Frau Präsidentin, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! In der Tat könnte man hier erstmal denken, dass eine Revision der Haushaltsordnung eine ziemlich trockene Sache ist. Aber es geht hier eben ums Eingemachte. Es geht darum, welche Regeln gelten eigentlich dafür, wie wir im Jahr mehr als 180 Milliarden Euro in der Europäischen Union ausgeben. Und da muss ich einfach sagen: Die Debatte, die wir da jetzt geführt haben, und vor allen Dingen die Position der Mitgliedstaaten in dieser Debatte war doch höchst befremdlich.

Man würde ja eigentlich davon ausgehen, dass, wenn wir dieses Geld im Namen der Bürgerinnen und Bürger ausgeben, dass dann auch jeder weiß, wer dieses Geld eigentlich bekommt, dass man sehen kann, wie viel Geld geht denn z. B. an Familienmitglieder von Viktor Orbán oder an den ehemaligen Premierminister Babiš, wer bekommt eigentlich am meisten EU-Geld. Bei all diesen Sachen haben wir jetzt ein bisschen mehr Transparenz bekommen – in vier Jahren. Warum das erst 2028 in Kraft tritt? Auch das war eher eines der befremdlicheren Phänomene.

Dass die Regierungen sich in den Verhandlungen lange geweigert haben, dass Mitgliedstaaten sich gegenseitig davor warnen, dass, wenn ein bestimmtes Unternehmen, eine bestimmte Organisation schon rechtskräftig wegen Korruption verurteilt ist, man dann den anderen Ländern mal Bescheid sagt, dass man bei denen vielleicht noch mal extra hinguckt oder sie auch von öffentlichen Ausschreibungen ausschließt – auch das soll jetzt kommen, aber eben auch erst in vier Jahren. Ich finde, das hätte auch deutlich schneller gehen können.

Aber das Befremdlichste am Ende bleibt die absolute Weigerung der Mitgliedstaaten, sich, wenn es zu Betrug oder Misswirtschaft in einem Projekt gekommen ist, dann auch dafür einzusetzen, dass man sich das Geld zurückholt. Und ganz ehrlich, das kann man draußen niemandem erklären, und ich befürchte, wir werden an die Haushaltsordnung beizeiten noch einmal ranmüssen, um diese Fehler zu korrigieren.

Joachim Kuhs, *im Namen der ID-Fraktion*. – Frau Präsidentin, werter Herr Kommissar, liebe Kollegen! Als ich vor bald fünf Jahren zum ersten Mal an einer Sitzung des Haushaltsausschusses teilnahm, haben wir bereits über eine grundlegende Revision der Haushaltsordnung gesprochen. Erschreckt damals über den schieren Umfang und die Komplexität dieses Regelwerks, erschien mir dieses Vorhaben mehr als plausibel und notwendig. Heute, fast am Ende der Legislatur, stimmen wir nun nur über einige wenige Änderungen ab. Die grundlegende Revision ist immer noch in weiter Ferne, und ich wage zu bezweifeln, ob es gelingen wird, diese Überarbeitung und Anpassungen mit der Verabschiedung des nächsten MFR zu vollenden. Ich wünsche der Kommission in dieser Beziehung auf jeden Fall viel Glück dazu.

Für den Bericht gebührt Ihnen, Herr Kommissar, und auch den Berichterstatlern Dank. Es sind ja auch einige wirklich gute Änderungen eingearbeitet, wie zum Beispiel eine NGO-Definition, neue Untergrenzen, ein zentrales Informationssystem und vieles mehr.

Ich finde es aber befremdlich, dass man sich in einem solchen rein technischen Dokument nicht von ideologischen und politisch aufgeladenen Begriffen und Regelungen fernhält, damit ohne Not haushaltsrechtliche Genehmigungen mit zum Beispiel dem Respekt für die europäischen Werte verknüpft, und dadurch einer willkürlichen Behandlung von Mittelzuweisungen Tür und Tor öffnet.

Die Regelungen der Haushaltsordnung sollten ausschließlich sachlich und objektiv überprüfbare Kriterien enthalten. Nach meinem Eindruck ist das leider nicht der Fall; daher werde ich mich bei der Abstimmung enthalten. Aber das können Sie ja sicher verschmerzen, Herr Kommissar.

Ivan Vilibor Sinčić (NI). – Poštovana predsjedavajuća, Europska unija gotovo da nema vlastitih novaca, nego sve dolazi od donacija država članica. Tako je barem bilo dok se nisu počeli razvijati vlastiti resursi za financijsku omotnicu 2021. do 2027.

Zaduživanje 750 milijardi eura putem euroobveznica za Next Generation EU nisu EU fondovi, suprotno to su anti-EU fondovi jer će upravo vraćanje ovog silnog duga ugroziti ono što znamo kao EU fondove, što priznajete u brojnim dokumentima.

Ono što Komisija želi je trajno uvesti mogućnost izdavanja euroobveznica, iako nema pravo na to prema Maastrichtskom sporazumu koji to zabranjuje. To bi još više dalo moć Komisiji spram građana, a oslabila njezin položaj spram banaka. Drugim riječima, banke bi još više kontrolirale ovu organizaciju.

Zašto se uništavaju ekonomije *lockdownom*, sankcijama Rusiji i nedostatkom energije, preuzimanjem dugova Ukrajine? Zato da bi se uvalio neviđeni dug europskim građanima. A kako? Upravo pomoću još euroobveznica prema kojima će ovih 750 milijardi izgledati kao sitniš.

Radi li, dakle, Komisija za banke, žele li cijelu organizaciju uvaliti u ralje banaka i dužničko ropstvo? Tko će to plaćati? EU građani putem novih poreza, pa je tako uveden porez na plastiku, očekuje se uvođenje poreza na financijske transakcije i ugljik i tko zna još što. Bit ćemo dužni kao nacionalne države ako se ostvare ovi planovi.

Caterina Chinnici (PPE). – Signora Presidente, signor Commissario, onorevoli colleghi, aiutare le autorità nazionali ad accelerare l'impiego dei fondi UE e restare vigili, e realizzare controlli efficaci a tutti i livelli per assicurare che i fondi siano spesi secondo le regole nei tempi previsti e per il conseguimento dei risultati attesi.

Questo, in estrema sintesi, il monito contenuto nell'ultima relazione annuale della Corte dei Conti europea, e l'accordo raggiunto sulle modifiche al regolamento finanziario è un passo importante in tale direzione.

L'estensione del sistema EDES alla gestione concorrente, che copre il 70 % dei programmi UE per la tutela del bilancio contro reati come le frodi, la corruzione, il riciclaggio di denaro e, per altro verso, l'obbligatorietà dell'inserimento dei dati nel sistema ARACHNE, potranno accrescere l'efficacia dei controlli e garantire un maggiore rispetto delle regole.

L'introduzione poi di forme di semplificazione per alleggerire gli oneri, soprattutto a carico delle piccole e medie imprese, potrà contribuire ad accelerare l'impiego delle risorse; con il rafforzamento della trasparenza sui beneficiari dei fondi, attraverso la creazione di un sito web centralizzato, sarà più agevole la verifica dei risultati.

E poi, ancora maggiore certezza del diritto, con l'allineamento del regolamento finanziario al pacchetto QFP in modo da avere un codice unico per tutta la spesa dell'Unione; nuove norme in materia di appalti per una gestione più efficiente delle situazioni di crisi; digitalizzazione, i cui benefici, anche a fini di audit e controllo oltre che di riduzione della burocrazia, devono essere sfruttati appieno; trasparenza, responsabilità, efficienza, protezione degli interessi finanziari dell'Unione e quindi dei cittadini europei.

Queste le linee che devono guidare la spesa dei fondi, soprattutto in un momento difficile come quello attuale, in cui però, di contro, l'ammontare delle risorse finanziarie messe in campo dall'Unione è senza precedenti.

Ringrazio quindi in particolare i relatori, gli onorevoli Hohlmeier e Ušakovs, per l'impegno e la tenacia con cui hanno condotto e portato a termine i negoziati.

Sándor Rónai (S&D). – Elnök Asszony! A magyar kormány évek óta úgy módosítja a magyarországi törvényeket, hogy a munkavállalók egyre rosszabb, egyre kiszolgáltatottabb helyzetbe kerüljenek, elsősorban a multinacionális cégekkel szemben. Ki tudja miért, a magyar kormány úgy gondolja, hogy minél alacsonyabbak a fizetések, minél nehezebb közösen fellépni az érdekeik védelmében, minél nagyobb a multik profitja, annál jobb Magyarországnak. Ki érti ezt a furcsa és a magyar dolgozóknak szándékosan kárt okozó kormányzást?

Szerencsére itt, az Európai Unió szívében megvédik a dolgozókat. Hatalmas előrelépés, hogy ettől kezdve uniós támogatásokat csak azok kaphatnak, akik tiszteletben tartják a dolgozók szociális jogait. Az Európai Unió nem hajlandó támogatni a munkavállalókat szándékosan kiszígerelő cégeket. Minden erőmmel támogatom ezt a döntést, mert ez valódi védelmet jelent a dolgozók számára. Még sok ilyen intézkedésre van szükség. Szociáldemokrataként pedig azért fogok dolgozni, hogy a keményen dolgozó emberek a mindennapokban érezzék és élvezzék az Európai Unió védelmét és támogatását.

Katalin Cseh (Renew). – Madam President, dear colleagues, as we stepped into this Parliament in 2019, the EU's anti-fraud framework seemed like a water pistol against the forest fire, designed to address small irregularities but simply inadequate in the face of systemic corruption, like what we witnessed in Hungary. Many claimed it was impossible to change anything, but we rolled up our sleeves and got to work – and we did make breakthroughs.

Creating the rule of law mechanism stands out as a crucial reform. It shows that the EU is finally taking up a fight, and this financial regulation also improves things in the right direction. We've boosted transparency by improving our database of final beneficiaries, and we reinforced the EU's blacklist, which shockingly did not cover funds jointly managed by Member States – and now it does.

But of course there is more work ahead. Take the blacklist, for instance. It remains still too narrow in scope and too slow. It should automatically include applicants where the EU's investigations unveil fraud – and colleagues, this is the fight we are going to have in the next mandate.

Spontane Wortmeldungen

Mick Wallace (The Left). – Madam President, with this semester document, the EU has missed a golden opportunity to reform its own fiscal rules. The deal, struck in December 2023, maintains the Maastricht Treaty's 60 % debt and 3 % deficit ceilings, and this, I think, is a mistake.

Take, for example, how the current fiscal rules work in Belgium. To comply with the current rules, the Belgian Government will have to save EUR 4 billion a year for seven years, or EUR 7 billion a year for four years. This means a total of EUR 28 billion will be removed from the public spending powers and taken out of the Belgian economy up to the end of the decade.

This amounts to an attack on democracy and a hollowing out of the welfare state. It's madness that the fiscal rules imposed by the Maastricht Treaty are essentially undermining public spending still. While we encourage Member States to spend more and more on defence, we allowed the fiscal rules to reduce state support for citizens that most need them.

(Ende der spontanen Wortmeldungen)

Johannes Hahn, Member of the Commission. – Frau Vorsitzende, honourable Members, once again, a big thank you for all your efforts and contribution in reaching this final agreement. We would have not made it to the finish line without Parliament's strong support, flexibility and cooperation, and willingness, I have to say, to compromise.

I would like to extend my thanks to everyone involved in the process, who made reaching the agreement possible. I truly believe that we were able to find excellent compromises that many EU citizens, beneficiaries and implementing partners will be able to benefit from. We had a common goal, which we were able to reach. The Union budget will be more agile for times of crisis, more transparent and better protected against fraudsters.

I must also mention that the Commission has made a formal statement in relation to the data mining and risk scoring tool, and the publication of data on recipients of EU funds. This statement will be sent to Parliament's services for inclusion in the verbatim record of this debate.

Once again, thank you, and let us not do this again any time too soon, please! But if necessary, it has to be done.

Commission statement

'The Commission considers that the reference made in Article 36(10) to Article 38(1) in relation to the notion of recipients does not expand the scope of the obligations of the Member States laid down in sector-specific rules.'

Monika Hohlmeier, Berichterstatterin. – Frau Präsidentin! Wie gesagt, noch einmal ein Dankeschön an den Kommissar und für die gute Zusammenarbeit, die wir hatten. Der Kollege Körner hat es so schön ausgedrückt, dass Haushaltsordnung etwas sehr Trockenes zu sein scheint. Man kann gar nicht ahnen, welche emotionalen Ausbrüche es zum Teil gegeben hat in Bezug auf diese eigentlich sehr trockene Materie, denn wenn man die Mitgliedstaaten auf Digitalisierung anspricht und auf ihre Verwaltungsinstrumente und auf die Modernisierung, dann sind sie bemerkenswert zurückhaltend. Das ist ein sehr spannender Prozess, den wir da vollzogen haben. Noch einmal danke für die Unterstützung!

Ich habe jetzt gerade schmunzeln müssen, dass zwei Kollegen zum Europäischen Semester gesprochen haben, aber nicht zur Europäischen Haushaltsordnung. Also, wir haben uns jetzt gerade über die Haushaltsordnung unterhalten, und sie ist halt nun einmal das Instrument für den eigenen Haushalt, den wir haben, und vor allem auch für die Möglichkeiten, die wir als Parlament haben, um nachzuverfolgen: Wird das Geld richtig ausgegeben und sinnvoll ausgegeben? Und die Instrumente wollten wir stärken.

Nils Ušakovs, rapporteur. – Madam President, we have made significant efforts towards the revision of the Financial Regulation and achieved decent results in our fight to make the spending of European money more transparent, honest and effective. Still, we will be facing a number of challenges ahead. The Financial Regulation needs further improvement, as well as the way European money is spent.

A main concern in the future will still be the inability to absorb available resources, inability to select suitable projects, and inability to implement sophisticated large-scale projects. 75% of funds are managed under shared management, and we all know that the ways national authorities select projects and ensure their adequacy differ from country to country.

In Latvia, on one hand, they are concerned that a significant part of EU funds – up to EUR 500 million may just go unspent. This is a failure of the Latvian Government and the respective Ministries, and this also means huge missed opportunities for Latvian people.

On the other hand, we have examples like Rail Baltica, a high-speed rail project connecting European countries in the Baltic region, the largest European project ever in the Baltic region, worth billions of euro. And we still don't know precisely how many billions that will cost at the end of the day. And here we see another failure of the Latvian authorities that may result in another type of risks: the new railroad skipping Riga, the largest and central city in the region. At the same time, there are numerous examples of infrastructure projects related to construction and innovation, and renovation in the middle of nowhere, having zero or minimal effect.

Parliament has undertaken considerable effort to improve the way European money is spent. Much more will have to be done in the forthcoming mandates of the European Parliament.

Die Präsidentin. – Die Aussprache ist damit geschlossen.

Die Abstimmung findet am Donnerstag, 14. März 2024, statt.

19. Sammanhållningspolitiken 2014–2020 – genomförande och resultat i medlemsstaterna (debatt)

Die Präsidentin. – Als nächster Punkt der Tagesordnung folgt die Aussprache über den Bericht von Andrey Novakov im Namen des Ausschusses für regionale Entwicklung über die Umsetzung und die Ergebnisse der Kohäsionspolitik 2014–2020 in den Mitgliedstaaten (2023/2121(INI)) (A9-0049/2024).

President. – Take your time, the Commissioner is not yet there. Just take your time, but she is expected to be there within a couple minutes I think.

We are in the European Parliament and the notion of one minute can be interpreted in different manners.

Андрей Новаков, докладчик. – Г-жо Председател, надявам се, че Комисарят скоро ще бъде с нас.

Утре гласуваме 30 страници, 30 страници, които обобщават цял един мандат на комисията по регионално развитие. Доклад, който отне доста време, защото това беше мандат, който беше всичко, но не и обикновен. Той беше всичко, но не и лесен. И не, в тези 30 страници не пише, че кохезионната политика е прекрасна и невероятна, и че е безгрешна. Пише обаче, че във време на Ковид, когато Европейският съюз трябваше да спасява животи, тази политика бе единствената, която се зае с тази задача.

Точно обратното, в нашия доклад има 85 препоръки как кохезионната политика да стане по-разбираема, по-човешка, по-лесна, по-достъпна и да достигне до все повече хора в Европейския съюз, във всеки един край, във всяко село, във всяка община. Месеци наред се посветих на това да пътувам в цяла Европа заедно с делегация, с мои колеги от ЕНП, с които посещавахме емблематични проекти, финансирани от Европейския съюз. От телескопи, най-големите в света, през болници и експозитори, през инвестиции в малък и среден бизнес. Оказа се, че Европейският съюз не е измислил нищо по-добро от кохезионната политика, за да инвестира в своето развитие. Нито една криза не успя да съсипе кохезионната политика, а именно тя предлагаше решение за всяка от тях. Кохезионната политика беше най-честият заподозрян за финансиране на каквото се сетите – от боеприпаси, маски, респираторни апарати, до мерки за погасяване

на инфлацията.

Искам да кажа, че кохезионната политика не харчи, а инвестира. Всяко евро, което излиза от европейския бюджет и се инвестира в даден регион, се връща отчасти там, откъдето е дошло и подпомага всички по веригата – от нетните платци до нетните бенефициенти. Кое то означава, че такива не съществуват, има само нетни печеливши. Ще ви дам един пример и то е с газовата връзка между България и Гърция, интерконектора, който бе стартиран от едно проевропейско правителство през 2019 г., който осигурява енергийна независимост на половината континент, на цяла част от региона. Ето това е нещо, което не бихме могли да постигнем сами. Постигаме го благодарение на европейския бюджет.

Такива истории трябва да разказваме по време на предстоящата кампания, защото кохезионната политика е витрината на Европейския съюз с всичко, което сме постигнали. Колеги, не е време да дебатираме дали има кохезионна политика, а как да я направим по-силна, по-опростена и по-достъпна.

Искам да благодаря на всички политически групи за подкрепата и за това, че утре, вярвам ще получа тяхната подкрепа не просто за да оценим изминалия програмен период и всичко, което беше постигнато, но да изпратим силен сигнал към Европейската комисия и държавите членки. Кохезионната политика ще я има, докато го има и ЕС, няма да се откажем от нея. Тя съществува за това да прави живота на всеки един европеец по-добър.

Elisa Ferreira, Member of the Commission. – Madam President, dear rapporteur Andrey Novakov, honourable Members, first of all, thank you very much for this report. I find this report extremely timely and appropriate because in fact, on one hand, it provides evidence that cohesion policy works and demonstrates the value of a place-based policy. My particular thanks to the rapporteur for highlighting the results of cohesion programming during the period that is now finishing.

The report also identifies the challenges ahead, in particular demographic change, climate change and continued geopolitical instability, as well as areas of improvement and modernisation of the policy to be able to respond, to give the adequate answer to these challenges. So, I think this report makes a vital contribution to discussions on the future of the policy.

Indeed, your report, I would like to underline four elements in this report, in relation in particular to the role that we all have to address of modernising cohesion policy. First, enhancing the performance of the policy and a related second area that touches directly simplification and the ease of implementation, which by itself requires improved administrative capacity so that you can have another mode of managing the policy.

We see potential to increase effectiveness at the same time as accelerating implementation and you build on lessons learned from other European instruments, such as the Recovery and Resilience Facility funds and plans. But of course, there are certain elements that we cannot disregard or change in cohesion policy and this is the identity, main principles, long-term objectives of the policy – and they have got to be preserved.

A third aspect: enhanced links with reforms, better governance, administrative capacity need, in fact, to be seriously considered. As the report points out, some Member States' regional and local authorities, as well as other stakeholders, lack sufficient capacity to design, plan, implement, and this capacity is a precondition for performance-based programme management.

Moreover, to maximise impacts, investments must in fact be combined with reforms. Reflections should cover the scope of the reforms needed, the role of the European Semester and how Member States can play their part, their role.

A fourth element: we are considering increased flexibility for emerging challenges. Different challenges affect each region differently and cohesion policy intervention during recent crises has been indispensable. Otherwise, there would have been the collapse of a lot of regions and countries.

From the emergency response to COVID-19, to the STEP initiative, we have shown that Europe is close to the citizens, is in a solidarity mode with the citizens also in times of crisis, or in particular in times of crisis, while promoting European competitiveness in a fast-changing world.

As you know, together with you, all of you, we have done our utmost with the policies' long-term objectives not being shifted or changed to balance the policy and to adjust the policy to give adequate responses to this crisis. We continue to support long-term investments. It's are the key drivers of economic convergence, get regions out of development traps, make sure that in fact and in reality, no person is forgotten or feels forgotten.

In the coming weeks, the Commission will publish the Ninth Cohesion Report. This will raise key questions for the future, providing solid data, solid information, which is also an important basis for discussion. So, your contribution is absolutely essential. Thank you very much for it and I look forward to the exchange that will follow.

Christian Doleschal, *im Namen der PPE-Fraktion*. – Frau Präsidentin, sehr geehrte Kommissarin, sehr verehrte Abgeordnete! Mit dem heutigen Bericht setzen wir einen ersten wichtigen Meilenstein für die Zukunft der Kohäsionspolitik, und wir stellen klar: In der Europäischen Union lassen wir niemanden zurück, kein Dorf, keine Stadt, keine Region.

Wir stehen erstens für eine Kohäsionspolitik, die alle Regionen stärkt, ob in Ost- oder Westeuropa, ob in der Stadt oder auf dem Land. Unser Ziel ist es, gleichwertige Lebensverhältnisse zu schaffen; besonders ländliche Räume mit demografischen Herausforderungen haben hier zu kämpfen. Wir als EVP wollen unterstützen und den Zugang zu Fördermitteln erleichtern. Der ländliche Raum ist für uns als CSU Zukunftsraum.

Wir fordern zweitens eine Kohäsionspolitik, die auf Partnerschaft beruht. Eine wirksame und zielgerichtete Förderpolitik funktioniert nur in Zusammenarbeit mit unseren nationalen und lokalen Akteuren vor Ort, mit unseren Bürgermeistern und Landräten, die wirklich etwas bewegen. Deshalb die klare Forderung: Mehr Freiheit für alle Ebenen! Lassen Sie uns auf die Erfahrungen vor Ort vertrauen!

Wir wollen drittens eine Kohäsionspolitik, die klare Regeln und Verfahren hat. Gelder müssen gerecht und effizient verteilt werden, keine Frage; aber komplizierte und unnötige bürokratische Regeln müssen verhindert werden. Bürokratie darf nicht länger die größte Bremse erfolgreicher Förderpolitik sein.

Ich komme aus der schönen Oberpfalz im Norden Bayerns, an der Grenze zu Tschechien. Viele Vertreter kommen ebenfalls aus Grenzregionen aus ganz Europa. Sie kennen die bürokratischen Hindernisse, aber auch die strukturellen Nachteile, wenn man an einer Grenze lebt. Grenzregionen haben mit besonderen Herausforderungen umzugehen – unterschiedliche Verwaltungsräume, unterschiedliche Sprachräume –, und deshalb verlangt es nach einer besonderen Förderung. Ich freue mich, dass die Forderung nach einer Grenzlandmilliarde von Manfred Weber und mir in diesem Bericht enthalten ist.

Die Grenzregionen in Ostbayern und in ganz Europa sollen künftig besonders gefördert werden. Ich bin davon überzeugt, dass Europa nicht in Brüssel oder in den Hauptstädten zusammenwächst, sondern an den Grenzregionen.

Marcos Ros Sempere, *en nombre del Grupo S&D*. – Señora presidenta, señora comisaria, hay que mirar al pasado para impulsar el futuro. La política de cohesión es un pilar de la Unión Europea. Se asienta en los más profundos valores europeístas —igualdad, solidaridad, equilibrio entre regiones— y ha permitido acelerar el desarrollo de territorios que estaban a la cola e incorporarnos todos a un tren europeo que avanza firme y a buen ritmo.

Ahora, esta revisión del período anterior llega en un momento en el que ya trabajamos en lo que debe ser la política de cohesión del futuro y tenemos que aprender del pasado para crecer más fuertes. Necesitamos una política de cohesión que mire más allá del producto interior bruto para asignar y utilizar recursos; los aspectos socioeconómicos y medioambientales también se tienen que valorar.

Debemos fortalecer la cogobernanza: los Gobiernos más cercanos conocen mejor las necesidades del territorio. También simplificar los trámites administrativos, agilizar procesos y aumentar la transparencia. Necesitamos una política de cohesión que refuerce la transición ecológica y la transición digital. Una política de cohesión que contribuya a una transición justa en todas las regiones.

Los fondos de cohesión deben combatir también la despoblación en algunas regiones de la Unión Europea y potenciar el papel de la agenda territorial europea, una visión integrada del territorio. Una política de cohesión, también, con una financiación sólida que no sea la hucha a la que recurrir cada vez que tenemos una crisis.

En definitiva, una política de cohesión centrada en los ciudadanos. Pensando en aquellos ciudadanos que estudiaron en colegios, acudieron a hospitales y han conducido por carreteras financiadas con estos fondos y pensando en las nuevas generaciones y en cómo mejorar esta política para reducir desigualdades, equilibrar territorios y potenciar una Unión Europea más digital, más verde y más sostenible. En definitiva, una política de cohesión para ofrecer a las nuevas generaciones más y mejores oportunidades. Para ofrecerles una vida mejor.

Irène Tolleret, *au nom du groupe Renew*. – Madame la Présidente, Madame la Commissaire, chers collègues, l'analyse de la mise en place de la politique de cohésion 2014-2020 nous permet de tirer des enseignements utiles quant à son avenir. Je vais vous parler des zones rurales.

Il est pour moi important de corriger le déséquilibre entre les zones rurales et les zones urbaines, qui caractérise aujourd'hui la politique de cohésion, en consacrant un pourcentage du budget de celle-ci aux zones rurales, suivant le même principe que celui qui est appliqué aux zones urbaines. Nous devons assouplir les programmes pour prendre en compte les disparités infrarégionales. Et surtout, simplifions, simplifions, simplifions! Ayons de l'audace! Les outils existent: les coûts simplifiés, les procédures liées aux marchés publics, l'articulation des différentes politiques de cohésion avec les règles d'aides d'État. Mettons en place l'audit unique, les guichets uniques pour les bénéficiaires, et évitons la surtransposition.

Le cœur battant de la démocratie européenne est localisé dans les petits villages de notre Union, faisons en sorte qu'ils soient également le cœur battant de notre politique de cohésion.

Caroline Roose, *au nom du groupe Verts/ALE*. – Madame la Présidente, Madame la Commissaire, avez-vous déjà pris un train dans le sud de la France? Y a-t-il des projets d'énergies renouvelables près de chez vous? L'hôpital près de chez vous a-t-il été récemment rénové? Quel est le point commun entre ces projets? Ces projets, ils sont financés par l'Union européenne. La politique régionale représente un tiers du budget de l'Union européenne. Elle est notre plus grande arme contre les inégalités économiques et sociales. Elle est un pilier de la solidarité entre nos territoires, nos régions, nos villes, nos communes. Elle est indispensable à la transition écologique. Elle est nécessaire pour réduire les écarts de développement entre les États membres. La politique régionale de l'Union européenne a un impact direct sur chaque citoyenne et chaque citoyen, améliore leur quotidien et contribue à une Europe plus verte et plus prospère.

Moi, quand je me rends sur le terrain, on me demande souvent à quoi sert l'Europe, et les réalisations concrètes de la politique régionale sont souvent la meilleure réponse à cette question. Aujourd'hui, nous sommes face à un choix: poursuivre sur la voie de la solidarité ou bien laisser notre engagement envers nos régions faiblir, et les citoyens avec.

Je nous appelle à maintenir un budget solide pour la politique régionale et à rejeter toute réduction ou tout détournement de son financement. Continuons à construire une Europe plus forte, une Europe plus verte et plus équitable pour les générations à venir.

Krzysztof Jurgiel, *w imieniu grupy ECR*. – Pani Przewodnicząca! W okresie programowania 2014–2020 polityka spójności jako główna polityka inwestycyjna Unii Europejskiej skutecznie realizowała swój traktatowy cel, jakim jest osiągnięcie spójności gospodarczej, społecznej i terytorialnej w całej Unii Europejskiej. Przeprowadzone przez państwa członkowskie oceny wyników inwestycji w ramach polityki spójności na lata 2014–2020 pokazują, że ogólnie polityka spójności przyniosła pozytywne rezultaty w obszarach objętych wsparciem. Z zadowoleniem odnotowuję reakcję polityki spójności na ostatnie kryzysy: przekierowano prawie 28 mld euro na walkę ze skutkami kryzysu związanego z COVID-19, 13 mld euro przekierowano na zapewnienie wsparcia biznesowego przedsiębiorcom najbardziej dotkniętym kryzysem COVID-19.

Polska w ramach funduszy polityki spójności otrzymała 82,5 mld euro. Ważne jest, że na wsparcie w formie dedykowanych instrumentów we właściwych programach krajowych i regionalnych na rzecz rozwoju obszarów wiejskich przeznaczono kwotę około 5,9 mld złotych. Kontynuowano też działania rozwojowe poprzez dodatkowe fundusze dla Polski Wschodniej w wysokości 8 mld złotych. Zrealizowano 2007 tys. projektów, w tym 160 prac na B+R oraz 2 tys. na innowacje.

Przed nami przyszłość. Na politykę spójności na lata 2021–2027 przekazano 330 mld euro, z czego 70 mld euro przypadnie Polsce, w tym 2,6 miliarda na przyspieszenie rozwoju wschodnich województw oraz 10 mld złotych na rozwój obszarów wiejskich. Proszę tylko Komisję o nieblokowanie środków dla Polski.

Alessandro Panza, *a nome del gruppo ID*. – Signora Presidente, signora Commissario, onorevoli colleghi, ringrazio innanzitutto il collega Andrey Novakov per la sua relazione che è estremamente equilibrata.

La politica di coesione 2014-2020 ha rappresentato un pilastro fondamentale per il progresso europeo, con un importante stanziamento di fondi e con una percentuale di assorbimento di circa l'89 %.

L'Europa in questi ultimi anni si è trovata ad affrontare crisi inaspettate: la pandemia, la guerra in Ucraina, la crisi energetica. L'attuazione della programmazione nella sua ultima fase è stata utilizzata in via emergenziale come strumento di risposta ad esse, cosa che ha pesantemente compromesso tempi e risultati.

Sono però convinto che sia imperativo che la politica di coesione non sia vista come uno strumento di risposta alle crisi e alle emergenze, che essa debba consolidare gli obiettivi a medio e lungo termine che le sono propri.

È urgente migliorare la flessibilità e semplificare la gestione dei fondi; l'attuale complessità non solo ne ostacola l'assorbimento, ma mina anche la fiducia dei cittadini. Anche qui un po' di buon senso dovrebbe essere al centro, oltre la burocrazia.

Chiudo con un appello, cara Commissaria: nel mio Paese è stato recentemente varato un disegno di legge sulle aree montane per dare centralità a queste zone. Auspico che nella prossima programmazione, sulla scorta di quanto viene fatto per la strategia integrata per le aree marittime, venga fatta la stessa cosa per le aree montane. Avere degli indicatori chiari su una parte di territorio, che è il 35 % del continente europeo, servirà anche a capire come la politica di coesione potrà impattare positivamente sulle aree delle terre alte del nostro continente.

Martina Michels, *im Namen der Fraktion The Left*. – Frau Präsidentin, Frau Kommissarin, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Die Letzten werden die Ersten sein: Die EU-Strukturfonds könnten dieses biblische Bonmot wahr werden lassen, doch dafür muss die EU-Förderung wirklich strategisch eingesetzt werden.

Denken wir daran, wie wir das fossile Zeitalter mit schmierigem Gas, mit stinkenden Schornsteinen endlich hinter uns lassen, wie wir digitaler und inklusiver werden, und auch daran, dass Migration ein Gewinn für unsere schrumpfenden Gesellschaften sein könnte, wenn die EU ihre Abschottungs- und Desintegrationspolitik beenden würde.

Doch immer wieder kämpfen wir leider auch hier in diesem Hause erneut um die EU-Strukturfondsmittel; sie werden mehr und mehr zum Notfallfonds für verschiedene EU-Projekte. Doch so geht jede strategische Planung den Bach runter.

Und abschließend sage ich in aller Klarheit: Die Rüstungsproduktion mit EU-Strukturfonds anzukurbeln, das mag den einen oder anderen Arbeitsplatz schaffen, doch Rüstungsproduktion leistet nichts für die ökologische Transformation und bringt langfristig keine Sicherheit. Komplette zivile genutzte EU-Strukturmittel sind nicht nur das Gebot der Stunde, sondern auch der Kompass für die nachhaltige Wirtschaft. Also: Hände weg von den Strukturfonds!

Katarína Roth Neveďalová (NI). – Vážená pani predsedníčka, politika súdržnosti je politikou investície, ako správne povedal niekto predou mnou pred chvíľkou. Ja si myslím, že to je jedna z najlepších politík, ktoré Európska únia má, a preto je veľmi dôležité, aby sme ju naďalej podporovali a aby sme stále nechávali dostatočné financie práve pre politiku súdržnosti lebo vidíme, ako tiež niekto poznamenal pred chvíľou, že keď idete hocikeď po Európe, všade máte tabule, kde je napísané, že sú projekty financované z Európskej únie. Či už to bolo v oblasti vzdelávania, sociálnej politiky, digitálu, rozdielov medzi jednotlivými regiónmi, výstavby atď., čiže naozaj je to veľmi politika úspešná.

Ja by som rada vyzdvihla za toto obdobje, o ktorom dnes hovoríme, pilotné projekty, ktoré boli aj na území Slovenskej republiky. Či to bola napríklad transformácia uhoľných regiónov na Hornej Nitre, ale takisto aj špeciálny projekt pre tzv. zaostávajúce, dobiehajúce regióny, kde bol Prešovský a Banskobystrický samosprávny kraj na Slovensku, ktoré získali špeciálne financie práve na transformáciu týchto regiónov, a ako pilotné projekty sme si mohli vyskúšať rôzne typy politik, ktoré môžu v týchto regiónoch fungovať.

Ja si myslím, že túto politiku treba naďalej podporovať, posilňovať, ale hlavne bojovať v oblasti politiky pre súdržnosť proti byrokracii, ktorá stále v tejto politike pretrváva, a takisto aj proti *gold-platingu*, ktorý tu stále máme.

Franc Bogovič (PPE). – Gospa predsednica. Leta 1998 je Slovenija začela predpristopna pogajanja z Evropsko unijo. Tisto leto sem tudi postal župan občine Krško, v kateri sem trinajst let županoval, zato zelo dobro vem, kaj pomeni, kako lahko s kohezijskimi sredstvi zgradiš osnovno infrastrukturo, zgradiš okoljsko infrastrukturo, protipoplavne zaščite. V naši občini smo že 15 let nazaj tudi izgradili širokopasovne povezave tudi po vaseh.

Kohezijska politika je vezivo Evropske unije. Preko kohezijske politike se izvaja princip solidarnosti. Se pravi, manj razviti lahko računa na tiste, ki so bolj razviti in zato je zelo pomembna tudi gradnja evropske miselnosti ravno preko kohezijske politike in tudi seveda kmetijske politike.

Pred nami so novi izzivi. Zaključujem tu. To sedaj obravnava zaključek obdobja 14-20. Sedaj smo že globoko v naslednjem obdobju. Podnebne spremembe, digitalizacija, demografske spremembe, praznjenje podeželja in cela vrsta drugih kriznih situacij.

Zelo podpiram, da podobno kot imamo za urbana središča tudi za podeželje pripravimo poseben fond in posebno alokacijo denarja, kajti sam sem to tudi zapisal v amandmajih. Konec koncev imamo dolgoročno vizijo razvoja podeželja, ki temelji tudi na konceptu pametnih vasi, ki smo ga postavili v tem Evropskem parlamentu in sem aktivno sodeloval.

Biti mora fleksibilna in pa čim bolj poenostavljena in spoštovati princip subsidiarnosti, da bo blizu občin, regij, blizu ljudem.

Dovolite, da rečem samo hvala, gospa komisarka, za odlično sodelovanje, hvala Andrey, za odlično pripravljeno poročilo in hvala predsedniku Omarjee za odlično sodelovanje v Odboru za regionalni razvoj.

Cristina Maestre Martín De Almagro (S&D). – Señora presidenta, señora comisaria, la política de cohesión ha demostrado ser un instrumento político y financiero muy importante para hacer frente a las crisis que como siempre afectan más a quien tienen menos. ¿Y cuáles han sido las lecciones aprendidas?

Primero, que, si se quiere flexibilidad, se puede flexibilizar. Y por eso ha podido dar rápidamente apoyo económico y social a las regiones más afectadas.

Segundo, que ha hecho falta que millones de personas en el mundo mueran por una pandemia para entender que la sanidad pública claro que puede ser fortalecida por la política de cohesión.

Y tercero, que la política de cohesión es el mayor garante de una correcta distribución de los fondos de recuperación porque establece un reparto equilibrado y justo.

Dicho esto, ¿cómo diseñamos los fondos de cohesión del futuro? Pues con capacidad de adaptabilidad a cada realidad regional. Es decir, una política de cohesión basada en el territorio, con mayor lente social, con mayor transversalidad, especialmente en materia de género y juventud. Es decir, atendiendo también a variables como el envejecimiento de la población, la dispersión geográfica o el efecto de las catástrofes naturales o el cambio climático. Ese es el modelo al que tenemos que tender.

Ladislav Ilčík (ECR). – Poštovana predsedavajuća, poštovani kolege, kohezijska se politika sve češće nalazi na udaru jer mnogi u razvijenim članicama smatraju da na neki način uzdržavaju slabije razvijene. To se predstavlja nekakvom solidarnošću kao da razvijeniji nemaju nikakve koristi od toga.

Dopustite mi da razbijem taj mit. Prvo, razvijenije članice plasiraju svoje proizvode na jedinstveno tržište u većoj mjeri nego slabije razvijeni. Njima je u ekonomskom interesu da je cijelo europsko tržište relativno bogato, a ne da je pola tog tržišta siromašno. Također, iz slabije razvijenih članica dobili su kvalificiranu radnu snagu. Samo Hrvatska je utrošila 18 milijardi eura za školovanje ljudi koji su nakon ulaska u Europsku uniju otišli raditi u zapadne članice.

Dakle, u ovom procesu mi ostajemo bez najvrednijeg resursa bez ljudi, a sad vidimo da se zloupotrebom vladavine prava počinju ograničavati europska sredstva suverenim državama ako ne prihvate i vašu nametnutu ideologiju. Tako kohezijska politika postaje dvostruka kolonizacija kojom se dijelu Unije otima ljudski resurs i paralelno nameće ideološki okvir koji ti narodi ne žele. Ravnomjeran razvoj je jako važan za ukupan razvoj Europske unije.

Zato vas pozivam, upotrijebimo kohezijsku politiku za kompenzaciju stvarnih razlika među državama, a ne za namećanje ideologije.

André Rougé (ID). – Madame la Présidente, Madame la Commissaire, chers collègues, ce rapport fait peu de cas du développement des régions ultrapériphériques, notamment des départements d'outre-mer français. Cette France du large n'intéresse pas assez l'Union européenne, qui n'en perçoit pas la spécificité liée à l'éloignement et, souvent, à l'insularité.

J'ai déposé un amendement à ce rapport pour mieux prendre en compte les catastrophes naturelles et climatiques dans les régions ultrapériphériques. Malheureusement, il n'a pas été retenu. J'attirais pourtant l'attention sur les cas de sécheresse, aux conséquences catastrophiques et parfois vitales, pour un département comme Mayotte.

Le Fonds de cohésion, le FEDER et le FSE représentent un tiers du budget européen et doivent être des dispositifs utiles. La France est une contributrice nette de fonds censés favoriser une égalité de développement des États membres, mais dont l'approche ne prend pas suffisamment en compte les départements ultramarins.

Je souhaite donc que cet argent soit utilisé à meilleur escient en faveur de la France des outre-mer. J'aimerais que le mot cohésion soit appliqué à la lettre, qu'il ne soit pas le reflet d'un développement asymétrique au détriment de régions ici ultrapériphériques, mais que la France doit garder au centre de ses préoccupations.

Dan-Ștefan Motreanu (PPE). – Doamnă președintă, doamnă comisar, dragi colegi, încep prin a-i mulțumi colegului nostru Andrey Novakov pentru raportul detaliat privind implementarea politicii de coeziune și îi împărtășesc viziunea că nu există state net contribuitoare sau beneficiare, ci există doar avantaje pentru economia europeană în ansamblul său. Consider politica de coeziune drept principalul instrument prin care Uniunea Europeană își demonstrează valoarea adăugată, îmbunătățind calitatea vieții de zi cu zi a cetățenilor.

Consider, de asemenea, că principalul instrument prin care putem contracara narativul celor care, mai ales în pragul alegerilor, pun sub semnul întrebării apartenența la Uniunea Europeană rămâne politica de coeziune. Țara pe care o reprezintă, România, a reușit să absoarbă aproape în totalitate cele 24 de miliarde de euro disponibile în perioada 2014-2020, contribuind semnificativ la dezvoltarea economică și socială a orașelor și a comunităților rurale prin dezvoltarea infrastructurii rutiere și a transportului public, modernizarea școlilor și a spitalelor, renovarea clădirilor, sprijinul pentru dezvoltarea IMM-urilor și a antreprenoriatului și crearea de noi locuri de muncă.

Subliniez că aceste investiții reprezintă argumente solide pentru o campanie electorală proeuropeană și consider absolut necesare menținerea și consolidarea politicii de coeziune drept principal instrument al dezvoltării europene. Cu cât vom aloca în viitor un buget mai consistent politicii de coeziune, cu atât vom reuși să întărim sprijinul pentru proiectul european al populației, în special în regiunile în care cetățenii se simt lăsați în urmă sau sunt atrași de propaganda înșelătoare a regimurilor nedemocratice.

Matthias Ecke (S&D). – Frau Präsidentin, Frau Kommissarin! Dieser Bericht befasst sich mit der auslaufenden Förderperiode 2014-2020, aber er erlaubt uns auch, einen Blick in die Zukunft zu werfen. Der ist wichtig, denn die nächste Förderperiode der Kohäsionspolitik wird eine wie keine andere.

Wir stehen vor der Frage, wie wir einerseits weiter zusammenwachsen können, wie wir soziale, territoriale, wirtschaftliche Kohäsion erreichen. Zum anderen müssen wir den umfassenden Strukturwandel, die Transformation hin zu einer klimaneutralen Wirtschaft bewältigen.

Ich bin überzeugt, dass die Kohäsionspolitik, die ja zu Recht ein Drittel des EU-Haushalts ausmacht, sich verändern muss, um diesen Anforderungen gerecht zu werden. Die Kohäsionspolitik muss ein transformatives Instrument werden, das den tiefgreifenden Strukturwandel, mit dem die Regionen der EU konfrontiert sind, erfasst. Jeder Mensch sollte die gleichen Chancen haben, sich zu entfalten, unabhängig davon, wo sie oder er geboren wurde. Niemand sollte dazu gezwungen sein, seine Region zu verlassen, weil die Lebenschancen zu gering sind und der Strukturwandel nichts als Brachland hinterlässt.

Um all diese Aufgaben zu bewältigen, muss die Kohäsionspolitik agiler werden. Sie muss territorial sensibler werden, die Bedürfnisse unserer Regionen besser abbilden, flexibler und einfacher werden. Kurzum: Wir brauchen eine Kohäsionspolitik, die den Wandel mit ermöglicht und nicht bremst. Wir brauchen eine Kohäsionspolitik, von der alle Regionen profitieren.

Carlos Coelho (PPE). – Senhora Presidente, Senhora Comissária, Caros Colegas, agradeço ao Colega Novakov o seu importante relatório sobre a política de coesão da União Europeia. Queremos o desenvolvimento equilibrado das nossas regiões, cidades e áreas rurais e impulsionar o crescimento inclusivo e sustentável em todo o continente, reafirmando o compromisso da União Europeia com a solidariedade e com a coesão territorial.

E os resultados são positivos. Milhões de europeus beneficiaram de melhor acesso a cuidados de saúde, educação, formação, impulsionando a empregabilidade e fortalecendo as nossas economias locais. Acelerámos a transição para uma economia de baixo carbono, com investimentos em eficiência energética e energias renováveis, na linha do Acordo de Paris e do Pacto Ecológico Europeu.

Porém, os desafios permanecem. As disparidades regionais, os impactos desiguais das transições verde e digital e as emergências globais exigem uma política de coesão ainda mais forte e adaptável. Precisamos de mais flexibilidade, simplificação dos processos e o fortalecimento da governança transversal, assegurando que todos os níveis de governo estejam envolvidos na elaboração, implementação e avaliação dos diferentes programas.

E constatamos que nem todos beneficiaram da mesma maneira. Nem todos os Estados-Membros executaram bem os recursos europeus. Respostas lentas e burocráticas, ou revelando falta de visão estratégica, comprometem a eficácia das políticas de coesão e dão argumentos aos que defendem sempre que elas deveriam diminuir. Espero que o meu país, com o novo Governo, seja capaz de dar melhores exemplos de eficácia e contribua para um Portugal mais coeso e mais próximo da média europeia.

Margarida Marques (S&D). – Senhora Presidente, Senhora Comissária, o recurso à política de coesão nas respostas às crises que se sucederam e como estabilizador em desacelerações económicas foi decisivo para proteger os cidadãos, as famílias, as empresas, as regiões. Felicito a Senhora Comissária pela forma como geriu a flexibilidade, mas esta política é também decisiva para garantir uma recuperação equilibrada, reduzindo o agravamento de assimetrias.

Mas é importante que a coesão mantenha a sua natureza de investimento a longo prazo, centrando-se no crescimento, inovação e na criação de emprego. Também foi importante, no recente acordo das futuras regras de governação económica, que o Parlamento Europeu tenha conseguido retirar o cofinanciamento do cálculo da despesa líquida.

No futuro, a política de coesão deve beneficiar das lições do Plano de Recuperação e Resiliência. Mas a política de coesão não pode perder, em circunstâncias nenhuma, a sua identidade tal como está definida nos Tratados.

Isabel Benjumea Benjumea (PPE). – Señora presidenta, señora comisaria, quisiera comenzar mi intervención agradeciendo el trabajo del ponente de este informe, el señor Andrey Novakov, por su interés en recabar opiniones directas de las autoridades regionales y locales, su talante negociador y el brillante trabajo realizado. Algo, por cierto, habitual en la Comisión de Desarrollo Regional, que es uno de los pilares de este Parlamento.

Como diputada española, no puedo sino tener palabras de agradecimiento por la contribución que ha realizado y sigue realizando la política de cohesión en mi país. Son muchos los proyectos transformadores financiados por los Fondos Estructurales y que han promovido el crecimiento y la generación de oportunidades en las regiones españolas.

Hoy, por desgracia, hay una clara amenaza de convertir la política de cohesión en el depósito común al que recurrir cuando la Comisión necesita financiar nuevos programas de forma urgente. Y mientras se vacían estas partidas se multiplican los fondos y se genera un bloqueo tanto en la ejecución como en la gestión administrativa a todos los niveles, provocando así un retraso en la ejecución de los fondos y un menor impacto transformador de los mismos.

No se trata de prescindir de la cohesión. La solución pasa por reducir el enjambre burocrático, eliminar las trabas, simplificar los trámites, reforzar la cooperación público-privada, darle un papel protagonista al sector privado, centralizar la información o facilitar el acceso a los beneficiarios, promoviendo una mayor participación a nivel local y regional. Las regiones están pidiendo esta simplificación a gritos.

Crear nuevos fondos dificulta la gestión y reduce el impacto de la política de cohesión, una de las mejores valoradas por los ciudadanos europeos. Centrémonos, por lo tanto, en mejorarla, en impulsarla, no en ahogarla.

Stanislav Polčák (PPE). – Paní předsedající, vážená paní komisařko, úvodem dovoluji, abych shrnul, že tato zpráva kolegyně Novaková je podle mého názoru velmi kvalitní. Politika soudržnosti by měla zůstat součástí páteřních politik Evropské unie. A dovoluji ještě jednu úvodní poznámku. Politika soudržnosti EU se podle mého názoru nachází ve zlomovém bodě. Musí se vyrovnat s jinými, konkurenčními nástroji EU a podle mého názoru musí být zachována a naopak posílena. Co udělat pro posílení naší politiky soudržnosti v rámci období, které nás čeká?

Za prvé, ve srovnání s programovacím obdobím 2021 až 2027 musí dojít k reálnému navýšení celkového rozpočtu politiky soudržnosti a podílu víceletého finančního rámce pro tuto politiku. Za druhé, musíme zachovat sdílené řízení, nesmí dojít k opětovnému přesouvání politiky soudržnosti na úroveň členských států. Za třetí, nepochybně musíme nadále zjednodušovat předpisy, které regulují naši politiku soudržnosti jako takovou. Myslím si, že by měl být také zaveden mechanismus prověřování dopadů jednotlivých legislativ EU na venkov, na jeho rozvoj a také opatřována souhrnná data za Evropskou unii a jednotlivé regiony o dopadech a posunech, které působí politika soudržnosti na infrastrukturu, na občanskou vybavenost, na podporu inovativních projektů. Také nepochybně musíme prosazovat nadále zásadu partnerství při veškerém programování, provádění a monitorování a také úzkou spolupráci mezi regionálními a místními orgány. A v neposlední řadě je nezbytné zdůraznit, že rozpočet politiky soudržnosti by měl být vynakládán především na cíle a oblasti politiky soudržnosti, a nikoli na nové nástroje a programy, které se soudržnosti nesouvisí. Politika soudržnosti je jednou z vlajkových lodí EU a mělo by to tak zůstat.

Daniel Buda (PPE). – Doamna președintă, doamnă comisar, doamnelor și domnilor colegi, în primul rând, le mulțumesc foarte mult lui Andrey Novakov și domnului Emil Boc, președintele COTER, pentru contribuția adusă raportului privind politica de coeziune post-2027. Stimăți colegi, politica de coeziune reprezintă piatra de temelie a solidarității europene, garantând că nicio regiune nu este lăsată în urmă. Investițiile în cadrul politicii de coeziune au avut un impact major asupra regiunilor, orașelor și zonelor rurale. Aceste investiții au modelat infrastructura, au stimulat inovația, au susținut IMM-urile și au promovat cercetarea și educația.

Cu alte cuvinte, politica de coeziune a ajuns în fiecare localitate, dar mai ales – și aici subliniez – în fiecare casă din Uniunea Europeană. Reducerea birocrăției și simplificarea procesului de absorbție trebuie să fie în centrul politicii de coeziune post-2027 astfel încât să faciliteze accesul la fondurile europene pentru a putea dezvolta proiecte cu impact real și durabil. Investițiile la nivel local și regional rămân fundamentale, iar autoritățile locale și regionale joacă un rol crucial în gestionarea fondurilor pentru dezvoltare.

Un lucru este cert, stimați colegi și doamnă comisar: trebuie să fim apărătorii politicii de coeziune și să prevenim tăierea oricăror resurse financiare de la coeziune, iar bugetul total al politicii de coeziune pe perioada post-2027 ar trebui să fie cel puțin echivalent cu cel actual. Într-o Europă aflată în continuă schimbare, politica de coeziune, alături de politica agricolă comună, rămâne un instrument esențial pentru a garanta ceea ce înseamnă o viață mai bună în fiecare colț al Uniunii Europene, pentru fiecare cetățean european.

Spontane Wortmeldungen

Francisco José Millán Mon (PPE). – Señora presidenta, la política de cohesión es uno de los sellos distintivos de la Unión Europea. Felicito al señor Novakov por su informe. El mercado único es clave, pero también lo es la cohesión, fuente importante de financiación que facilita, además, la convergencia económica y social entre los Estados miembros.

Después de la crisis financiera de 2009 y la pandemia de COVID-19, varios países han sufrido graves retrocesos en sus economías. Por ejemplo, España. En 2007 tenía una renta per cápita que estaba en el 103 % de la media comunitaria, pero ha descendido en los últimos años hasta el actual 85%. España es, pues, nuevamente elegible para el Fondo de Cohesión. Pero, no obstante, la revisión del marco financiero plurianual recientemente aprobada, lamentablemente, no recoge la aplicación del Fondo de Cohesión para España. Esto supondrá una pérdida de unos 6 600 millones de euros para el fisco español. Lo que parece que no preocupa al Gobierno. Es muy de lamentar, cuando España todavía necesita importantes infraestructuras en materia de transporte y medio ambiente.

Y termino. Celebro que el informe del señor Novakov pida un aumento del presupuesto general de cohesión. Esta importante política no debe sufrir recortes.

Mónica Silvana González (S&D). – Señora presidenta, creo que uno de los principales retos de la política de cohesión es la desigualdad intrarregional, la falta de oportunidades para los grupos más vulnerables como población gitana, migrantes, personas con discapacidad, que viven en las regiones más ricas de Europa. En concreto, la Comunidad de Madrid es un claro ejemplo, es una de las comunidades más ricas de toda Europa, pero tiene una tasa estructural de pobreza que no baja en estos últimos años del 20 %: el índice Gini subió más de tres puntos en estos últimos años; el 20 % de los más ricos tienen casi ocho veces más ingresos que los más pobres; 1,4 millones de personas, de madrileños y madrileñas, viven en riesgo de pobreza; y el 40 % de las familias madrileñas presentan dificultades para llegar a fin de mes.

Por ello, necesitamos poner el objetivo en combatir la desigualdad intrarregional. El PIB no puede ser el único indicador que se utilice. Necesitamos incorporar medidores, variables de género, de origen étnico, de discapacidad para combatir esta desigualdad intrarregional, como en la Comunidad de Madrid.

Mauri Pekkarinen (Renew). – Arvoisa puhemies, kiitoksia esittelijälle ihan hyvästä mietinnöstä. Se ei kuitenkaan anna vastausta mielestäni yhteen tärkeään kysymykseen. Kun koheesiopolitiikan tehtävä on tasoittaa eroja jäsenmaiden välillä, sen toinen tärkeä tehtävä on tasoittaa eroja jäsenmaiden sisällä. Tänäään Euroopan unionissa on jäsenmaita, joissa eri alueiden, NUTS 3 -taseisten alueiden, väliset erot PPS:illä – Purchasing Power Standard, joka on oikea mittari – mitattuna voivat olla viisinkertaiset keskusalueen ja vähän syrjäisemmän alueen välillä. Nämä erot ovat viime vuosien aikana kasvaneet, kasvaneet ja kasvaneet.

Arvoisa komissaari, tämä kysymys on teille. Eikö seuraavaa ohjelmakautta valmisteltaessa pitäisi entistä radikaalisti enemmän kiinnittää huomiota siihen, että EU:n koheesiopolitiikka todella on sitä, mitä sen säädösten mukaan pitäisi olla, eli että se todella kykenee tasoittamaan ei vain jäsenmaiden välisiä eroja, vaan myös jäsenmaiden sisäisiä eroja. Miten tämä viimeksi mainittu tehtävä hoidetaan?

Rosa D'Amato (Verts/ALE). – Signora Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, se dovessi dare un titolo alla relazione io direi «nessuno tocchi la politica di coesione», eppure l'abbiamo fatto. Non è un bancomat, ricordiamolo, non è un fondo di emergenza.

Inoltre l'abbiamo anche usata per fini diversi dalla coesione fra le regioni: abbiamo finanziato industrie belliche, abbiamo finanziato multinazionali come le *Big Pharma*.

Infine voglio fare un appello alla Commissione europea: attenzione agli Stati membri. La politica di coesione è additiva, non è sostitutiva. Alcuni governi nazionali, come il mio, non solo non garantiscono alle regioni del Sud la stessa capacità amministrativa, né livelli essenziali di prestazione, ma minano la coesione con una legge, la cosiddetta legge sull'autonomia differenziata che non farà altro che peggiorare il divario fra il Sud e il Nord del Paese, contrariamente a quello che dice la stessa politica di coesione in Europa.

Ana Miranda (Verts/ALE). – Senhora Presidente, Senhora Comissária Ferreira, como eurodeputada galega verifico que há uma década de investimentos de coesão na Galiza que nem sempre tiveram bons resultados, como já falámos em alguns dos nossos encontros, sobretudo porque o governo galego não respondeu aos desafios necessários: de criar emprego, de manter o talento, de infraestruturas rurais ou de saneamento. O relatório do Parlamento Europeu afirma que a avaliação do impacto dos fundos não pode ser feita só ao nível dos fundos executados, mas também da natureza transformadora dos investimentos e do impacto na economia e no emprego.

Na Galiza, o governo do Partido Popular, depois de sete anos para planificar, atribuir e executar, mais os três anos de graça, ou seja, dez anos no total, ainda tem fundos europeus por utilizar e surge abaixo da média europeia. Aplica os programas sem dar conhecimento ao Parlamento galego, por exemplo.

Oxalá que, no próximo período, tenhamos um governo galego que realmente transforme, também, e que faça um bom uso dos fundos europeus.

Younous Omarjee (The Left). – Madame la Présidente, permettez-moi, en tant que président de notre commission du développement régional, de féliciter Andrey Novakov pour son excellent rapport, voté à l'unanimité au sein de notre commission. Et cette unanimité dit la très grande unité, tout au long de cette législature, qui nous a permis de trouver des solutions, y compris à la pandémie de la COVID-19 et à ses répercussions dans les régions, mais aussi des solutions permettant de venir en aide aux réfugiés ukrainiens. Je veux aussi adresser mes félicitations à la commissaire Elisa Ferreira pour son rôle extrêmement important dans les propositions qui ont été formulées, ainsi que dans l'excellente collaboration qu'elle a entretenue avec notre commission.

Pour terminer, je veux rappeler que, lorsque Jacques Delors est arrivé à la tête de la Commission européenne, sa première décision a été de multiplier par trois les fonds structurels, parce qu'il avait bien compris que notre politique de cohésion porte l'idée européenne et l'objectif d'égalité des conditions de vie en Europe. Il avait bien compris aussi les incidences de la politique de cohésion sur le marché unique. Maintenant, il nous faut penser l'avenir de notre politique, grâce à des recommandations qui vont inspirer, je l'espère, le futur Parlement européen.

Ivan Vilibor Sinčić (NI). – Poštovana predsjedavajuća, komesarko Ferreira, Hrvatski nacionalni državni ured za reviziju nedavno je potvrdio teze koje ponavljam godinama.

Naime, hrvatski centri za gospodarenje otpadom su financijska, tehnološka i okolišna katastrofa, a svi ti projekti su uredno verificirani od Europske komisije i od JASPERS-a i financirani iz ovih kohezijskih fondova. Zato se ne moramo čuditi da je upravo hrvatska rekorder po prijavama EPPO-u. Građani traže pravdu ovdje ako je već ne mogu dobiti u Hrvatskoj.

Naime, sve funkcionira po principu jahte. Kada biste jako siromašnom čovjeku poklonili jako skupu jahtu, on je ne može dovesti do mora, ne može platiti kapetana, ne može platiti vez, ne može platiti jedan rezervoar goriva da je koristi. Tako i mi dobivamo projekte koji su protuzakoniti, suprotni prostornim planovima, koji su veliki, koji imaju krivu tehnologiju i hrvatski građani su na to ogorčeni. Uništava proračune njihovih zajednica i uništava njihove općine i gradove.

Pozivam vas, dođite u Hrvatsku, pogledajte hrvatske pročištače voda, od Kaštijuna i Marišćine i devet drugih koje hoće napraviti na istom principu. Pogledajte naše konglomeracije, sustav gospodarenja otpadom. Je li uloga kohezijskih fondova da se napravi infrastruktura ili da zarade, dakle, s politikom povezane firme napumpavajući cijene? Za mnogo manje novaca se može napraviti puno više i kvalitetnije u Hrvatskoj.

(Ende der spontanen Wortmeldungen)

Elisa Ferreira, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, dear Chair, *cher ami* Younous Omarjee, dear Andrey Novakov, dear honourable Members of this Parliament, I want to thank you for your engagement throughout the mandate. I think we wouldn't have a better way to close a session if we didn't have such an interesting report that, as you mentioned, Mr Omarjee, was agreed with unanimity by all the members of this important committee, the REGI Committee.

I took note of everything that you said and I would like just to make a couple of comments. The first one is, in fact, to thank you and also to note the diversity of cases that you are bringing forward. Good examples but also difficult problems to be addressed.

You mentioned border areas, you mentioned rural areas, you mentioned the outermost regions, mountainous areas. I think the most important conclusion that we have to make is, in fact, that this is a policy that has to be built bottom-up and reflecting and fine-tuned to the diversity of situations we have to face.

So, the character of a place-based policy that involves the agents on the ground, the stakeholders, the trade unions, the mayors, the civil society; everybody has got to participate because the quality of the vision for the region determines the success of the policy.

A second aspect I would like to underline is that it is not only for cohesion policy to promote cohesion. It is important that the value that cohesion brings from a political and from an economic angle is shared by the Member State and by all the actors on the ground, including the regions that have the internal imbalances that some of you have mentioned.

The purpose of the cohesion policy is not to keep financing the regions forever, it is to give the support that is used in such a way that the region can participate in the internal market without, in the future, ideally receiving any support. It is the capacity to grow by itself that has got to be stimulated and not a permanent transfer of funding.

From this perspective, I would like to underline something that was also said here, that is when a region grows, it enlarges the internal market. It gives opportunities for investment – private investment, public investment – and selling for all the countries in Europe.

When you look at the regions and countries that joined the European Union after 2004 enlargement, they had a GDP per capita of 52 % of the average. Now they have 80 %. This means a lot of people wanting to buy products, a lot of opportunities for investments, a lot of new jobs that can be created.

It is with the quality of the analysis and proposals that we can change the disparities inside Europe. This is the work that has got to be shared by all Member States and taken into account in the horizontal policies. All policies have asymmetric impacts on the different regions.

So, I urge you to continue this debate, including the presentation of the 9th Cohesion Forum. I would like you to be present in the meeting that we have foreseen for 11 and 12 April, and I think for the future, when we are thinking of enlargement and all the things that are changing – greening, digital and unexpected events – we need a strong cohesion policy to make all these challenges an advantage.

I encourage you to share your reflections, to share your discussions, but also to come forward, to come outside the group of people that know the policy and to share with citizens in general and with other actors – ministers in your country, prime ministers and other colleagues – how important it is for Europe to progress, to develop, to have an even stronger cohesion policy. Thank you very, very much for all your work.

Andrey Novakov, *rapporteur*. – Madam President, dear colleagues, dear Commissioner, somehow I'm attracted to history by reading a lot about the Roman Empire, and I know that before they establish a village or a city, first they build a road, and I think they have very good reasons to do so. This helps me understand why, when we build an airport or a highway to a given place in Europe, we are not just absorbing EU funds, we are not just using EU programmes: we are keeping a whole region alive.

If you visit an average small or medium city somewhere in Europe and ask the average citizen there what Europe can do for you, I bet my hat that most of them will reply, 'Help me bring more EU funds to my place. We would like to attract more tourists. We need research and development facilities or centres. We would like to see a new factory improved here with EU funds. We would like to have safer and cleaner modes of transport thanks to EU funds.'

Nobody will ask about any other dimension of the Union, and yes, of course, our Union is probably the greatest achievement of humankind because of this almost a century of peace. But it was created because of the steel and coal, because of free trade, because of free movement. This is only possible if we build the right infrastructure with EU funds, and this is happening with empowering and enlarging cohesion policy, not cutting here and there.

I am grateful for all those who participate in this debate. I'm happy to see so many people here, so many people who would like to have a catch-the-eye and participate in the debate. It means that this policy is still alive. It means that there is demand for this policy not only in the east, but in the west as well.

We can see that the next step for the cohesion policy is to enlarge by including every region in Germany, in France, in Italy – everyone should be eligible to get support from that policy. I think this is the future of cohesion policy. It is going forward and not backward, and I think this is the only way to advertise what is the reason to exist of this Union.

Die Präsidentin. – Die Aussprache ist damit geschlossen.

Die Abstimmung findet am Donnerstag, 14. März 2024 statt.

20. Debatter om fall av kränkningar av de mänskliga rättigheterna samt av demokratiska och rättsstatliga principer (debatt)

20.1 Den omedelbara risken för massvält i Gaza och attackerna på leveranser av humanitärt bistånd

Die Präsidentin. – Als nächster Punkt der Tagesordnung folgt die Aussprache über Fälle von Verletzungen der Menschenrechte, der Demokratie und der Rechtsstaatlichkeit (Artikel 144 GO).

Es folgt zunächst die Aussprache über sechs Entschließungsanträge zu der akut drohenden schweren Hungersnot im Gazastreifen und zu den Angriffen auf humanitäre Hilfslieferungen (2024/2616(RSP))¹.

¹ Siehe Protokoll.

Lukas Mandl, author. – Madam President, Commissioner, colleagues, I can hardly stand the pictures of starvation and humanitarian crisis of suffering children, women, men in the Gaza Strip. And it's important that this European Parliament addresses this crisis.

And it's also important to tell the truth about the reasons for this crisis, because there's an old saying that claims: it's always the truth, the first victim in each war. And that's why we have to tell to the people there, and to the people all around the world, who is responsible for that crisis. And this is Hamas, Hamas, Hamas, and additionally, the Iranian regime triggering all of this, and global Islamist terrorism generally.

We have to say the truth this time for different reasons. First, Hamas is responsible because it has not undertaken only many, many attacks against its neighbour state – which is not a neighbour state since Hamas is not representing a state – against its neighbour, Israel. But also this incredible terrorist attack, the largest of all times, on 7 October last year. And Hamas is stealing goods, food, aid, stealing it every day for its own purposes, and to put it on the market, not even to put the rest of it to starving people, but to put it on a so-called market.

Hamas is responsible, and we have to tell the truth, because otherwise, after this war, we will again have conspiracy theories against Israel, we will again have antisemitism, and we will again have terrorism. The same terrorism that's threatening us in our cities, in our rural areas, in our urban areas within Europe, threatening Europeans. It's the same terrorism, Israel is fighting against; it's also threatening us.

So, I can only claim time and again, what we need is demilitarisation of all Palestinian territories. What we need is the creation of a civil society of education, of fighting antisemitism, of economic self-responsibility; not that money must be poured in from all the world all the time, for decades, in that region. Then, maybe one day, a two-state solution can appear if there is a security guarantee for Israel.

So let's blame Hamas, and let's help the suffering people.

VORSITZ: OTHMAR KARAS

Vizepräsident

Carlos Zorrinho, Autor. – Senhor Presidente, Senhora Comissária, não podemos correr o risco de banalização da destruição e do sofrimento brutal induzido pela não aplicação deliberada das mais elementares normas do direito internacional humanitário pelo Estado de Israel na Faixa de Gaza. Como já referi em múltiplas intervenções na minha qualidade de relator permanente do Parlamento Europeu para a ajuda humanitária, o Estado de Israel tem o direito de se defender, mas não o pode fazer ao arrefio da lei e do respeito pelos direitos humanos.

O que está a suceder na Faixa de Gaza é inaceitável: mais de 30 000 mortos e 70 000 feridos, sobretudo mulheres e crianças, muitas por não resistirem à malnutrição e à desidratação, ou vítimas colaterais de ataques das forças israelitas aos camiões de distribuição de ajuda.

É preciso agir, um cessar-fogo imediato é necessário. Israel deve cumprir o acórdão do Tribunal Internacional de Justiça e facilitar o acesso à ajuda humanitária. O ataque ao comboio humanitário, em 29 de fevereiro, deve ser investigado com urgência por uma entidade independente.

Também com urgência, a União Europeia deve continuar a financiar a UNRWA e a dar o exemplo necessário para que osadores que suspenderam a sua contribuição possam reconsiderar a decisão, confiando na investigação em curso e considerando o papel crucial que a organização desempenha na prestação da assistência humanitária necessária na Faixa de Gaza.

Hilde Vautmans, Auteur. – Voorzitter, collega's, de beelden uit Gaza van kinderen die verhongeren gaan door merg en been. Er dreigt een massale hongersnood met duizenden doden tot gevolg. Nu al zijn er meer dan 500 000 Palestijnen ondervoed en meer dan tienduizend kinderen gedood.

We hebben gisteren over een sterke gezamenlijke resolutie onderhandeld met een duidelijke boodschap. Ik doe nu een oproep: laten we ons daar ook verenigd achter scharen. Burgers, burgerinfrastructuur en humanitaire konvoien mogen nooit een doelwit zijn. Uithongering mag nooit worden ingezet als wapen en Israël moet alle corridors openen, zodat de honderden vrachtwagens met hulpgoederen vrij en veilig Gaza in kunnen.

Europa moet Israël duidelijk maken dat het zich moet houden aan de uitspraken van het Internationaal Gerechtshof. Die uitspraken zijn bindend. Maar uiteindelijk moeten we ook durven zeggen dat we Hamas moeten bestrijden. Uiteindelijk moet er een onmiddellijk en permanent staakt-het-vuren komen. Hamas moet alle gijzelaars vrijlaten. Ik hoop dat we hier morgen een heel sterk signaal kunnen geven. Dat is onze plicht.

Grace O'Sullivan, author. – Mr President, I received this direct message from a father in Gaza today:

'Here, people are experiencing a real famine. There is no healthy food, no water, and no electricity to filter the water. There are women and children humiliated under the rubble of their destroyed homes. The smell of decomposing corpses has begun to spread throughout the streets, and there is a major shortage of medical equipment. My children suffer every day because of the sounds of explosions. I have taken my children out from under the rubble twice and they need help.'

These are the words of photographer Mohammed Zaanoun. His testimony is not a result of a natural disaster or crop failure; this crisis is entirely manmade – made by the actions of Israel and the inaction of the world, watching on as Gazans cry out for help.

No more inaction! We must call for an immediate ceasefire and expansion of aid to all those who need it, and real action and a commitment to peace in Gaza.

(Applause)

Bert-Jan Ruissen, *Auteur*. – Voorzitter, collega's, dat de humanitaire situatie in Gaza uitermate zorgelijk is en dat we dus alles op alles moeten zetten om ervoor te zorgen dat de hulp bij de mensen terechtkomt, daar zijn we het, denk ik, allemaal over eens.

Maar wie zorgt er hier eigenlijk voor de grootste problemen? Is dat Israël, zoals voortdurend wordt beweerd, of is dat Hamas? Zeker: Israël heeft hier een verantwoordelijkheid. Israël is zich daarvan bewust en doet wat het kan om goederen door te laten en hulp te faciliteren. Van doelbewuste obstructie van de hulp door Israël is absoluut geen sprake.

Hamas daarentegen kaapt voedseltransporten ten behoeve van de eigen strijders en laat de Palestijnse burgerbevolking aan haar eigen lot over. Hamas is een terroristische organisatie die niet alleen Israël terroriseert, maar ook de eigen bevolking. Initiatieven om meer humanitaire hulp snel naar Gaza te krijgen, zoals de corridor via zee, verdienen zeker onze steun.

Maar wat zeker zou helpen, is dat Hamas de gijzelaars vrijlaat. Ook vandaag eisen we hun onmiddellijke vrijlating! Al meer dan vijf maanden lang worden ze onder erbarmelijke omstandigheden vastgehouden in de donkere tunnels van Hamas. Over mensen gesproken die dringend hulp nodig hebben! Waarom doet het Rode Kruis niet méér zijn best om toegang tot hen te krijgen? Wat doet de Commissie concreet voor hen? Graag een reactie.

Miguel Urbán Crespo, *autor*. – Señor presidente, estamos asistiendo a un auténtico genocidio en pleno siglo XXI. Un genocidio televisado en donde Israel no solo mata con bombas, sino también con el hambre. El hambre como una auténtica arma de guerra. El ataque contra el convoy humanitario por parte de Israel —que costó más de cien muertes y ochocientos heridos— no fue un error, sino una estrategia deliberada para impedir la distribución de la ayuda humanitaria, para acabar con la posibilidad de la vida en Gaza.

Señorías, desde que la Corte Internacional de Justicia alertara sobre la posibilidad de que Israel estuviera cometiendo un genocidio en Gaza no solo la Unión Europea no ha hecho nada para impedirlo, sino que la situación ha empeorado. La historia juzgará a los culpables, pero también a los cómplices que por acción u omisión permitan este genocidio.

Señorías, decidan en qué lado de la historia quieren estar. Yo lo tengo claro.

Antonio López-Istúriz White, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – Mr President, when dealing with a crisis, we as politicians have a duty to look beyond the ballot box. Unfortunately, half of this Parliament doesn't do it. Twenty-two speakers from the left after me will not speak about Hamas, will not speak about Israeli prisoners. No, they will not.

I will speak about all of them. I will speak about the sufferings of the Palestinian children and people and also the Israeli people, because this is the European Parliament. We speak about all of them, not just one part.

The situation in Gaza is dire and concerning. We want this war to end, at least on this I'm sure we all agree.

Could you please stop interrupting my intervention? Please? Could you please stop? Thank you. Mr President, she's insulting me. Mr President, are you taking note? Ms Ana Miranda. Could you please stop? I have never interrupted her in her interventions about genocide.

President. – Ms Miranda, you can ask for a blue-card and have the possibility of catch-the-eye, but not to interrupt.

Antonio López-Istúriz White, on behalf of the PPE Group. – Thank you very much, Mr President.

The situation in Gaza is dire and concerning. We want this war to end. But it is also our responsibility that the over 100 innocent civilians kidnapped 558 days ago by the Hamas terrorists be released. These are innocent civilians like Tsachi Idan, husband and father of three whose daughter was murdered, or little Kfir Bibas, who turned one year old in captivity.

I hope that someone after me will take good note, will also speak about that. We all have to speak about the drama that's going on also in Gaza, and that here we have to be part also of the solution. I have said this all the times in my interventions and I keep my word.

Udo Bullmann, im Namen der S&D-Fraktion. – Herr Präsident, Frau Kommissarin, wer te Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Ich konnte in der letzten Woche die Region bereisen, und zwar auf beiden Seiten, in Palästina und in Israel. Was wir hier sehen, ist eine unsägliche, eine diabolische Spirale von Hass und Gewalt auf beiden Seiten.

Deswegen tun Sie mir einen Gefallen: Es geht nicht um uns; es geht nicht um die Frage, wie wir uns traditionell diesem Konflikt nähern. Es geht heute und morgen in der Abstimmung nur um eines: Können wir einen Beitrag dazu leisten, dass das Sterben, dass das Hungern, dass das Leiden aufhört? Das muss unsere Messlatte sein, wer te Kolleginnen und Kollegen.

Deswegen brauchen wir einen Waffenstillstand, sofort und umfassend, damit weiteres Töten verhindert wird. Wir brauchen die bedingungslose Freilassung der Geiseln, unschuldig nach wie vor in Haft von Hamas. Und was wir dringend brauchen, ist eine umfassende und sofortige Verbesserung der humanitären Situation mit Versorgung zu Lande, zu Wasser und zu Luft – alles, was hilft.

Lassen Sie uns morgen mit einer starken Stimme sprechen! Hier ist kein Ort für die üblichen Auseinandersetzungen, hier ist Ort für eine starke Stimme des Europäischen Parlaments.

Christophe Grudler, au nom du groupe Renew. – Monsieur le Président, chers collègues, en décembre dernier, je me suis rendu à Rafah, en Égypte, au point de passage de la bande de Gaza, avec une délégation officielle de députés de mon groupe, Renew. J'ai vu l'acheminement et la distribution de l'aide humanitaire être entravés par les bombardements, les combats et les destructions. J'ai vu la détresse de la population civile gazaouie, qui n'a rien à voir avec le conflit, celle des enfants innocents, mutilés, mourant chaque jour de malnutrition, de déshydratation ou de bombardements.

Sur place, nous appelions déjà à un cessez-le-feu immédiat, au déblocage des convois humanitaires et alimentaires et à la libération de tous les otages. Où en sommes-nous, trois mois après? Nous ne pouvons pas tourner le dos à cette situation. Avec cette résolution, le Parlement européen doit réaffirmer que les attaques contre les livraisons d'aide alimentaire sont intolérables, injustifiables et indéfendables. Cette catastrophe humanitaire doit cesser, maintenant.

Mounir Satouri, au nom du groupe Verts/ALE. – Monsieur le Président, cela fait cinq mois. Cinq mois de siège total à Gaza. Ce siège, il a un nom: c'est un crime de guerre. Aux morts sous les bombes s'ajoutent désormais les morts de la faim. Alors je salue le petit pas en avant que constitue cette résolution, qui dénonce enfin la situation humanitaire et appelle à un cessez-le-feu.

Mais il faut arrêter l'hypocrisie. Ce Parlement refuse toujours de nommer clairement les responsables. À Gaza, il n'y a pas eu de tremblement de terre. À Gaza, il n'y a pas eu d'inondation. À Gaza, il y a un siège qui affame, qui sème volontairement le chaos. Il y a des femmes, des enfants qui meurent, des gens qui n'ont plus de moyens de se soigner depuis cinq mois. Alors arrêtez l'hypocrisie. Nommez les responsables, à savoir Israël et le gouvernement de Nétanyahou. Nommez les responsables, et votez notre amendement qui appelle à une levée du siège total.

Je vous demande aussi solennellement d'engager le Parlement à tout faire pour prévenir la mise en place d'un génocide à Gaza. Il en va de notre responsabilité, de nos valeurs devant l'histoire.

Assita Kanko, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Mr President, dear colleagues, Hamas calls for ceasefire but consistently rejected to free the remaining hostages, hostages held in captivity in tunnels potentially funded by Western money, hostages to whom access by the International Committee of the Red Cross was denied. Recently there was a manifestation in Brussels calling for a ceasefire. But I heard nobody talk about the atrocities committed by Hamas, and that view is becoming more and more mainstream in our media.

We must not forget what ignited this horrible situation for ordinary Palestinians. The Hamas assault on Israel, in which it killed, raped and tortured over a thousand men, women and children and took at least 240 people to Gaza as hostages. Calling just for a ceasefire is, to a certain degree, saying to Hamas, 'Well, you can try it again tomorrow.'

Dear colleagues, I am strongly convinced that there will be no prospects for peace, security, stability and prosperity for Gaza, as well as for Palestinian-Israeli reconciliation, as long as Hamas and other terrorist groups will play any role in the Gaza Strip. I support the continuation of humanitarian aid entering Gaza by road, air and sea, and stressed that it must reach those civilians in need, not Hamas, not UNWRA.

The disbursement of aid has to be organised in such a way that chaotic scenes and Hamas taking over aid convoys and redirecting aid to its own fighters are prevented. EU funds, which in the past were provided to UNWRA, should in the future be given to the UN Development Programme, UN Refugee Agency and the World Food Programme.

Stop fuelling Hamas, for the sake of the Palestinian people, for the sake of the Jewish State, for the sake of global peace and security – Hamas must end.

Sylvia Limmer, *im Namen der ID-Fraktion*. – Herr Präsident! Die Bevölkerung in Gaza leidet, ja, und mit Sicherheit sind viele Unschuldige betroffen. Aber Israel hat das Recht, nicht nur das Recht, sondern die Pflicht, dafür zu sorgen, dass sich der 7. Oktober niemals wiederholt.

70 % der Palästinenser befürworteten nach einer Befragung den Terroranschlag, und unter den feigen Mördern waren laut Berichten auch viele Zivilisten. Mir selbst wollen die Bilder von jubelnden Palästinensern nach dem Terroranschlag am 11. September 2001 nicht mehr aus dem Kopf. Wo sind die arabisch-muslimischen Brüder vor Ort, wenn es um die Not leidende Bevölkerung geht? Warum wird Israel für geschlossene Grenzübergänge kritisiert, nicht aber Ägypten und Jordanien? Und was ist mit der humanitären Situation der Geiseln, wer ist deren Fürsprecher? Übrigens ein Israel, das trotz täglichem Raketenterror und Attentaten jahrelang die Grundversorgung in Gaza lieferte.

I stand with Israel, und wir sollten das alle tun.

Idoia Villanueva Ruiz, *en nombre del Grupo The Left*. – Señor presidente, llevamos cinco meses de genocidio planificado por Israel en Gaza. Bombardeos, asesinatos, desplazamientos forzados y uso de las medicinas, el hambre y la sed como armas de tortura sobre inocentes. Israel no solo bloquea la entrada de ayuda humanitaria, sino que ataca los pocos convoyes que pasan.

Y mientras, la Unión Europea ¿qué hace? Se mantiene impasible ante esta barbarie. Ni una sola sanción o medida para que Israel cumpla con el fallo de la Corte Internacional y detenga este genocidio. Ni una sola medida para asegurar la entrada de los dos mil camiones con ayuda humanitaria que hoy Israel bloquea en la frontera con Egipto.

Ahora bien, Europa sí sigue comprando y vendiendo armas a espaldas a Israel. Esto, señorías, se llama complicidad con los asesinos. Europa participa hoy en el asesinato de decenas de miles de personas. Estamos asesinando nuestra credibilidad. Basta de falsa propaganda. Necesitamos desbloquear la entrada de ayuda humanitaria ya, no bases de los Estados Unidos en Gaza. Necesitamos un alto al fuego inmediato y permanente. Y, por una vez, el fin de la impunidad.

Antoni Comín i Oliveres (NI). – Señor presidente, solo un alto el fuego en Gaza permitirá evitar la hambruna a la que está expuesta ahora mismo la población palestina de la Franja. ¿Más muertos inocentes? ¿Y lo miraremos sin hacer nada?

Por eso exigimos al Gobierno de Israel un alto el fuego, sin condiciones e inmediato. De la misma manera que exigimos a Hamás, con la misma contundencia, la liberación de todos los rehenes, también sin condiciones y también inmediata, por supuesto. Por esto condenamos de forma inequívoca y rotunda la ofensiva militar israelí en Gaza, que está matando a decenas de miles de personas inocentes.

La Unión Europea no puede seguir exportando armas a Israel cuando sabemos que están siendo utilizadas en esta espantosa masacre. No podemos ser cómplices de un genocidio. Y con la misma rotundidad condenamos el atentado de Hamás del 7 de octubre, que acabó con la vida de más de mil inocentes en Israel. Por supuesto.

La solución sigue siendo, hoy como ayer, la que en su día dictaron las Naciones Unidas: dos Estados. El Estado palestino es un derecho del pueblo palestino, pero es también la única garantía real para que el Estado de Israel pueda vivir seguro y en paz. Así, el reconocimiento del Estado palestino, del todo necesario, irá en beneficio de los dos pueblos: del pueblo palestino y del pueblo israelí.

Elena Yoncheva (S&D). – Monsieur le Président, merci de me donner la parole. Chers collègues, nous avons besoin d'une initiative européenne pour la paix qui permette d'aider les civils à Gaza et de libérer les otages détenus par le Hamas. Oui, l'aide humanitaire entrant à Gaza via Chypre constitue une aide vitale. Mais l'Europe peut et doit faire davantage pour renforcer l'efficacité de l'aide humanitaire. Cela implique d'accentuer les efforts diplomatiques entre l'Union et les pays de la région voisins du conflit, de solliciter le soutien logistique de ces derniers et de fournir des ressources financières supplémentaires afin de garantir une fourniture efficace. En outre, la limitation de l'accès à Gaza pour les organisations humanitaires constitue un défi important. L'Europe doit plaider en faveur d'une plus grande transparence et d'une meilleure coopération de la part de toutes les parties concernées.

Abir Al-Sahlani (Renew). – Mr President, it's not just bombs that are killing children in Palestine. Mass starvation is a silent killer in Gaza. Premature babies die of malnutrition, newborn babies die because their mothers are too dehydrated to feed them, and there is no baby formula. Children die because their bodies start to break down due to lack of nutrition and clean water. Pregnant women die because they can no longer support two lives in one body.

How can we let this go on? Because we are letting this go on, and on, and on – for five months now. This is not starvation caused by a natural disaster or an order by God. This is mass starvation used as a weapon of war. This this action must be stopped! International law demands it: an immediate ceasefire! Let the aid enter Gaza. It is as simple as that. It all comes down to what you want to do: either we save the lives now, or we keep using starvation as a weapon in the war.

Ana Miranda (Verts/ALE). – Señor presidente, es inaceptable que Israel esté usando el hambre e impidiendo la entrada humanitaria como arma de guerra en su afán de venganza. He estado en el paso fronterizo de Rafah. Vi el bloqueo de más de dos mil camiones mientras hay niños que mueren por desnutrición y medio millón de personas está en riesgo de hambruna en Gaza. Es indefendible que Israel haya asesinado a 31 000 personas, a más niños en estos cinco meses de los que han muerto en todos los conflictos armados juntos en este año.

Israel es responsable, pero también Europa es responsable. Porque tenemos que parar esta impunidad ante el genocidio que está cometiendo Israel. Europa y el mundo son responsables si no se apoya un alto al fuego permanente, si no se apoya el bloqueo humanitario. Si se hace dentro de una semana, de un mes, no vale: tiene que ser ahora. Esto es una barbarie, un genocidio. Hay que parar y, sobre todo, parar de exportar armas.

Si no deciden poner fin a esta catástrofe humanitaria provocada por Israel en la Franja de Gaza, las imágenes de los niños desnutridos, de los presos desnudos y maniatados, de los cientos de personas hambrientas, aplastadas por tanques mientras buscan comida, les perseguirán siempre, harán que les tiemble la conciencia, si es que todavía tienen algo de conciencia y algo de humanidad.

Joachim Stanisław Brudziński (ECR). – Panie Przewodniczący! Po raz kolejny debatujemy w tej izbie o dramacie tysięcy Bogu ducha winnych palestyńskich cywilów, a co szczególnie poruszające – o cierpieniu i śmierci tysięcy palestyńskich dzieci. Dzieci, którym odebrano nie tylko dzieciństwo, ale również prawo do życia, marzeń i godności. Przerzucamy się argumentami, kto jest bardziej winny: Izrael czy Hamas, ale chyba dla wszystkich oczywiste jest, że ta sytuacja, która ma miejsce dzisiaj w Gazie, jest skutkiem barbarzyńskiego ataku 7 października ubiegłego roku przez terrorystów Hamasu na państwo Izrael. Wojna, która od wieków toczy się pomiędzy synami Abrahama i Ismaila, jest tak samo okrutna i bezsensowna, jak bezsensowny i okrutny jest terroryzm Hamasu, jak bezsensowna i okrutna jest agresja wymierzona przez armię Izraela w cywili w Strefie Gazy.

Po raz kolejny chciałbym jednak zwrócić uwagę tych wszystkich, którzy przerzucają się argumentami, która ze stron tego konfliktu jest bardziej winna, że jest inny barbarzyńca podgrzewający ten konflikt i czerpiący z tego konfliktu wizerunkowe i polityczne zyski. Tym barbarzyńcą jest Putin, dla którego destabilizacja na Bliskim Wschodzie, wciąganie w tę sytuację Stanów Zjednoczonych, rewoltowanie młodzieży na ulicach naszych miast jest znakomitą zasłoną dymną dla tego, co robi na Ukrainie.

Κωνσταντίνος Αρβανίτης (The Left). – Κύριε Πρόεδρε, κύριοι συνάδελφοι, πριν λίγη ώρα μια βόμβα χτύπησε μια αποθήκη τροφίμων στη Γάζα. Έχουμε νεκρούς και τραυματίες. Αυτός ήταν ο στόχος. Το Ισραήλ λοιπόν βεβαίως έχει δικαίωμα. Ο παλαιστινιακός λαός έχει κανένα δικαίωμα να υπάρχει; Πέντε μήνες γενοκτονικής βίας, 35.000 θάνατοι, νεκρά παιδιά, 160 παιδιά τη μέρα, 45 δημοσιογράφοι. Και χθες είδαμε και τα πλάνα με βασανισμούς γιατρών από ισραηλινές δυνάμεις. Αυτό που συμβαίνει είναι έγκλημα πολέμου. Μετά την καταδικαστέα φυσικά επίθεση, αλλά από την άλλη η κυβέρνηση Νετανιάχου βρήκε την καλύτερη και βολική αφορμή να προχωρήσει στη μαζικότερη εκτόπιση πληθυσμού και στην ολοκλήρωση του σχεδίου αφανισμού ενός ολόκληρου λαού, του παλαιστινιακού.

Αυτό που συμβαίνει στη Γάζα είναι συνέχεια ενός χρόνιου εγκλήματος από το 1948: αποφάσεις του Οργανισμού Ηνωμένων Εθνών. Δεν θα ξαναγράψουμε την ιστορία εδώ πάλι από την αρχή. Όπως και το άλλο έγκλημα στην Κύπρο με στρατό κατοχής. Η Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση έχει ευθύνες. Τι πρέπει να γίνει; Το Ισραήλ παρανομεί. Να ανοίξει άμεσα όλους τους διαδρόμους που έχει κλείσει για την παροχή ανθρωπιστικής βοήθειας. Αναστολή της συμφωνίας σύνδεσης με το Ισραήλ μέχρι να ευθυγραμμιστεί. Και φυσικά στήριξη και οικονομική στήριξη στην UNRWA, καθώς είναι ο μόνος οργανισμός. Αυτή είναι η άποψη της Αριστεράς.

Dino Giarrusso (NI). – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, la politica di aggressione criminale di Netanyahu non solo continua, ma raggiunge vette di orrore e disumanità insopportabili, vomitevoli, indegne. Gaza è l'inferno in terra.

Quando si attaccano degli esseri umani che, stremati dalla fame, stanno ricevendo aiuti umanitari, ci si rende responsabili di un'ignominia che getta vergogna non solo su chi preme il grilletto e uccide, ma sull'intera umanità che non riesce a fermare questo orrore, cui assistiamo da mesi come se fosse normale. No, non è normale! È un abisso di morte, è una sconfitta della civiltà, dell'umanità, della dignità umana.

E ogni bambino palestinese ucciso dalle armi o dalla fame è una coltellata nella carne viva delle istituzioni e delle organizzazioni internazionali, che di pace sanno parlare ma non sono capaci di bloccare questa versione così squallida e feroce di una guerra brutale.

Tanti ebrei coraggiosi in tutto il mondo protestano con forza contro la condotta di Netanyahu a Gaza. E cosa fa l'Europa? Perché non ha il coraggio di prendere posizioni nette? Di sanzionare questa violazione costante dei diritti umani? Perché non mette il proprio corpo fra chi uccide e chi muore?

A che serve l'Europa, se non sa fare nulla su Gaza?

Brando Benifei (S&D). – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, la carestia a Gaza è molto più di un rischio, è la drammatica realtà che stanno vivendo in queste ore bambini, donne e uomini, vittime della strategia del governo di Netanyahu.

L'ha detto anche l'Alto rappresentante Borrell: la crisi umanitaria a Gaza non è un disastro naturale, Israele sta usando la fame come arma di guerra.

Quello che sta accadendo al varco di Rafah è inumano e l'ha constatato sul posto una delegazione di parlamentari di varie forze politiche, a partire dal Partito Democratico italiano: acqua, cibo, medicinali, generatori per ospedali non possono varcare il confine.

Per questo ho depositato io stesso, con alcuni colleghi, un'interrogazione parlamentare rivolta alla Commissione europea per impegnarsi e per sbloccare questi aiuti umanitari finanziati con fondi europei fermi al varco.

Ma l'Europa deve alzare la voce adesso: stop alla fame come arma di guerra! Serve un cessate il fuoco immediato per negoziare la liberazione degli esseri umani ostaggio dei terroristi di Hamas, e credo che sia il momento che il governo Netanyahu vada a casa, che Netanyahu si dimetta e lasci spazio a una nuova stagione che possa costruire la pace.

Michael Kauch (Renew). – Herr Präsident, meine Damen und Herren! Weil ich an der Seite Israels stehe, fordere ich die israelische Regierung auf, die humanitäre Situation in Gaza unverzüglich zu verbessern, Hilfskonvois in die Region zu lassen und alles zu tun, um den Hunger in Gaza, die dramatische Unterversorgung mit Gesundheit zu beenden.

Aber was ich in dieser Debatte gehört habe, insbesondere von der politischen Linken, finde ich skandalös. Hier wird eine Täter-Opfer-Umkehr betrieben, wo ich mich frage, ob das Ausfluss eines linken Antisemitismus ist. Denn es war die Hamas, die im Oktober angegriffen hat, und zwar nicht nur mit einem Terrorangriff, sondern mit regelmäßigen, über Monate gehenden Raketenangriffen auf die israelische Zivilbevölkerung.

Und jetzt so zu tun, als sei nur Israel schuld an der Situation, verkennt die Zusammenhänge. Deshalb ist die einzige Möglichkeit, diesen Konflikt zu beenden, eine Zweistaatenlösung; und dazu muss die Hamas ihre Herrschaft in Gaza verlieren.

Margrete Auken (Verts/ALE). – Hr. formand »Har I gjort jer klart, at vores civilisation reelt er truet?« Situationen er indlysende slem for den mishandlede befolkning i Gaza, men alt forværres, når flertallet her og blandt regeringerne ikke vover at nævne Israels 57 års besættelse af Palæstina, som den virkelighed er sket i. En besættelse, som kun er blevet værre og værre, og nu i Gaza kulminerer i, hvad ICJ ikke afviser er et folkedrab. Til og med tøver man med at gøre det tydeligt, hvad Gazas lidelser skyldes. Israels kyniske brug af sult, tørst og sygdom som våben mod den indespærrede befolkning oven i skyderier og bombardementer. Så er det reelt vores civilisation, der står på spil, et sammenbrud af den internationale retsorden. EU's hykleri og dobbeltmoral blinker skarpt ud over hele stjernehimlen. Vi må omgående presse Israel til at følge ICJ's pålæg. Vi må omgående vise Gaza og resten af verden, at vi mener det, når vi insisterer på menneskerettigheder og retsstatsprincippet. Det er forhåbentlig ikke for sent.

Leila Chaïbi (The Left). – Monsieur le Président, après les bombes et les obus, c'est la faim qui sème la mort à Gaza. En refusant d'y laisser entrer les camions d'aide humanitaire, Israël affame sciemment plus de 2 millions de Gazaouis. Je veux rappeler ici que la résolution 2712 du Conseil de sécurité des Nations unies demande expressément de garantir l'approvisionnement en nourriture. À l'inverse, Israël organise la famine. Il y a quelques heures à peine, aujourd'hui, Israël a bombardé un des derniers centres de distribution alimentaire de l'ONU, et cela deux semaines après que Tsahal a fait feu sur une distribution de nourriture. Ils venaient chercher du pain, ils ont reçu des bombes...

Le gouvernement israélien utilise la famine comme une arme de guerre dans son entreprise génocidaire. Alors, face à ce carnage, il ne faut pas seulement des résolutions, il faut des sanctions. L'Union européenne doit dès aujourd'hui décréter un embargo sur l'envoi d'armes et dès aujourd'hui suspendre l'accord d'association qui la lie à Israël. Pas dans un mois, pas dans une semaine: c'est immédiatement qu'il faut agir.

Matjaž Nemec (S&D). – Gospod predsednik. V Gazi ljudje še naprej umirajo in stradajo. Več sto tisoč ljudi se dnevno sooča s kroničnim pomanjkanjem hrane in humanitarne pomoči, predvsem otroci in ženske. Izrael genocid nad palestinskim narodom v Gazi izvaja tudi s stradanjem.

Dovolj je bilo leporečenja. Ljudje v Gazi ne potrebujejo naših lepih besed. Potrebujejo predvsem naša dejanja.

Zahtevamo takojšnje in trajno prekinitev ognja in odprtje neoviranega koridorja za dostavo nujne humanitarne pomoči. In zahtevamo ukrepanje vseh držav in Varnostnega sveta Združenih narodov.

Neukrepanje proti Izraelu legitimira vojne zločine v Gazi. Potrebujemo radikalne spremembe v odnosu do agresorja. Skrajni čas je, spoštovani, da ta hiša evropske demokracije soglasno in nedvoumno zahteva takojšnje in trajno premirje. Dovolj je dovolj.

Barry Andrews (Renew). – Mr President, Commissioner, colleagues, first of all I would like to applaud the many Irish artists who have refused to participate in the South by Southwest Festival over the issue of US Army sponsorship. It is correct to shift the focus onto the issue of arms exports to Israel.

Last month, the US Senate approved a military aid package of USD 14.5 billion. I can only summarise the official EU and US policy as one of wanting well-fed corpses. Providing aid to Gaza with one hand and bombs to Israel with the other is absurd. Grippled by a long-overdue crisis of conscience, the US and the EU make great play of airdrops, maritime corridors and calls for Israel to open new humanitarian routes.

What is the logic here? Do they really think that innocent Gazan women and children will be grateful for aid sent to them by the same people that supply arms targeted at them? I would be embarrassed and ashamed to be associated with such a perverse policy.

Alice Kuhnke (Verts/ALE). – Herr talman! Det tog nästan sex månader, fler än 30 000 döda, varav de flesta är kvinnor och barn, och att en domstol varnade för folkmord innan en majoritet av EU-parlamentets folkvalda ställde sig bakom det självklara – att vi kräver en permanent vapenvila.

Det är något allvarligt fel med medmänskligheten. Barnen dör i Gaza, inte bara av bomber utan av svält. Ingen plats är säker. Men nu, när ni äntligen ställt er bakom våra krav om permanent vapenvila, kan ni också lyssna till våra andra krav.

Pausa EU:s handelsavtal med Israel. Inför fullt vapenembargo. Sätt maximal press på Israel att följa den order som domstolen ICJ har utfärdat. Israels regering måste sluta döda oskyldiga. Hjälp måste in.

Chris MacManus (The Left). – Mr President, *a chairde*, what is happening in Gaza is a live-streamed genocide, a humanitarian catastrophe broadcast in real time. How much horror must the people of Gaza endure before we act? How many more children must die before we hold Netanyahu's Government accountable?

The mass starvation in Gaza and the attacks on humanitarian aid deliveries must be called out for what they are: war crimes. The EU needs to send a clear signal to the Netanyahu regime with the immediate suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement. There can be no trade deals with war criminals.

Colleagues, future generations will ask us what we did when this genocide unfolded. Did we stand for peace, for ceasefire, or did we stand with war criminals? President von der Leyen has made it clear where she stands. History will not be kind to those who support her stance.

Lina Gálvez Muñoz (S&D). – Señor presidente, señora comisaria, la situación en Gaza es atroz y empeora cada minuto: la mortífera ofensiva militar de Israel, el bloqueo de una parte de la ayuda humanitaria por el Gobierno de Netanyahu, la destrucción de infraestructuras —incluidos hospitales—, muerte, hambre, vulneración de derechos humanos... Ya más de 31 000 palestinos muertos. Muchísimas mujeres, niños, niñas.

Nadie niega el derecho a defenderse de Israel, pero la desproporción... Su respuesta es inhumana y contraria al Derecho internacional, como también lo es privar a la población de productos esenciales —harina, agua, medicinas—, creando, según las Naciones Unidas, niveles catastróficos de privación y falta de comida. Condiciones inhumanas para las mujeres, su menstruación, sus partos. La ayuda desde el aire no es efectiva y, además, ha resultado ser peligrosa. Hay que desbloquear la ayuda por tierra, tener un alto al fuego, liberar a los rehenes de forma inmediata e incondicional y avanzar en la solución del reconocimiento del Estado palestino.

La Unión Europea tiene que evaluar con seriedad si Israel está cumpliendo el Acuerdo de Asociación. No podemos mirar para otra parte. Sería indecente hacerlo.

Salima Yenbou (Renew). – Monsieur le Président, la situation à Gaza est inhumaine. L'urgence est absolue: la destruction massive de Gaza par les bombardements, le déplacement forcé des Gazaouis et le blocage de l'aide humanitaire ont conduit Gaza à une famine catastrophique. Nous ne pouvons que condamner avec la plus grande fermeté l'entrave à l'aide humanitaire orchestrée par Israël et les attaques contre les convois, l'une ayant fait plus de 120 morts le 29 février dernier, et une autre ayant eu lieu aujourd'hui encore à Rafah.

Bien sûr qu'il faut une enquête internationale indépendante, mais cela suffit, cette horreur dans l'horreur! Les largages ne sauront suffire à nourrir et à soigner plus de 2 millions de personnes. Nous exhortons les autorités israéliennes à garantir d'urgence des accès sûrs à l'aide humanitaire. Le droit d'Israël à la légitime défense ne saurait en aucun cas justifier la mort et la famine des civils palestiniens, de ces hommes, de ces femmes et de ces enfants morts par milliers depuis cinq mois.

Un cessez-le-feu permanent et immédiat est vital pour qu'aucune nouvelle vie supplémentaire ne soit enlevée, pour que l'aide humanitaire soit enfin apportée au peuple palestinien, pour que tous les otages israéliens soient libérés et pour qu'enfin la solution à deux États soit mise en œuvre, pour une paix durable.

Piernicola Pedicini (Verts/ALE). – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, parlare di «rischio» di attacchi militari agli aiuti umanitari dopo che i fatti sono già successi, la dice lunga sull'ipocrisia di quest'Aula.

Io voglio ricordare che il trattato sull'Unione europea, la Carta delle Nazioni Unite, l'Atto finale di Helsinki e la Carta di Parigi impongono di preservare la pace, di prevenire i conflitti e di astenersi dalla minaccia e dall'uso, anche indiretto, della forza.

Eppure i nostri capi di Stato e di governo sono andati a stringere la mano prontamente a Netanyahu mentre commetteva crimini di guerra e adesso non prendono le distanze da Israele neanche davanti alla vergogna dei civili ridotti alla fame e alla sete.

Però noi abbiamo la Presidente von der Leyen che si ricandida promuovendo il riarmo; abbiamo Macron che dice che dobbiamo mandare i nostri militari in guerra. Ma non saranno i figli di Macron o i figli della von der Leyen ad andare in guerra, saranno come al solito i figli dei poveri che dovranno morire.

Perciò io spero davvero che alle prossime elezioni europee i poveri, che sono tanti proprio grazie a queste persone, possano davvero mandare a casa per sempre Macron, von der Leyen e tutta questa gente amica delle guerre.

President. – Dear colleagues, we now come to catch-the-eye. As I have a long list of colleagues who are interested in speaking, I will take nine people, and only those who were present for the whole of the debate. There is a clear order.

(Catch-the-eye procedure)

Michaela Šojdrová (PPE). – Mr President, let me reiterate our strongest condemnation of the barbaric attacks by Hamas on Israel. Israel has the right to defend itself against this terrorist organisation. Hamas is still holding a number of hostages, including women, elderly and the wounded. It is Hamas which refuses to release them and rejects the six-week ceasefire that is on the table, and instead favours continuing the war.

In Gaza, we see humanitarian disaster. Almost 16% of children in Gaza are already suffering from acute malnutrition. Families have been drinking unsafe water for months and spend the days without eating. They are being used as human shields. So we demand immediate release of the hostages. This should be followed by the reconstruction of infrastructure to prevent the worsening of the catastrophic famine.

Domènec Ruiz Devesa (S&D). – Señor presidente, es evidente —lo hemos repetido muchos diputados— que se están cometiendo crímenes de guerra en Palestina. El bombardeo indiscriminado de civiles es un crimen de guerra. El uso de las hambrunas como arma de guerra es un crimen de guerra. Y, ante esto, tenemos que reaccionar con fuerza como Unión Europea. Y creo que desde el Parlamento ya hemos mandado señales muy claras. Necesitamos que el Consejo actúe. Y ¿qué puede hacer el Consejo al respecto?

Como se ha dicho, tenemos que revisar el Acuerdo de Asociación con Israel para verificar si Israel está cumpliendo con sus obligaciones en el marco de este Acuerdo en materia de derechos fundamentales.

En segundo lugar, podemos reconocer, como Estados miembros de la Unión Europea, al Estado palestino.

Y, en tercer lugar, tenemos que seguir reclamando que Israel cese sus actividades militares para que podamos proceder a actividades de carácter humanitario, a la entrega de alimentos por tierra, mar y aire.

Irena Joveva (Renew). – Gospod predsednik. To je Yazan. In to je za tiste, ki se sprenevedate. Yazan postal obraz lakote v Gazi. Zapomnite si ga tisti, ki boste spet proti takojšnjemu premirju. Tisti, ki ste še (*Predsednik prekinje govornico.*) vedno proti sankcijam Izraela.

Neštetokrat smo obtožili Hamas, seveda smo, še vedno ga. Neštetokrat smo tudi pozvali Izrael, naj pravico do samoobrambe izvaja v skladu z mednarodnim pravom. In? In več deset tisoč Palestincev je mrtvih in Yazan ni edini otrok, ki je umrl zaradi lakote. Žal tudi ni zadnji.

Ne rečem, da kot Unija ne počnemo nič, rečem pa, da počnemo daleč premalo. Kje je suspenz pridružitvenega sporazuma EU-Izrael, kje so sankcije zoper Netanjahuja. Ni vse tako zelo zapleteno, a veste. Ampak večina vas noče.

Ursuli von der Leyen je lažje reči, da v Gazi potrebujejo takojšen humanitarni premor, ki bo privedel do prekinitve ognja. Kakšen premor? Prekinitve ognja – takoj! Nehajte se sprenevedati. Noben otrok na tem svetu ne bi smel gledati v nebo in se spraševati, kaj bo padlo. Smrt ali večerja. Nehajte.

Rosa D'Amato (Verts/ALE). – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, «porto quotidianamente nel cuore con dolore la sofferenza delle popolazioni in Palestina e in Israele, dovuta alle ostilità in corso. Le migliaia di morti, di feriti, di sfollati, le immani distruzioni causano dolore, e questo con conseguenze tremende sui piccoli».

Incoraggio a continuare i negoziati per un immediato cessate il fuoco a Gaza e in tutta la regione, affinché gli ostaggi siano subito liberati e la popolazione civile possa avere accesso sicuro agli aiuti umanitari.

«Mi domando davvero: si pensa di costruire un mondo migliore in questo modo? Davvero si pensa di raggiungere così la pace? Basta, per favore! Diciamo tutti: basta, per favore, fermatevi!». Non sono parole mie, sono le parole del Papa.

Clare Daly (The Left). – Mr President, as the people of Gaza face agonising death from orchestrated starvation, the EU is so concerned about the humanitarian situation that some of its Member States cut the UNRWA funding and increased arms to Israel. The US is so troubled, it's building a pier and air-dropping food, but there's hundreds of trucks already at the border-crossing full of supplies. It's just they're being prevented from crossing by the same Israel that the US is sending another USD 17.6 billion in military assistance to. What sort of sick monsters are these? There would be no famine or genocide in Gaza if Biden restrained Israel. His support has been conscious and unconditional.

So as the Irish politicians shamefully cross the Atlantic to doff the cap for St Patrick's Day and pay homage to this butcher, they should remember that our history and relationship with the US comes from our famine. Irish Americans should know the people of Ireland stand against genocide.

Seasaimid leis an Phailistín. Tiocfaidh bhur lá.

Seán Kelly (PPE). – A *Uachtarán*, in my 15 years in the European Parliament, this is the longest list I've ever seen for an urgency debate. Not surprising, because I think all right-minded people were absolutely appalled at Hamas's brutal, evil attack on innocent Israelis on 7 October.

But many of those right-minded people are now equally appalled at Netanyahu's over-the-top reaction. The slaughter of the innocent, especially women and children – who hadn't hand, act or part in Hamas's attack on Israel – is not acceptable.

We, as a Parliament, have to call for immediate humanitarian aid for the poor, starving people of Gaza. Also, there must be an unconditional release of all hostages.

And, thirdly, a ceasefire must be established immediately, so that peace can be brought about here and get a political solution, a two-state solution. That's the only solution that's possible, because this is a place which we all regard with affection: it's the Holy Land, but an unholy war has been going on there for too long. It's time to stop it.

Milan Brglez (S&D). – Gospod predsednik. Posebni poročevalci Združenih narodov in strokovnjaki Sveta Združenih narodov za človekove pravice so izraelske napade in dostave humanitarne pomoči označili kot masaker v pogojih neizogibne grožnje stradanja.

Visoki predstavnik EU za zunanje zadeve in varnostno politiko upravičeno govori o tem, da Izrael lakoto uporablja kot metodo vojskovanja. Dolgotrajnost pogubnega humanitarnega položaja palestinskega civilnega prebivalstva, predvsem žensk in otrok na območju Gaze, ki so poleg neposrednih groženj oboroženih spopadov podvrženi še podhranjenosti, dehidraciji, lakoti in nalezljivim boleznim, dosega raven, ko jo bomo žal dolžni primerjati s holodomorom kot obliko genocida.

Omogočiti pretok humanitarne pomoči je minimalna osnovna humanitarna obveznost, ki jo mora Izrael zagotoviti brezpogojno in ne sme uporabljati kot pogajalsko sredstvo tekom pogajanj o nujnem premirju. Prav tako mora Hamas brezpogojno izpustiti talce.

Zato na tem mestu pozivam izraelsko vlado in Hamas, pa tudi države Evropske unije k doslednemu in brezpogojnem spoštovanju temeljnih skupnih načel mednarodnega humanitarnega prava, še zlasti načel človečnosti, nevtralnosti, nepristranskosti in neodvisnosti.

Karen Melchior (Renew). – Hr. formand! Det, vi diskuterer her i dag, er massehungersnød. En befolkning, der er blevet holdt som gidsler af en terrororganisation, Hamas, gennem næsten 20 år. Grænseovergange, der har været lukket i årevis. Børn, gravide og gamle bedsteforældre, som enten har lavet en dukke som denne eller leger med den. De er ikke Hamas. De har behov for, at der bliver lukket op for grænseovergangene, og at de får den mad, som de har brug for. Vi taler om en masshungersnød, som dræber børn, gravide og gamle bedsteforældre.

Marc Botenga (The Left). – Monsieur le Président, écoutez, après plus de 12 300 enfants palestiniens tués par Israël, ce qui est plus en quelques mois qu'en quatre ans de guerre partout dans le monde, Israël est maintenant en train d'affamer une population entière, et des dizaines d'enfants sont déjà morts de malnutrition. Ceux qui le nient n'ont pas écouté les dirigeants israéliens: en octobre déjà le ministre de la défense l'avait annoncé. Il avait dit: pas d'eau, pas de nourriture pour les Palestiniens, pas de nourriture pour ces animaux humains. Ils avaient donc annoncé leur politique génocidaire!

Face à cela, qu'est-ce que vous avez fait? Rien. Rien! Pis: l'Union européenne a renforcé ses liens avec Israël, investissant, donnant le feu vert à un nouveau gazoduc qui la reliera à l'État hébreu, lui accordant des prêts avantageux, lui exprimant tout son soutien. Rien! Vous êtes complices! Il faut un embargo militaire maintenant, sinon vos mains seront remplies de sang!

(End of catch-the-eye procedure)

President. – It is my decision how many people get the floor. I said nine people. I had much more. Nine people – balanced politically, balanced regionally – and that was the decision. I mentioned it before.

Elisa Ferreira, Member of the Commission. – Mr President, I'm speaking here on behalf of the High Representative / Vice-President, Josep Borrell, who is on mission to the United Nations.

We are in the fifth month of this terrible war between Israel and Hamas, which has taken tens of thousands of lives and brought so much destruction across Gaza. The tragic events that we continue to see every day critically remind us about the absolute urgency to end the fighting, massively increase humanitarian aid and free the remaining hostages.

The European Union has fully supported the negotiations for another humanitarian pause, leading to a sustainable ceasefire and release of hostages. The European Union has repeatedly stressed the right of Israel to defend its citizens in the face of the horrible and indiscriminate terrorist attack of 7 October. These rights must be exercised in line with international humanitarian and human rights law. This means that the protection of civilians must remain a priority.

We have witnessed horrific images, such as those of 29 February in the northern part of Gaza, where over 100 Palestinians were killed while trying to access humanitarian aid deliveries. Another 700 people were injured. People in Gaza are starving. The health system is in a state of collapse. We are very concerned about the humanitarian consequences of a possible ground operation in Rafah.

The international community needs to take action to protect civilians from both starvation and violence. All those concerned about the situation in Gaza should put pressure on the Israeli Government to grant unimpeded humanitarian land access without blocking convoys. Other options are not enough. Airdrops are good, but insufficient. Sea corridors are needed, but take time. And time is of the essence.

The European Union will continue supporting the United Nations and other humanitarian actors, sparing no effort to contribute to alleviating the humanitarian disaster for the Palestinian population. In addition to the EUR 125 million for humanitarian assistance in 2024, the European Union recently agreed an additional EUR 68 million to support the Palestinian people across the region. We will work with key partners, such as the Red Cross and the Red Crescent. We will also continue to support UNRWA in its central role in Gaza and elsewhere in the region. And we have just paid the first EUR 50 million of the 2024 envelope.

An immediate humanitarian pause, leading to a lasting ceasefire, is urgently needed to enable the large-scale delivery of humanitarian aid and the protection of civilians in Gaza.

Der Präsident. – Die Aussprache ist damit geschlossen. Zum Abschluss der Aussprache wurden 6 Entschließungsanträge eingereicht.

Die Abstimmung findet am Donnerstag, 14. März 2024, statt.

Schriftliche Erklärungen (Artikel 171)

João Pimenta Lopes (The Left), por escrito. – O Parlamento Europeu reiterou a exigência de um cessar-fogo imediato e permanente. Relevante, apesar de tardia e da ausência de ações da UE nesse sentido. Além disso, condena a obstrução à ajuda humanitária; os ataques aos comboios humanitários e contra civis que procuram ajuda, bem como a instalações humanitárias e médicas; o assassinato de trabalhadores humanitários, profissionais de saúde e de jornalistas. Condena o aumento da violência contra palestinianos na Cisjordânia, por colonos e pelo exército israelita, bem como a aceleração da criação de colonatos ilegais em território palestiniano. Reconhece o papel indispensável da UNRWA na região.

Distanciamo-nos, contudo, de alterações aprovadas que, confundindo agressor e agredido, visam desresponsabilizar Israel pela obstrução à ajuda humanitária e pelos ataques aos comboios humanitários. Ou que tentem, de forma mais ou menos velada, condicionar o necessário e urgente cessar-fogo imediato e permanente perante o massacre que Israel perpetua contra o povo Palestino, e procurem distorcer e responsabilizar a resistência palestina pela ausência de solução política e pacífica, ilibando a política de décadas de Israel de humilhação, agressão, ocupação, contra o povo palestino.

As instituições da UE devem usar todos os meios à disposição na exigência e concretização de um cessar-fogo imediato e permanente, bem como do acesso incondicional da ajuda humanitária à população em Gaza.

Laura Ferrara (NI), per iscritto. – Ciò che sta avvenendo a Gaza rappresenta un fallimento in termini di rispetto del diritto internazionale e per l'umanità intera.

L'imminente rischio di una carestia di massa non può essere più ignorato. Le cifre parlano chiaro: più di 30 000 morti e 70 000 feriti, con una situazione disperata di insicurezza alimentare che colpisce gravemente i bambini, con quasi il 16 % di loro che soffre già di malnutrizione. È inaccettabile il blocco degli aiuti umanitari mentre la popolazione stremata continua a subire sofferenze indicibili. Il governo israeliano deve consentire la consegna senza ostacoli e sicura degli aiuti a Gaza, compreso l'accesso al cibo e altre necessità di base.

Occorre un impegno totale da parte della comunità internazionale per evitare la perdita di altre vite civili innocenti, operatori umanitari e giornalisti. È imperativo un cessate il fuoco immediato e permanente. La situazione a Gaza richiede azioni immediate e concrete. Non possiamo restare indifferenti di fronte a una tragedia che si sta consumando davanti agli occhi di tutto il mondo.

20.2 Förtrycket i Afghanistan, inbegripet offentliga avrättningar och våld mot kvinnor

Der Präsident. – Es folgt nun die Aussprache über sechs Entschließungsanträge zum repressiven Umfeld in Afghanistan, darunter öffentliche Hinrichtungen und Gewalt gegen Frauen (2024/2617(RSP))¹.

1 Siehe Protokoll.

Isabel Santos, Autora. – Senhor Presidente, Senhora Comissária, com o regresso dos talibãs ao poder, depois da retirada descoordenada dos Estados Unidos, a barbárie tomou conta do Afeganistão e, mais uma vez, as mulheres têm sido as principais vítimas. Abateu-se de novo sobre elas o pesado manto da invisibilidade e da desumanização, sendo-lhes novamente negado o direito ao ensino, ao trabalho, à livre circulação, à liberdade de expressão e à sua própria identidade.

Mas se tudo isto, já de si, é atroz e inaceitável, as notícias de execuções públicas ultrapassam todas as marcas da brutalidade. A pena de morte é degradante e intolerável nos tempos modernos e as execuções públicas representam um regresso às trevas mais profundas.

É nosso dever apoiar a sociedade civil afegã, ser céleres na atribuição de vistos humanitários às mulheres perseguidas e aos defensores de direitos humanos, bem como exigir a libertação das vítimas de violência contra as mulheres e raparigas em prisões absolutamente degradantes, e a abolição da pena de morte e o fim imediato das execuções públicas.

Petras Auštrevičius, author. – Mr President, Commissioner, dear colleagues, the Taliban regime has turned Afghanistan into a closed country that discriminates against women, kills critics in public and prosecutes ethnic and religious minorities. Women's futures and opportunities are being sacrificed in the name of radicalised Sharia law.

We must condemn loudly and clearly every crime committed by the Taliban against Afghan society and give hope for a different future. I call on Afghanistan's regional neighbours, the Arab League and other cooperating states to influence the Taliban leadership to demand changes in women's rights, education and participation in public life.

The European Union must, has supported, and will continue to support those human rights and educational activities who continue their work in Afghanistan and abroad, providing the necessary services to an Afghan society that deserves a different set of opportunities and prospects for the country.

Tineke Strik, author. – Mr President, Commissioner, it's heartbreaking to conclude that this debate and resolution is a repetition of doing urgent calls for a change in Afghanistan. Because not a single thing has improved for women and girls. The gender apartheid installed by the Taliban is still alive. The human rights and the humanitarian crisis have not improved at all.

But this status quo makes it all the more important that the EU offers support and solidarity to the Afghan population in and outside of the country. But also this is, sadly enough, still far too little and that's also a status quo. Humanitarian organisations still lack funding. Local staff is still stuck without help. Afghans still face pushbacks and rejected asylum applications.

We need to drastically change our policies towards Afghans and give them the support they deserve. Be strong on the five benchmarks, but also support civil society, human rights defenders, women and girls – specifically in their education but also in their health services – and step up our resettlement and humanitarian visa. And last but not least, finally complete the evacuation of the Afghan local staff that worked for EU missions and operations.

Please do what we promised once because if the EU doesn't care for them, no one will.

Anna Fotyga, *author*. – Mr President, no words provided in our resolutions are adequate to describe the level of atrocities in Afghanistan after a Taliban takeover of the state. The very radical interpretation of Sharia law in particular is violent against women and girls. They are practically banned from access to public life, work, healthcare and education without male-relative companionship. It is also extremely violent against minorities like Hazara and Tajiks, with the return of public executions. We have to demand change within the country. We have to increase our support to society.

Seán Kelly, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – *A Uachtarán*, the situation in Afghanistan is alarming, with human rights violations occurring daily, including arrests, detentions, abductions, tortures and killings. Since the Taliban takeover, there has been a complete lack of accountability for these atrocities. Women and girls, in particular, have faced escalating restrictions on their fundamental rights, such as limited access to education, mobility and employment, effectively erasing them from public life.

The recent public executions of three individuals, along with the Taliban's discriminatory restrictions and harsh penalties, are deeply disturbing. The Taliban's draconian crackdown on dissent and non-compliance with their strict dress code is a clear violation of human rights.

It is crucial that we condemn these actions and demand accountability from the de facto authorities in Afghanistan. As the EU, we have a responsibility to address these continuous human rights violations and support the Afghan people, especially women and girls, in their pursuit of justice and freedom.

We must fully support the establishment of an international accountability mechanism to collect and preserve evidence of serious violations in Afghanistan. This will be essential for future criminal proceedings and ensuring justice for the victims of human rights abuses.

Finally, I reiterate my calls for the European Commission and Member States to facilitate scholarships exclusively for Afghan women and girls. By bringing women back into education, we are not saving them from Afghanistan; we are saving them for Afghanistan in the future.

Thijs Reuten, *namens de S&D-Fractie*. – Voorzitter, collega's, commissaris, 2,5 jaar geleden hebben de Taliban de macht overgenomen in Afghanistan – de "nieuwe Taliban", waar sommigen naïef intrapten, waarvan de woordvoerder zei: "Wij zullen geen vrouwen discrimineren!" Vrouwen en meisjes in Afghanistan mogen eigenlijk geen mens meer zijn. Niet naar school, niet sporten, niet werken of naar het park. Ze krijgen dagelijks te maken met fysiek en seksueel geweld en het enige wat zij willen, is een leven. Dromen van iets wat op een toekomst lijkt, maar het is een hel zonder perspectief.

De druk op het Talibanregime moet omhoog, ook op de landen die hen ter wille zijn, met als minimale eis grondrechten voor meisjes en vrouwen. Aan de Commissie vraag ik bij de lidstaten aan te dringen op meer visa en hervestiging voor de meest kwetsbare Afghanen, vrouwen die als activist actief waren, maar ook de voormalige Eupol-medewerkers, die voor hun leven moeten vrezen.

Salima Yenbou, *au nom du groupe Renew*. – Monsieur le Président, je me tiens devant vous aujourd'hui non seulement en tant que défenseure des droits de l'homme, mais également en tant que porte-voix des femmes opprimées en Afghanistan.

Depuis le retour des talibans, la femme n'existe plus, en Afghanistan. Exécutions publiques, flagellations, interdiction de suivre une scolarité, interdiction de se déplacer sans un tuteur: nous assistons à la suppression brutale de tous les droits qu'elles ont acquis au cours des deux dernières décennies. Dans un silence international assourdissant, les talibans effacent les femmes de l'espace public, démantèlent les structures gouvernementales, imposent la charia en lieu et place du système judiciaire. Les violences domestiques et les mariages forcés explosent. Chaque jour ou presque, une nouvelle interdiction vient anéantir le peu de droits qu'il reste aux femmes. La vie des femmes afghanes est désormais réduite à être sous le joug des hommes, emmurées vivantes.

Il y a quelques jours, nous célébrions la Journée internationale des droits des femmes. Plus que jamais les femmes afghanes ont besoin de nous pour mettre fin à la terreur qu'elles subissent depuis le retour des talibans, en août 2021.

Silvia Sardone, a nome del gruppo ID. – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, siete degli ipocriti, la vostra posizione sulle donne oppresse per motivi religiosi è sempre più imbarazzante.

Esprimete solidarietà alle donne afgane, senza però dire che quelle violenze sono figlie della sharia e del fondamentalismo islamico imposto dai talebani.

Le donne in Afghanistan non possono lavorare, non possono studiare, non possono muoversi liberamente, devono chiedere il permesso al marito, Insomma, non possono essere libere.

In questo contesto voi promuovete proprio il velo islamico, come simbolo positivo di integrazione, nelle comunicazioni istituzionali delle istituzioni europee. Non solo, continuate a favorire l'islamizzazione nelle nostre città. Basta, basta, basta con la vostra ambiguità! Basta con la vostra sottomissione! Viva la libertà!

È davvero quella l'immagine delle donne che volete vedere anche in Europa? Io no.

Michaela Šojdrová (PPE). – Mr President, dear colleagues, Commissioner, after returning to power, the Taliban took over all aspects of everyday life through the immediate implementation of Sharia. It means the withdrawal of the country and human rights back to the barbaric age: flogging, stoning and public executions.

On 23 March, Afghanistan's schools will reopen for the new academic year. This will mark the third year that girls will not be allowed to attend school. This is just the tip of the iceberg in the systematic process of elimination of girls and women from public life.

We praise the courage of Afghan women and civil society. We call for immediately restoration the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and girls in public life, particularly access to education and work. The Afghan so-called authorities must abolish capital punishment and halt public executions and other inhuman punishment.

Alessandra Moretti (S&D). – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, la mia amica Zara, riuscita miracolosamente a scappare da Kabul nell'agosto del 2021, ha un motto «Donne per le donne». Lo rivolge prima di tutto a se stessa, perché nonostante sia riuscita a trasferirsi in Italia e a riconquistare le sue libertà, non può dimenticare tutte le donne, le ragazze e le bambine rimaste in Afghanistan.

Sono diventate persone senza volto, senza diritti, senza futuro. Sì, perché privando le giovani dell'istruzione, della possibilità di lavorare o persino di curarsi, viene messo a rischio il loro futuro, la loro vita.

Sono passati due anni e mezzo dalla presa di potere da parte dei talebani e io vorrei che ognuno di noi, in questo Parlamento, facesse proprio il motto «Donne per le donne». Siamo noi, nati nella parte fortunata del mondo, noi che possiamo parlare liberamente, scrivere, esprimerci attraverso l'arte, siamo noi che dobbiamo tenere alta l'attenzione sul futuro delle donne e delle ragazze afgane e fare in modo che tornino ad essere artefici del loro destino e protagoniste della rinascita del loro Paese.

Karen Melchior (Renew). – Mr President, is the EU just empty words? Or are we defender of rights? Because in Afghanistan right now, girls are robbed of their dreams, women are caged in their houses and a generation is suffering under Taliban rule.

So, we must keep talking about Afghanistan. As the world watches, transactional and silent, as a young girl's basic right to education becomes a dangerous act of defiance. For Hazara women, their ethnicity adds another layer of repression to the already brutal reality they face just by being women.

We must not normalise this gender apartheid. History will judge us by our actions, not our words. Will we be the generation that turned a blind eye? Or are we the generation that fought for Afghan women's right to learn, right to work, or simply the right to exist?

Dominique Bilde (ID). – Monsieur le Président, la réintroduction des exécutions publiques en Afghanistan n'aura sans doute étonné que quelques ingénus, qui appelaient de leurs vœux un gouvernement taliban modéré. La dégradation spectaculaire de la condition féminine avait du reste déjà démontré que les maîtres du pays n'avaient pas renoncé à leurs fondamentaux.

Rien n'aura en effet été épargné aux intéressées, de leur éviction de l'enseignement supérieur ou – comble de la mesquinerie – des parcs publics de Kaboul à l'interdiction de travailler au sein des ONG – laquelle place les donateurs internationaux au pied du mur, j'y reviendrai. C'est sans compter les drames silencieux, les violences domestiques massives, ou encore la vague de suicides qui touche les Afghanes, et sur laquelle les autorités sont évidemment peu loquaces.

Si nous ne pouvons empêcher ces abus, veillons en tout cas à l'application stricte du principe «Pour les femmes, par les femmes» dans l'aide humanitaire. N'acceptons aucune compromission vis-à-vis de leurs droits fondamentaux, pas plus que vis-à-vis de la transparence, au regard de certaines allégations portant sur de possibles détournements. Maintenant, cela suffit!

Susanna Ceccardi (ID). – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, è da poco passato l'8 marzo anche per le afgane eppure di loro già non si ricorda nessuno, in particolare le femministe europee.

Vede, Presidente, la scorsa settimana ho promosso una campagna di manifesti molto chiari. Veicolava, attraverso una scritta in arabo e in italiano, un messaggio molto semplice: «In Europa hai gli stessi diritti di tuo marito».

Da quel giorno mi sono piovute addosso offese, insulti, minacce e al posto della solidarietà ho trovato il biasimo della sinistra e delle femministe, troppo forse impegnate a condannare l'Occidente per accorgersi di cosa stia accadendo davvero nei paesi dove i diritti delle donne sono violati per davvero.

E allora riporto le parole di una grande donna, una grande scrittrice, proprio rivolte alle femministe nostrane: «Alle cicale di sesso femminile, ossia alle femministe di cattiva memoria qualcosa da dire ce l'ho, Giù la maschera, false amazzoni. [...] Com'è che sulle sorelle afgane, sulle creature assassinate, seviziate dai [...] maschilisti con la sottana e il turbante, imitate il silenzio dei vostri ometti? Com'è che non organizzate mai un'abbaiatina dinnanzi all'ambasciata dell'Afghanistan, [...] o di qualche altro paese [...] islamico che viola i diritti delle donne? [...] Oppure delle sorelle musulmane non ve ne importa un accidente perché le considerate inferiori? In tal caso, chi è razzista qui: io o voi? La verità è che non siete nemmeno cicale. Siete e siete sempre state delle galline cui riesce soltanto starnazzar nel pollaio [...]. O parassite. Che per tentar d'emergere, avete avuto bisogno d'un uomo che vi tenesse per mano».

Questa era la grande Oriana Fallaci, e oggi non è cambiato molto.

Catch-the-eye procedure

Fabio Massimo Castaldo (Renew). – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, secondo le Nazioni Unite, oggi il popolo afgano versa in una situazione ben peggiore rispetto a quella nella quale si trovava nel 2002.

A Kabul non ci sono più diritti, solo paura, divieti e privazioni; a Kabul vige l'applicazione integrale della sharia e delle sue pene medievali; a Kabul una donna non ha il diritto all'istruzione superiore, non può lavorare e non può neanche uscire di casa se non accompagnata da un uomo che le faccia da tutore; a Kabul l'omosessualità è punita con la lapidazione.

Dobbiamo assumerci le nostre responsabilità per quanto sta accadendo, colleghi. Certo, i vent'anni della nostra presenza sono stati costellati da luci e ombre, ma il frettoloso abbandono da parte degli americani e di noi europei ha fatto risprofondare l'Afghanistan nelle tenebre dell'oscurantismo.

Dobbiamo adoperare ogni strumento di pressione sul regime talebano, mettendo sul tavolo tutto quello che serve per fargli rispettare i criteri di condizionalità già fissati.

E soprattutto dobbiamo supportare il popolo afgano, incrementando i nostri aiuti umanitari e stando al fianco della società civile che sogna un futuro migliore. Forse non è ancora troppo tardi per rimediare, almeno in parte, agli errori del passato.

Mick Wallace (The Left). – Mr President, reading the Afghan resolution beside the Gaza one, it's hard to believe that the two were negotiated by the same Parliament. The Taliban is condemned for their treatment of women and girls, and rightly so. The resolution says they're to be held accountable for their crimes. Sanctions must be imposed.

Meanwhile, in the genocide of Gaza, only Hamas are condemned. Humanitarian aid has been blocked by Israel. But reading the text, you wouldn't know it. The Israelis are carrying out extrajudicial executions of men, women and children, but youse won't talk about it. The Israelis are imposing famine conditions and using starvation as a weapon of war against 2.3 million civilians. But listening to ye, you'd swear it was a natural disaster.

We don't like the Taliban, but they're not killing tens of thousands of civilians. Yet youse are throwing the book at them, when you can't even bring yourselves to properly name the genocidal crimes of the Israeli regime. Is it because youse are complicit in the war crimes of the Israelis? What is wrong with this place?

Clare Daly (The Left). – Mr President, this week's resolution on Afghanistan is a tour of force. It really is. Gaslighting, phoney feminism, weaponised concern: all the greatest hits. Twenty years of NATO war and occupation that visited suffering, death and destruction on the women of Afghanistan: according to this resolution, it never happened.

The empowerment and consolidation of the Taliban from that war and occupation: again, that never happened. A reflection on the fact that the US invaded Afghanistan to save Afghan women, and that instead murdered and maimed them in their tens of thousands, and then left – and the vast, vast majority of them worse off than they were before.

Forget it! The very last thing Afghan women need is more Western concern, more of the iron fist concealed in a velvet glove. Because until the West starts reckoning with the 23 years of violence and pain it has brought to the women of Afghanistan, then you'll never be in a position to effect change.

(Ende der spontanen Wortmeldungen)

Elisa Ferreira, Member of the Commission. – Mr President, like in the previous point, I am speaking on behalf of the High Representative / Vice-President, Josep Borrell, who is at the United Nations on a mission.

The European Union is deeply concerned about the deteriorating human rights situation in Afghanistan, in particular the systematic gender-based discrimination and violence by the Taliban against women and girls. In addition to restricting women's and girls' freedom of movement and access to employment and education, women are also being arbitrarily arrested and detained for violations of the Taliban-imposed dress code. The restrictions imposed on women and girls heighten their vulnerability to gender-based violence in public and in private. Domestic violence has increased, especially as women and girls are confined inside their homes.

The lack of clarity in the legal framework on gender-based violence discourages women from reporting the incidents to the de facto authorities, preferring instead traditional dispute resolution mechanisms, which are also often not in line with international human rights law. The Taliban de facto authorities continue to implement the death penalty, with five known cases of public executions reported since 2021. The three most recent ones just took place in February this year. The European Union always condemns in the strongest terms all public executions. They are degrading and contradictory to human dignity. The European Union strongly opposes the death penalty at all times and in all circumstances.

The European Union is committed to supporting the empowerment of women and girls and their equal access to work and quality education, as well as their full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership in all spheres of society.

Through statements, through our delegation in Kabul and through our Special Envoy for Afghanistan, the European Union continuously calls on the Taliban to respect the human rights of the Afghan people. The European Union reminds the Taliban and Afghanistan that Afghanistan is bound by international human rights law and international humanitarian law. This means that they have an obligation to uphold human rights and are accountable for human rights abuses.

The European Union supports strong monitoring and accountability mechanisms, including the human rights component of UNAMA and the mandate of the United Nations Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett. As the largest donor to the International Criminal Court (ICC), the European Union acknowledges that the ICC investigation into the Afghanistan situation can be an important addition to ensure accountability.

The European Union will continue to support Afghan human rights defenders and civil society in Afghanistan and abroad, with EUR 8.9 million, as they courageously struggle to defend the rights of the Afghan people, in particular women and girls. European Union actions include preserving and safeguarding documentation related to grievances, strengthening the resilience of Afghan human rights defenders, and contributing to maintain access to relevant and reliable information among the Afghan population, with an emphasis exactly on women and youth.

Der Präsident. – Die Aussprache zu diesem Punkt ist damit geschlossen. Zum Abschluss der Aussprache wurden 6 - Entschließungsanträge eingereicht.

Die Abstimmung findet am Donnerstag, 14. März 2024, statt.

20.3 Fallet Rocío San Miguel och General Hernández Da Costa, bland andra politiska fångar i Venezuela

Der Präsident. – Es folgt nun die Aussprache über fünf Entschließungsanträge zu dem Fall von Rocío San Miguel und General Hernández Da Costa sowie anderer politischer Gefangener in Venezuela (2024/2618(RSP))¹.

1 Siehe Protokoll.

Gabriel Mato, autor. – Señor presidente, señora comisaria, nuevamente debatimos sobre Venezuela y nuevamente nos tenemos que referir a las atrocidades del régimen. Hoy hablamos de Rocío San Miguel, una ciudadana europea defensora de los derechos humanos, detenida sin motivo y secuestrada en El Helicoide desde el 9 de febrero. Su delito: luchar por la libertad.

También hablamos del general Hernández Da Costa, prisionero político desde 2018 y trasladado el pasado 19 de febrero a la prisión de El Rodeo I, donde a pesar de su precario estado de salud no solo no cuenta con el tratamiento médico adecuado, sino que le hacen sobrevivir en condiciones inhumanas. No se le permitió recoger sus enseres ni sus medicinas y tan solo le autorizan una visita familiar cada cuarenta y cinco días. Advertimos desde aquí con rotundidad de la responsabilidad del régimen si le llegara a pasar algo.

En este escenario, desde la Unión Europea tenemos que dar un paso más. Esto no puede continuar como hasta ahora. Exigimos la libertad de todos los presos políticos ya, así como que se investigue el asesinato de Roldán Ojeda. Es necesario que endurezcamos las sanciones contra la tiranía del régimen de Venezuela y que le exijamos que cumpla con el Acuerdo de Barbados. Que se levanten de inmediato las inhabilitaciones y que el pueblo de Venezuela pueda decidir libremente si prefiere a Maduro o prefiere a María Corina Machado, la candidata democráticamente elegida por la oposición.

El pueblo venezolano merece elegir su destino y, sobre todo, merece salir de la situación a la que el régimen le tiene sometido. Terminó diciendo lo que tantas veces me han oído decir: no les vamos a dejar solos en su lucha por la libertad.

Dita Charanzová, autora. – Señor presidente, Rocío San Miguel, Hernández Da Costa, Juan Freites, Luis Camaro, Guillermo López, Emil Brand y muchos más están en prisión solo porque opinan diferente al régimen dictatorial o simplemente porque trabajaron para la candidata presidencial María Corina Machado. Estos son tan solo algunos de los muchos ejemplos de la brutalidad del régimen de Nicolás Maduro.

La Unión Europea tiene que responder firmemente a esta nueva ola de represión y, como mínimo, en primer lugar, adoptar nuevas sanciones contra los responsables de estos crímenes. Y, en segundo lugar, pedir que estas violaciones de los derechos humanos sean incluidas en la investigación de la Corte Penal Internacional. Ahora más que nunca, la Unión Europea debe estar al lado de nuestros amigos los demócratas venezolanos hasta el final.

IN THE CHAIR: MARC ANGEL

Vice-President

Hermann Tertsch, *autor*. – Señor presidente, hoy estamos aquí pensando en Rocío San Miguel, una gran luchadora por los derechos humanos que fue secuestrada y se halla en paradero desconocido en este momento, y en el general Hernández Da Costa, que lleva nada menos que seis años en la cárcel injustamente y que está en unas condiciones de salud absolutamente deplorables.

Y tenemos a una inhabilitada que es María Corina Machado, lo que supone la inhabilitación de las elecciones que pretenden y pretendían algunos que se celebraran en Venezuela, y que van a ser del todo imposibles porque no se pueden celebrar elecciones cuando se está deteniendo, cuando se está torturando, cuando se está asesinando y cuando se está haciendo desaparecer, como se está haciendo en Venezuela sin parar.

Y el Acuerdo de Barbados ha sido otra farsa más, otra farsa para seguir prolongando la situación, para que se retiraran unas sanciones y para poder seguir jugando con la comunidad internacional. El señor Maduro seguirá en su sitio mientras tenga defensores como Zapatero, como Borrell, mientras tenga cómplices como tienen Lula y como tienen Petro y como tienen tantos otros. Y mientras no haya gente que le haga cumplir con el Derecho internacional y con el Derecho en su casa. Los dictadores no se van voluntariamente nunca, a no ser que se les obligue.

Nacho Sánchez Amor, *autor*. – Señor presidente, señora comisaria, quiero agradecer el tono, el contenido y el texto de la negociación en un asunto que hasta hace poco era divisivo en esta Casa. Seguramente también el buen trabajo de coordinación del señor Mato ha mantenido ese acuerdo. Y es que Maduro está haciendo todo lo posible para que de nuevo votemos todos o casi todos juntos. Ya pasó en febrero y creo que esta vez será similar, porque he sabido ahora, esta tarde, que no había enmiendas.

La gravedad de la situación de la oposición allí, la represión abierta, desnuda, de cualquier opinión crítica, tiene un efecto colateral fuera del país, y es que pone de acuerdo a organismos internacionales, a las Naciones Unidas, a la Unión Europea. Todo el mundo está en un cierre de filas con el derecho de la oposición a unas elecciones limpias.

La penúltima vuelta de tuerca —lamentablemente siempre hay que hablar de la penúltima vuelta de tuerca— han sido los casos que nos concitan hoy aquí: Rocío San Miguel y el general Hernández de Acosta. Pero ya ha habido más estos últimos días. Todo con el telón de fondo de un intento transparente, sostenido, de silenciar cualquier voz crítica.

No ha bastado la inhabilitación de María Corina Machado. No basta con descabezar electoralmente a la oposición. Hay que seguir persiguiendo cualquier voz crítica, incluso de personas del mundo académico reconocidas como la profesora a la que nos referimos hoy. Prueba, por cierto, todo ello —y quizá un elemento de esperanza— del temor del régimen a esas urnas que serán la forma de acabar con este funesto período en la historia de Venezuela.

Jordi Solé, *autor*. – Señor presidente, el último informe anual sobre la política exterior y de seguridad común nos recordaba que la Unión Europea debe contribuir —cito— «al multilateralismo mundial, a la resolución pacífica de conflictos y al desarrollo de la democracia». Este, y no otro, debe ser nuestro principal propósito.

En este sentido tomamos nota del anuncio de elecciones presidenciales en Venezuela para el próximo 28 de julio, pero condenamos firmemente la persecución sistemática y el encarcelamiento de miembros de la oposición, así como los reiterados ataques a la sociedad civil y a defensores de los derechos humanos. Sin oposición, sencillamente, no hay elecciones democráticas. De hecho, no hay democracia.

Las autoridades venezolanas deben poner fin a las detenciones e inhabilitaciones arbitrarias, liberar inmediatamente a los más de doscientos presos políticos y permitir que la oposición —toda ella— concurra en igualdad de condiciones a las elecciones del 28 de julio. Venezuela no saldrá de la crítica situación en la que se encuentra sin respetar los derechos humanos y las normas democráticas más fundamentales. Insistimos en ello porque queremos lo mejor para el pueblo de Venezuela.

Leopoldo López Gil, *en nombre del Grupo PPE*. – Señor presidente, señora comisaria, el régimen de Nicolás Maduro, no contento con más de trescientos presos políticos encarcelados de manera ilegítima y utilizando la desaparición forzosa como un *modus operandi* para privarles de libertad, secuestró el 9 de febrero a la defensora de los derechos humanos Rocío San Miguel, de nacionalidad española.

Recordemos también al general Héctor Hernández Da Costa, quien lleva preso desde 2018 y ahora ha sido transferido durante el mes de febrero a la prisión de El Rodeo I, prisión destacada por sus crueldades y hacinamiento. Recordemos que, además de varios activistas vinculados a María Corina Machado, candidata para vencer a Maduro en las elecciones presidenciales, también otros dirigentes de oposición han sido detenidos recientemente e incomunicados.

Seramente preguntamos: ¿estamos dispuestos a legitimar unas elecciones írritas mediante una misión de observación electoral? ¿Hasta cuándo vamos a tolerar un régimen corrupto que amenaza la Unión Europea haciendo chanchullos con el Gobierno de España, saltándose a la ligera todas las sanciones impuestas por la Unión?

José Ramón Bauzá Díaz, *en nombre del Grupo Renew*. – Señor presidente, señora comisaria, la causa de la libertad de los presos políticos en Venezuela dejó de ser una causa exclusiva de los venezolanos para convertirse también en una causa propia europea. Gran parte de quienes hoy sobreviven bajo el yugo de la dictadura tienen nuestra nacionalidad: la española, la portuguesa, la italiana... María Auxiliadora Delgado, Juan Carlos Marrufo, Ángela Expósito, y ahora nos vemos obligados a añadir en la lista un nuevo nombre, el de Rocío San Miguel. Los españoles conocemos muy bien su voz valiente y decidida.

Es tiempo de máxima presión contra el régimen. La debilidad en el ejército, como lo demuestra la infame e inhumana situación del general Hernández Da Costa, es la verdadera ventana de oportunidad para acabar con esta farsa. Esta Cámara no puede ni debe callar ante una nueva demostración del miedo de Maduro. Esta Cámara hoy habla por Rocío, por Héctor y por los cientos de secuestrados y torturados en Venezuela.

Y esta farsa debe acabar en la actuación decidida de nuestros Estados miembros. Para acabar con que María Corina se pueda presentar a las elecciones y los venezolanos puedan votar en libertad. Porque, señorías, no habrá otra oportunidad. Es ahora o nunca y depende de nosotros.

Anna Fotyga, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Mr President, Commissioner, we firmly stand by Rocío San Miguel and General Hernández Da Costa. Rocío San Miguel, brave lawyer and human rights defender of Spanish descent, and held in very abusive conditions. And General of very fragile health, held already six years.

But we stand by others, more than 300 political prisoners of the Maduro regime and we remember María Corina Machado, who was prevented to enjoy her passive election rights in Venezuela. We, the EU, have tools on our disposal and we have to use them more, with more strength in order to ensure proper reaction from the Maduro regime. Free all prisoners immediately!

Francisco José Millán Mon (PPE). – Señor presidente, señora comisaria, la situación en Venezuela no hace más que empeorar. El Acuerdo de Barbados contemplan la participación de todos los candidatos en las elecciones presidenciales y la liberación de los presos políticos. Pero Maduro ha optado por seguir la ruta opuesta.

Como denunciábamos en este Parlamento hace poco, continúa la prohibición a María Corina Machado de presentarse a las elecciones y aumentan, además, las detenciones arbitrarias de políticos, periodistas o defensores de los derechos humanos. Es el caso reciente de Rocío San Miguel, ciudadana española, que ha sido acusada injustamente y cuyo proceso carece de las mínimas garantías legales. Este caso se suma a los trescientos presos políticos como el general Hernández Da Costa, injustamente detenido desde 2018.

En este contexto me gustaría preguntarle al Consejo —bueno a la Comisión, que está aquí hoy, el Consejo no— qué espera realmente de las elecciones convocadas por Maduro para el 28 de julio. Por otra parte, creo que, si la actual situación persiste, cuando llegue el momento de renovar las sanciones de Venezuela en mayo debemos reforzarlas. No, desde luego, suavizarlas, sino reforzarlas.

El mensaje es claro: para que haya unas elecciones democráticas y libres, María Corina Machado tiene que poder presentarse y los presos políticos tienen que ser puestos en libertad. Todas las instituciones de la Unión debemos presionar al régimen y, si es posible, actuar de forma coordinada en esta línea con los Estados Unidos.

Catch-the-eye procedure

Jiří Pospíšil (PPE). – Pane předsedající, já chtěl podpořit kolegy, kteří připravili toto usnesení. Považuji to za mimořádně důležité. Často debatujeme o situaci ve Venezuele zde na plénu. Za posledních 10 let, kdy jsem měl tu čest se těchto debat účastnit, šlo několikrát o to, že jsme jasně pojmenovali problémy Madurova režimu. Bohužel ta situace se zhoršuje, režim utahuje šrouby. Mluvíme o dalších politických vězních a přitom mají v létě proběhnout klíčové volby. Nevím, jestli je šance, aby ty volby byly svobodné. Je to můj dotaz na paní komisařku, na Komisi. V případě, že se ukazuje, a to dnes vidíme, že šance na svobodné volby příliš výrazná není, měli bychom opravdu zvážit to, co někteří kolegové říkali, tedy zpřísnit sankce vůči Venezuele, protože my zde vedeme permanentně debatu, ale ta situace se bohužel stále zhoršuje. Přimlouval bych se tedy za to, abychom zvážili zpřísnění sankcí vůči této zemi.

Sandra Pereira (The Left). – Senhor Presidente, um mês depois, o Parlamento Europeu volta a discutir a situação na República Bolivariana da Venezuela.

Se dúvidas houvesse, com tanta insistência fica claro que o objetivo, alinhado com a agenda dos Estados Unidos da América e da extrema-direita golpista venezuelana, é o de procurar interferir, uma vez mais, nos processos eleitorais na Venezuela. O objetivo deste debate não é, mas devia ser, a exigência do fim das medidas coercivas unilaterais, contrárias ao direito internacional, impostas pelos Estados Unidos da América.

Por causa das sanções, entre 2015 e 2023 estima-se uma queda de 99 % nas receitas da produção de petróleo na Venezuela. Imaginem, se conseguirem, as repercussões que isso tem no desenvolvimento de um país e na vida do seu povo. E a resolução que amanhã vamos votar ainda pede mais sanções!

Daqui, expressamos a nossa solidariedade com o povo venezuelano e a sua luta em defesa da sua soberania, do seu caminho de desenvolvimento e progresso social, livre de ingerências externas.

(End of catch-the-eye procedure)

Elisa Ferreira, Member of the Commission. – Mr President, honourable Members, like in the previous items of the agenda, I'll be speaking on behalf of the High Representative and Vice-President Josep Borrell, who is in the United Nations in a mission.

A few weeks ago, this plenary discussed the repression against the democratic forces in Venezuela, including aggression on presidential candidate María Corina Machado and other opposition members. The repression continues, as we have seen over the weekend with the arrest of yet another of Machado's party members, this time in the region of Barinas. Today we are discussing the cases of Rocío San Miguel and General Hernández Da Costa.

Let me start by recalling that the European Union has been firmly and actively committed to promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the protection of human rights defenders in Venezuela and the protection of European Union citizens in the country. Rocío San Miguel is one of them: a Spanish Venezuelan citizen. She is the president of the NGO Control Ciudadano and a renowned human rights defender who has been imprisoned since 9 February without access to her lawyers. She is currently detained in the headquarters of Venezuela's intelligence service, known as 'El Helicoide'. Four other relatives, including three Spanish-Venezuelan citizens who were arrested with her, have been released on condition not to leave the country or speak to the media.

Regarding General Héctor Hernández Da Costa, he has been detained since 2018. His family and lawyers have in vain requested to obtain access and to provide the necessary medical assistance.

Honourable Members, the European Union continues to call on the Venezuelan authorities to guarantee political and civil rights, and ensure the protection of human rights defenders. We will continue to monitor closely the situation, including by promoting access to human rights mechanisms in Venezuela. The European Union deeply regrets the decision of the Venezuelan authorities to suspend the activities of the technical office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights. The European Union commends the significant work of the office in Venezuela, engaging with the authorities, political actors and civil society, and calls for its prompt reopening and resumption of activities.

The European Union calls for the immediate and unconditional release of those individuals unjustly detained, for respect of due process, for the protection and safety of detainees to be ensured at all times, and for them to be allowed immediate access to their lawyers of choice and family visits. The European Union remains convinced that the repression of human rights and political freedoms needs to be addressed through a peaceful and democratic solution to the political crisis, including inclusive and competitive elections. We hope that the forthcoming presidential elections to be held on 28 July will reflect the democratic aspirations of the Venezuelans.

The European Union will continue working with Venezuelans and the international community to foster dialogue and to foster democracy, and to promote the respect of the rule of law and human rights in Venezuela.

President. – The debate is closed.

I have received five motions for resolutions¹ and the vote will be held tomorrow.

¹ See minutes.

21. Tilltagande retorik och våld mot hbtqi-personer: den senaste tidens attacker i Thessaloniki (debatt)

President. – The next item is the debate on the Commission statement on rising anti-LGBTIQ rhetoric and violence: recent attacks in Thessaloniki (2024/2654(RSP)).

Elisa Ferreira, *Member of the Commission.* – Mr President, honourable Members, I'll be speaking on behalf of Commissioner Dalli. Honourable Members, thank you for bringing to the forefront the recent assaults targeting two 21-year-old LGBTIQ people in Thessaloniki. According to local news, a crowd started shouting abuse, proceeded to throw bottles and chased the two individuals, all because of their sexual orientation. My heart goes out to the victims of these abhorrent attacks, as well as to the broader LGBTIQ community.

These alarming incidents within our Union pose a direct threat to the very fabric of our societies founded on principles of equality and respect. In recent years, we have witnessed a disturbing rise in hate speech and hate crimes targeting LGBTIQ people as well as organisations advocating for LGBTIQ rights, both globally and within the European Union.

According to the latest data, trans and intersex people continue to face disproportionate levels of stigma and violence. The Fundamental Rights Agency's 2019 LGBTI survey found that one in ten LGBTI respondents in the European Union reported experiencing physical or sexual attacks because of their identity. Trans and intersex respondents faced even higher rates of violence.

The European Commission remains steadfast in its commitment to ensuring that you can be who you are, love who you want without fear of discrimination or violence.

Four years ago, we took a determined step forward with the adoption of the first ever Commission LGBTIQ Equality Strategy. This comprehensive strategy combines targeted initiatives with the mainstreaming of LGBTIQ equality across all policy domains. Under this strategy, the Commission acted to address fragmentation in the criminalisation of hate speech and to ensure effective protection of all victims of hate speech and hate crimes across the European Union, including LGBTIQ people.

In December 2021, the Commission adopted a proposal for a Council decision to include hate speech and hate crime in the list of European Union crimes in Article 83 of the Treaty. After more than two years, the Council has not yet reached the needed unanimity to adopt its decision, which is necessary for the Commission to be able to propose a common legal framework to criminalise hate speech and hate crime. I thank the European Parliament for its commitment in support of this initiative.

The Commission also called for a swift adoption of the proposal in its joint communication that we called 'No place for hate', which represents a strong commitment to reinforce the European Union policy response to hatred in all its forms, including against LGBTIQ individuals.

Moreover, the Commission works jointly with the tech industry and other relevant stakeholders to counter hateful content online through the European Union Internet Forum. In 2023, the Forum published a handbook on borderline content to guide tech companies to identify such content, including when targeting LGBTIQ people.

The establishment of the High Level Group on combating hate speech and hate crime in 2016 provides a platform for exchange among national authorities and focusing on victim support, law enforcement training and data collection.

To face the challenges of online hatred, the Commission initiated a voluntary code of conduct with the major social media platforms. We are in the process of revising the code to ensure it enhances its preventive capacity to respond to threats of hatred before it goes viral.

And that the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme, the Commission continues to allocate funding to combat hate crime and aid speech while promoting LGBTIQ equality. One example is our support to a project implemented by the Council of Europe on combating anti-LGBTIQ violence and hate speech, strengthening awareness-raising and fact-based narratives.

Equality bodies in the Member States, they have a crucial role in addressing discrimination. That is why we have proposed legislation to establish binding standards for these bodies and strengthen their independence and powers. The new rules will ensure that discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation falls squarely within the mandate of equality bodies in all Member States. We welcome the agreement on this legislation and your support for its swift adoption.

Honourable Members, as emphasised by President von der Leyen in her State of the Union address last year, it is the moment to show in reality that we can build a Europe where you can be who you are, love who you want and aim as high as you want. Together we can make this vision for Europe a reality.

Jiří Pospíšil, za skupinu PPE. – Pane předsedající, dámy a pánové, dovoluji mi, abych se vyjádřil k tomuto mimořádně důležitému tématu. Útok, který jsme na počátku tohoto měsíce zaznamenali nejen zde všude v Evropě, ale i po celém světě, útok proti příslušníkům LGBTIQ komunity v Soluni je něco, co je natolik nepřijatelné a natolik závažné, že je dobře, že to téma probíráme a projednáváme zde, na půdě Evropského parlamentu. Není to „běžný trestný čin“, není to běžný útok proti někomu, který nabyl fyzické podoby, ale je to bohužel útok, který byl zapříčiněn pohnutkami nenávisti. Byl způsoben proto, protože někdo byl příslušníkem určité menšiny, a proto útočník na něj útočil. A toto je velmi silné téma, které zde máme takto projednat. Myslím si, že to je téma, které bude důležité i pro příští Evropský parlament a příští Komisi. Bylo to tady naznačeno a řečeno. Bohužel plíživá netolerance vůči příslušníkům menšin je něco, s čím se v Evropě stále a dále potýkáme, a bude třeba, aby v této věci Evropský parlament, Evropská komise byly velmi aktivní.

Bylo zde zmíněno téma posílení trestního právního rámce, zpřísnění postihu trestných činů, které jsou realizovány z nenávisti. Toto je téma, které bohužel již delší dobu leží na stole. Členské státy v Radě stále tuto otázku ještě nevyřešily a my musíme tláčit na jednotlivé členské státy, aby posílily trestněprávní ochranu a zpřísnily postih trestných činů, které jsou páčány z nenávisti. Je to otázka sociálních sítí. Po útoku v Soluni jsme svědky nenávistných výroků na sociálních sítích, na sítích, které čte celá veřejnost. Čtou to mladí lidé, čtou to děti. Musíme v této věci být velmi aktivní a tento strašný případ nechť je nám dalším motorem v naší činnosti.

Cyrus Engerer, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – Mr President, madam Commissioner, I have said that a number of times in this House it starts with a word, an insult, a slur, but then it moves to a fist, a knife and sometimes a gun. But what happened in Thessaloniki last weekend must be condemned. But how much more hate speech and physical attacks against LGBTIQ people will we have to denounce in this House?

What starts as transphobic language by fascists, even in this House yesterday when discussing International Women's Day, ends up in a mob of over 200 people hurling abuse, throwing bottles and running after two 20-year olds in Aristotle Square and the surrounding streets. Shame on all of you from the far right who come here inciting this hatred with the words you use in this Parliament, the words you use on television and in your speeches. Shame on you! Hate and violence have no limit, but we will fight tooth and nail so that this House remains a shelter for those running away from your hatred.

I welcome the condemnation by the Greek authorities, but I urge our heads of states and governments, I urge opposition leaders to speak about inclusion, to speak about equality every day, every week in their speeches, because it is only in this way that we can change hearts and minds. It is these speeches, because the minute we stop mentioning equality is the minute that we start backsliding. Democratic forces who believe in the rule of law, who believe in human rights, who believe in the protection of minorities, must counter the hate of fascists and some religious leaders also in Greece.

And to the trans-community in Thessaloniki, you are not alone! We are with you and we will be with you this June in the streets of Thessaloniki for EuroPride. We will join the thousands who have marched last Sunday so that we march together in June in Thessaloniki, because love will win over the fascists' hate.

Pierre Karleskind, *au nom du groupe Renew*. – Monsieur le Président, chers collègues, hier, c'est par la voix d'une députée du groupe de Jordan Bardella que la transphobie a fait irruption dans cet hémicycle. Dans la foulée, j'ai relaté l'épisode sur les réseaux sociaux, sur mon compte Twitter. Depuis, c'est un déferlement, un déferlement avec, toutes les trois minutes – toutes les trois minutes! – un nouveau commentaire transphobe qui est publié en réaction à mon tweet. Plus de 600 en vingt-quatre heures. Je voudrais remercier STOP Homophobie, qui a pris soin de signaler à Twitter déjà plus de 400 d'entre ces commentaires. Je vous fais grâce de leur lecture, sauf pour l'un d'eux, qui dit la chose suivante: «Ni femme, ni homme, ni être humain.»

C'est cette déshumanisation colportée dans les discours de haine qui débouche inéluctablement sur des violences physiques telles que celles ayant été perpétrées à Thessalonique il y a quelques jours. Les mots peuvent être des armes, des armes pour quoi? Ici, comme la droite fondamentaliste américaine, l'extrême droite européenne se sert des personnes trans comme d'une arme électorale.

Kim Van Sparrentak, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – Mr President, I stand here today in solidarity with the victims of the attacks last Saturday. One of whom was attacked again only two days later. In solidarity with a community that has sadly seen a sharp rise in violence for over a decade. In solidarity with all victims of hate speech. Please know that you are seen, know that you are loved, know that you deserve to walk on the streets and be safe. And know that the horrible things that are said in this House and many other parliaments aren't shared by a majority. We know that you deserve us to do better.

And to those politicians that are so out of real ideas to make society actually better for people, that they decided to spread and incite hate, hoping that will win them elections, shame on you! If you incite hate in this arena, you are responsible for the actions inspired by those words and we will hold you accountable. Trans lives matter. Queer lives matter. You are beautiful and deserve nothing but praise and respect.

Ангел Джамбазки, *от името на групата ECR*. – Г-н Председател, природата, биологията, науката познават два пола мъжки и женски. В много малко случаи, биологично, това не е точно така при раждането.

Тези два пола са това, което прави нашето общество и нашите семейства. Как не си давате сметка, че всъщност обиждате биологичните жени, когато позволявате на родени мъже да се състезават в женски спортове? Как си мислите, че ще се състезават роден мъж и родена жена в бокса? Кой ще спечели в плуването, кой ще спечели в силовите спортове? Кой ще спечели? Защо унижавате жените? Защо ги обиждате? Защо им отнемате правото да бъдат такива, каквито са и да печелят, бийейки жени?

Аз разбирам, че повечето от вас нямат кауза и си търсят някаква, за която да се хванат, но този дебат тук е сюрреалистичен, сюрреалистичен. Има мъж и жена, има семейство от мъж и жена. Уважаваме всеки както се чувства и каквото прави, но не може да налагате или по-скоро не трябва, правете каквото искате, такава пропаганда, която да се лее непрекъснато и да се извежда един въпрос в европейски проблем. Няма такъв европейски проблем, в главите Ви може да има, но всъщност няма. Има мъже и жени в семейството от мъж и жена. Оттук нататък е въпрос на лично убеждение, но това не може да бъде и не трябва да бъде политика. В края на краищата трябва да се придържаме към реалността, биологията и нормалността.

Mathilde Androuët, au nom du groupe ID. – Monsieur le Président, samedi dernier, un couple trans a été traqué par une foule violente à Thessalonique. Que l'on soit ou non une personne transsexuelle, il est urgent de rappeler que personne, personne en Europe ne doit voir son intégrité menacée du fait de ses opinions, de sa religion ou de son mode de vie.

Logiquement alignés sur ce principe de respect de l'être humain, les initiateurs de ce débat condamneront, j'en suis sûre, avec la même fermeté toutes les violences, y compris celles qui s'exercent contre des féministes telles que Riley Gaines, qui défend les femmes dans le sport, et qui le 7 avril dernier a dû être exfiltrée de la salle où elle s'était barricadée pendant trois heures pour échapper aux coups et aux menaces d'une foule enragée de militants de la cause trans – soit le même scénario que le couple en Grèce.

C'est étrange, je ne vous ai jamais entendus demander un débat pour défendre ces féministes menacées de mort. Y aurait-il des proies et des victimes par principe pour la gauche? Le camp du bien aurait-il une défense sélective des valeurs? Si je sais être une cible pour vous, les belles âmes, sachez que moi, contrairement à vous, je m'insurge contre toutes les violences, et j'ai bien dit toutes.

Δημήτριος Παπαδημούλης, εξ ονόματος της ομάδας The Left. – Κύριε Πρόεδρε, θέλω να στείλω ένα μήνυμα στα δύο νεαρά παιδιά, τους δύο τρανς, που τους κυνήγησε ένας όχλος εκατοντάδων ανθρώπων και από τύχη δεν θρηνήσαμε θύματα, όπως είχαμε μια ωμή δολοφονική βία το 2018 με θύμα τον Ζακ Κωστόπουλο στην Ελλάδα. Το μήνυμα είναι ότι όσοι θεωρούμε αυτονόητο ότι όλοι οι άνθρωποι, ανεξάρτητα από τον σεξουαλικό τους προσανατολισμό, έχουν το δικαίωμα στην ασφάλεια και τον σεβασμό είμαστε η μεγάλη πλειοψηφία και στην πατρίδα μου, την Ελλάδα, και μέσα στο Ευρωπαϊκό Κοινοβούλιο και στην Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση, γιατί η ρητορική μίσους οδηγεί στη βία και η πολιτική επένδυση των πολιτικών εγγονιών του Χίτλερ και του Μουσολίνι σε αυτή τη ρητορική μίσους που γεννά βία, δεν θα κερδίσει. Ούτε στις ευρωεκλογές, ούτε ποτέ. Γιατί τα εκατομμύρια των νεκρών, μεταξύ των οποίων και ομοφυλόφιλων που πέθαναν στα κρεματόρια, είναι ένα δίδαγμα που μας οδηγεί και στο μέλλον όλους τους δημοκράτες, από τη δημοκρατική Δεξιά μέχρι και την Αριστερά.

Κώστας Παπαδάκης (NI). – Κύριε Πρόεδρε, καταδικάζουμε και από αυτό το βήμα την επίθεση σε βάρος δύο νεαρών τρανς ατόμων από ομάδα τραμπούκων στη Θεσσαλονίκη. Τέτοιες απαράδεκτες ενέργειες πρέπει να αντιμετωπίζονται με αποφασιστικότητα, να καταδικάζονται μαζικά και να απομονώνονται. Οι διακρίσεις, οι ρατσιστικές επιθέσεις και οι συμπεριφορές με κριτήριο τον σεξουαλικό προσανατολισμό αντιμετωπίζονται με την αλληλεγγύη, αυτή που επέδειξαν λαϊκές δυνάμεις που βοήθησαν τα θύματα της επίθεσης. Η ίδια η πραγματικότητα δείχνει ότι η κυβέρνηση της Νέας Δημοκρατίας και η Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση ούτε θέλουν ούτε μπορούν να αντιμετωπίσουν τον ρατσισμό και την ομοφοβία, κάθε είδους διακρίσεις και τραμπούκικες ομάδες, ούτε επίσης και τα κυκλώματα βιαστών και μαστροπών που με την εξοργιστική εισαγγελική πρόταση αιθώονται και υποθάλπονται. Όλα αυτά αποτελούν αναπόσπαστα στοιχεία της σήψης ενός βάρβαρου συστήματος και τροφοδοτούνται από την ίδια την πολιτική τους. Απαιτούμε να μην υπάρξει καμία συγκάλυψη. Οι ένοχοι της επίθεσης στη Θεσσαλονίκη αλλά και το κύκλωμα παιδοβιαστών στα Σεπόλια να τιμωρηθούν.

Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D). – Señor presidente, señora comisaria, señorías, gracias por estar aquí a estas altas horas de la noche dando testimonio de un compromiso puesto por escrito por la Comisión en la Estrategia para la Igualdad de las Personas LGTBIQ 2020-2025, pero, sobre todo, honrando mandatos de la Carta de los Derechos Fundamentales de la Unión Europea, que entró en vigor con el Tratado de Lisboa con el mismo valor jurídico que los Tratados, y cuyo artículo 21 prohíbe cualquier forma de discriminación por razón de sexo u orientación sexual.

Y, por tanto, cuando hemos hablado aquí esta noche de derechos en Venezuela, de derechos en Afganistán, ¿cómo no vamos a hablar de derechos fundamentales a la no discriminación, a la igualdad de trato y al respeto de todas las personas, sean quienes sean, sean quienes hayan decidido ser, amen como amen, en la Unión Europea, en sus Estados miembros?

Estaríamos fallando a nuestro deber si no estuviéramos debatiendo que en Salónica, en Grecia, un Estado miembro de la Unión Europea, dos jóvenes de veintiún años han sido acosados brutalmente por una horda fascista con las hechuras y las apariencias características de la intolerancia fascista. Y esto nos pone de nuevo sobre aviso de que la libertad, la igualdad de trato, la dignidad, la igual dignidad de todas las personas en su orientación sexual y hasta en sus diferencias, no está nunca asegurada para siempre y desde luego, no lo está en la Unión Europea. Y nos recuerda el deber que tenemos cada vez que esto suceda de señalar con el dedo a los Gobiernos de la Unión Europea que miran para otro lado, que no incoan las acciones penales y depuran todas las responsabilidades y que no sientan ante la justicia penal a quien falta al respeto a ningún ser humano por ser lo que es, por su identidad, por su orientación sexual, por amar a quien ame.

Sophia in 't Veld (Renew). – Mr President, Madam Commissioner, colleagues, phobia, like in homophobia, transphobia, literally means fear. And indeed, it seems that some people are frantic about the idea that there are people in the world who are different from them. And I just heard the colleague who's already left say, you insult biological women. Well, I don't know. I don't feel insulted, I've got better things to do with my life than making other people miserable.

Last month, Greece adopted equal marriage. That is objectively a great step forward. But the real test for Greece is now. In 2018, the Zak Kostopoulos was attacked by a homophobic mob in Athens. He was also beaten by police officers and he died while in police custody, yet the police officers went free. Last week, two trans people were attacked on the streets of Athens by a transphobic mob. This time should be different. The first reactions of the authorities now seem to be more adequate in 2018, so let's hope it will be better. But I would like to call on all political parties to firmly condemn the attacks and to make it clear that there is zero tolerance for hate crimes in Greece, and to visibly stand by the side of their LGBTI fellow citizens.

Πέτρος Κόκκαλης (Verts/ALE). – Κύριε Πρόεδρε, μετά την πρόσφατη επίθεση στη Θεσσαλονίκη, είχαμε χθες επίθεση σε κινηματογράφο από παραρησκευτικές ομάδες και έχει επίσης συλληφθεί ένας 32χρονος σε μια νέα επίθεση σε ένα από τα δύο ΛΟΑΤΚΙ άτομα που κινδύνευαν με λιντσάρισμα από έναν μαύρο όχλο στην κεντρική πλατεία της πόλης. Μια πόλη που έχει γνωρίσει την τελευταία τριακονταετία μια πρωτοφανή υποβάθμιση, οικονομική κατάρρευση και κινδυνεύει να γίνει έρμαιο ακραίων εθνικιστικών και ρατσιστικών κύκλων, που εκμεταλλεύονται την απουσία ενός ισχυρού αντίπαλου επίσημου λόγου και λειτουργούν συχνά με τη λογική παρακράτους. Από τον εθνικορησκευτικό παροξυσμό στα συλλαλητήρια κατά της συμφωνίας των Πρεσπών και την αδιστακτη σωματική επίθεση ενάντια στον δήμαρχο Γιάννη Μπουτάρη μέχρι τον διχαστικό, κακοποιητικό και ρατσιστικό λόγο που ακούστηκε από μέλη πέντε κομμάτων στο Ελληνικό Κοινοβούλιο στη συζήτηση για την ισότητα στον γάμο, είναι ο ίδιος κατήφορος.

Το τρανσφοβικό πογκρόμ που είδαμε το Σάββατο στη Θεσσαλονίκη είναι το αποτέλεσμα και η κυβέρνηση της Ελλάδος πρέπει επιτέλους να καταλάβει ότι, όταν κλαδεύεις το κράτος δικαίου, θερίζεις θύελλες και, όταν αποδυναμώνεις τους δημοκρατικούς θεσμούς, βοηθάς το φίδι να γεννήσει. Το έχουμε ξαναδεί αυτό και στη Θεσσαλονίκη και στην Ευρώπη και δεν πρέπει να το ξαναδούμε σε αυτές τις ευρωεκλογές, γιατί αυτό είναι το δίλημμα της 9ης Ιουνίου. Η Ευρώπη που στρέφει τον όχλο απέναντι στον αδύναμο και τον διαφορετικό, τον Άλκη Καμπανό και τον Ζακ Κωστόπουλο, τη 12χρονη του Κολωνού και τους έφηβους νεκρούς Ρομά, τους κυνηγούς κεφαλών στον Έβρο και τα δύο ΛΟΑΤΚΙ άτομα. Δεν είναι η δική μας Ευρώπη αυτή. Αυτή η Ευρώπη της βίας και της μισαλλοδοξίας είναι η Ευρώπη της άκρας δεξιάς, είναι η Ευρώπη του κ. Βέμπερ, της Λεπέν, του Όρμπαν και της Μελόνι, και σε αυτήν πρέπει να βάλουμε ξανά ανάχωμα. Τον νου σας δημοκράτες!

Κωνσταντίνος Αρβανίτης (The Left). – Κύριε Πρόεδρε, όποιος δεν έχει μάτια για να δει, θα τα βρει για να κλάψει, αλλά τότε θα είναι πολύ αργά για δάκρυα. Γιατί πριν από έξι χρόνια, όπως είπαν οι συνάδελφοί μου, άφηνε την τελευταία του πνοή ένας νέος άνθρωπος, ο Ζακ Κωστόπουλος, μπροστά στα μάτια μας, μπροστά στις οθόνες μας. Θα μπορούσε κάποιος να πει ότι ήταν ένα μεμονωμένο περιστατικό, όμως δεν ήταν. Γιατί τα γεγονότα της Θεσσαλονίκης μάς επεσήμαναν ότι δεν ήταν, όπως και χθες μάθαμε ότι απελευθερώθηκαν και κυνηγοί κεφαλών στην Αλεξανδρούπολη. Ο διακόπτης γύρισε, τα δικράνια σηκώθηκαν και όχλος κυνηγάει μάγισσες, πενήντα μέτρα από το αστυνομικό τμήμα. Το διαφορετικό δεν ενοχλεί απλώς.

Το διαφορετικό θέλουν πλέον να το τρομοκρατήσουν, να το εξευτελίσουν, να το εξαφανίσουν. Αυτά συμβαίνουν με μαθηματική ακρίβεια όταν η εξουσία επωάζει το αβγό του φιδιού. Αυτά συμβαίνουν όταν πολιτικοί και παρατάξεις υιοθετούν ρητορική και τακτικές των πιο μαύρων σελίδων της ευρωπαϊκής ιστορίας, μέρες '35. Είναι η ποινικοποίηση της διαφορετικότητας. Είναι η ποινικοποίηση της φτώχειας. Τίποτα δεν είναι τυχαίο. Φτώχεια, ακρίβεια, ανεργία, κοινωνικό κράτος υπό κατάρρευση, πολιτικό σύστημα σε διαρκή κρίση αναξιοπιστίας, θεσμοί σε αποδιοργάνωση, εκτροχιασμένο κράτος δικαίου, fake news και κατασκευασμένοι εσωτερικοί εχθροί. Όποιος δεν έχει μάτια για να δει, θα βρει για να κλάψει, αλλά τότε θα είναι πολύ αργά για δάκρυα.

Vera Tax (S&D). – Voorzitter, zaterdagavond: 200 mensen op een toeristisch plein in Griekenland die samen een jong stel aanvallen – een bizar incident. Wat was hier aan de hand?

Het begon met woorden uit de menigte. Vervolgens werden flessen gegooid en werd er fysiek geweld toegepast. Het stel is een restaurant ingevlucht en later door de politie in veiligheid gebracht.

Waar komen die woede en dat geweld vandaan? Je ziet dat het geen incident is, maar een tendens. Een tendens die ook hier in dit Parlement keiharde realiteit is. Transfobe teksten worden hier in deze zaal veelvuldig uitgeschreeuwd door extreemrechtse politici. Politici ter rechterzijde, nu afwezig, die willens en wetens inspelen op de angst van mensen over een onzekere toekomst, met als doel om de eigen onmacht te verhullen en de schuld bij een ander te leggen. En altijd bij een ander die in de minderheid is, zoals transmensen.

Extreemrechtse politici over de hele wereld kopiëren elkaars woorden en geven minderheden de schuld van alles wat mis is in de maatschappij. Dit is niet zonder gevolgen. Want waar verbale agressie naar minderheden de norm is, is fysieke agressie op straat niet ver weg. Waar verbale agressie de norm is en zich lafjes verschuilt achter het recht op vrije meningsuiting, wordt medemenselijkheid steeds verder uitgehouden.

Woorden doen er dus toe, maar meer nog doet jouw stem er dus toe bij de volgende verkiezingen. Wie mag er spreken namens jou? Wie krijgt de meerderheid in de EU-democratie? Zijn dat de haters, of de medemensen?

Karen Melchior (Renew). – Mr President, there is No LGBTQ without T. The two people attacked in Thessaloniki were trans. This was not a coincidence. Because to the right, when they cannot stop equal marriage, when you cannot stop the freedom to love whoever you want to love, you attack the trans community who just want to be who they are. Trans women are women. Trans men are men. And trans lives matter. Trans men and trans women have the right to be loved and to live the lives they want to live and do the sports they want to do.

To the silent majority, now is the time to speak up because the very vocal hateful minority is already shouting. Start speaking up for trans rights.

Brando Benifei (S&D). – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, purtroppo anche in quest'Aula, nella celebrazione della Giornata internazionale per i diritti della donna, abbiamo sentito parole transfobiche quindi si tratta di un problema che ovunque, anche qui, è un problema culturale, un problema di leggi.

Vale per Salonicco, vale per la Grecia, per i fatti di violenza che ricordiamo, ma vale anche per il mio Paese, l'Italia, dove continuano a esserci suicidi di ragazze e ragazzi della comunità LGBTQIA+. Ci sono violenze, ci sono episodi di bullismo, ci sono discriminazioni a tutti i livelli.

Abbiamo bisogno di dare un segno chiaro, un cambiamento culturale, politico e di leggi. L'Europa deve impegnarsi affinché tutti gli Stati membri realizzino leggi chiare contro le discriminazioni e vengano sempre perseguiti adeguatamente i criminali che commettono attacchi omofobici e transfobici.

Dobbiamo lavorare insieme, non può essere un tema che divide, dobbiamo essere uniti perché ogni vita vale.

Michael Kauch (Renew). – Herr Präsident, meine Damen und Herren! Wir haben von vielen Rednern schon gehört, wie dramatisch die Situation für viele LGBTI in Europa ist. Ich glaube, wir müssen darüber sprechen: Was können wir tun?

Zunächst einmal sind die Mitgliedstaaten gefordert, in ihrer Rechtsordnung Hassverbrechen stärker zu bestrafen. Die deutsche Bundesregierung hat eine entsprechende Maßnahme vorgelegt und umgesetzt; Hasskriminalität in Deutschland wird jetzt auch für LSBTI stärker bestraft. Das war dringend nötig, denn in Frankfurt hatten wir einen Fall, da hat jemand einem den Kiefer gebrochen, und der ist dann mit einer Bewährungsstrafe rausgekommen – „ist ja alles nicht ganz so schlimm gewesen“.

Das Zweite ist die Prävention. Um Prävention machen zu können, müssen wir uns auch darüber im Klaren sein: Was sind denn unsere Hauptproblemgruppen an der Stelle? Es sind vor allem junge Männer, Männer teilweise unter 18 Jahren, teilweise mit rechtem Hintergrund, teilweise mit Migrationshintergrund. Wir haben auch in Thessaloniki gesehen, dass von 21 Verhafteten zwölf nicht die griechische Staatsbürgerschaft hatten, sondern die von Drittstaaten. Das müssen wir zur Kenntnis nehmen und entsprechend in unsere Maßnahmenplanung auch einbeziehen.

Deutschland hat das mit dem Aktionsplan „Queer leben“ auf den Weg gebracht. Ich würde mich freuen, wenn in allen Mitgliedstaaten auch entsprechende Präventionsprogramme umgesetzt werden.

Fabio Massimo Castaldo (Renew). – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, non abbiamo avuto neanche il tempo di festeggiare lo storico traguardo raggiunto dalla Grecia il 16 febbraio con il matrimonio egualitario, che già l'aggressione di Salonicco ci ha ricordato quanto sia radicata la cultura dell'odio nella nostra Europa.

Ho sempre ritenuto che la politica dovesse avere anche una funzione pedagogica, cercando di migliorare la società, e invece vedo questo lato dell'emiciclo tristemente vuoto, silenzioso. E quando non è silenzioso lo vedo cavalcare l'onda dell'intolleranza. Vedo sempre questa propensione a cavalcare le differenze tra un noi e un loro, che esistono soltanto nel vostro immaginario, cari colleghi dell'estrema destra.

Ma quando lo capirete che il diritto ad essere ciò che si vuole, ad amare chi si vuole, a fare del proprio corpo ciò che si vuole, appartiene a ognuno di noi, senza distinzioni? È così difficile accettare che ogni essere umano ha il diritto assoluto e inalienabile di ricercare la propria felicità nel modo in cui vuole?

Smettetela con questa caccia alle streghe, con le vostre ghetizzazioni e le vostre fobie; smettetela di ricercare una definizione di normalità, che nulla ha a che vedere con la natura umana. Quanti altri pestaggi, suicidi e morti dovremo piangere prima che smettiate di fomentare l'odio verso la comunità LGBTIQ in Grecia, in Italia, in Europa e ovunque nel mondo?

L'omosessualità esiste in 450 specie, l'omofobia e la transfobia solo in una: chi è innaturale adesso? Cambiamo questa cultura dell'odio e trasformiamola in una cultura dell'amore.

Catch-the-eye procedure

Μανώλης Κεφαλογιάννης (PPE). – Κύριε Πρόεδρε, η ρητορική μίσους από ομάδες του περιθωρίου αποτελεί πανευρωπαϊκό φαινόμενο. Ο κοινωνικός εκφασισμός δεν πρόκειται να γίνει ανεκτός στην Ελλάδα. Άμεση και αποτελεσματική ήταν η κινητοποίηση της ελληνικής πολιτείας, των πολιτικών κομμάτων, της ελληνικής αστυνομίας. Στην Ελλάδα η εθνική στρατηγική για την ισότητα εκπονήθηκε με πρωτοβουλία του πρωθυπουργού Κυριάκου Μητσοτάκη. Θεσμοθετήθηκε ο νόμος 5089 του 2024 για την ισότητα στον πολιτικό γάμο με τροποποίηση του Ποινικού Κώδικα και της εργατικής νομοθεσίας. Θεσμοθετήθηκε ο νόμος 4931 του 2022, που απαγορεύει ρητά τις πρακτικές μεταστροφής της έκφρασης φύλου. Θεσμοθετήθηκε ο νόμος 4958 του 2022, που απαγορεύει ιατρικές διαδικασίες θεραπείας σε ανηλίκους. Θεσμοθετήθηκε ο νόμος 4604 του 2019, που προωθεί την ουσιαστική ισότητα των φύλων και κατοχυρώνει την καταπολέμηση της έμφυλης βίας. Αλλά και η προηγούμενη κυβέρνηση θεσμοθέτησε τον νόμο 4491 του 2017, που αναγνωρίζει και κατοχυρώνει την ταυτότητα των φύλων. Θεσμοθέτησε τον νόμο 4356 του 2015, που μιλάει για το σύμφωνο συμβίωσης και την άσκηση των ατομικών δικαιωμάτων. Η Ελλάδα διαχρονικά βρίσκεται στην πρωτοπορία της ισότητας, με σεβασμό στην αξιοπρέπεια για όλους.

(End of catch-the-eye procedure)

Elisa Ferreira, Member of the Commission. – Mr President, honourable Members, since its adoption, the implementation of the LGBTIQ equality strategy contributes to improve many people's lives and to build equal and welcoming societies for LGBTIQ people. Yet the assaults in Thessaloniki were a stark reminder that much remains to be done.

Hate-motivated attacks are on the rise in most European Union countries, particularly affecting trans people. Against this surge of violence and discrimination, the European Union never hesitated to act to combat hatred and to put equality at the centre of all its policies. While we made important steps forward, the ongoing backlash is a reminder that progress towards LGBTIQ equality is fragile and hardly irreversible. It is crucial for the European Union to remain vigilant and to continue to be at the forefront to protect the human rights of LGBTIQ people.

Hate has no place in Europe. Let us stand together in solidarity to eradicate it once and for all.

President. – Thank you very much, Commissioner. I thank all the colleagues for this debate. I thank those who stayed in the room for the whole debate.

I also thank those who reminded us of Zach Kostopoulos, whose mother was here, and brought a petition to this House – to the Committee on Petitions – drawing attention to the killing of her son and to police impunity.

The debate is closed.

22. Den tid det tar för Europeiska kommissionen att behandla begäranden om allmänhetens tillgång till handlingar (debatt)

President. – The next item is the debate on the Commission statement on the time the European Commission takes to deal with requests for public access to documents (2023/2941(RSP)).

Elisa Ferreira, Member of the Commission. – Mr President, I'll be speaking on behalf of Commissioner Věra Jourová. And I'll start by thanking you for the possibility to speak about the time the European Commission takes to deal with requests for public access to documents in accordance with Regulation 1049/2001, in view of the vote on the motion for a resolution submitted by the LIBE Committee at the plenary session.

As you know, transparency is one of the objectives of the von der Leyen Commission and underpins any action that the Commission undertakes. With respect to statistics and delays, the Commission provided detailed elements in response to the European Ombudsman's strategic inquiry on this matter.

The Commission indeed receives the highest number of applications for public access to documents among all the institutions. This trend is confirmed in the latest annual report for the year 2022. The number of initial applications received by the Commission in 2022 reached 7 410. As regards confirmatory applications requesting a review by the Commission of the initial replies fully or partially refusing access, their number reached 418 in 2022, which reflects an increase of almost 17.8% in comparison with 2021.

The Commission welcomed most of the Ombudsman's recommendations, which largely correspond to its current practices. The Commission acknowledges the importance of the timely handling of requests for access to documents. It is striving to ensure that requests are processed within statutory deadlines, and notes that most requests for access to documents are handled effectively within the deadlines provided for by Regulation 1049/2001.

In this respect, the Commission would like to reiterate that the European Ombudsman's findings of maladministration concern the confirmatory stage of the access to documents procedure, which represents only a limited part of the total applications received by the Commission: 4% in 2021 and 5% in 2022. Moreover, the statistics confirm the strict interpretation of the exceptions by the Commission, as the requested documents are fully or partially disclosed in more than 77% of cases at the initial stage, and that wider or even full access was granted in more than half of the cases reviewed at the confirmatory stage in 2022. This data not only confirmed the openness of the Commission, but also the commitment of the institution to the right of access to documents as part of its overall transparency policy.

In any event, the Commission has taken action in this matter. Firstly, the Commission has reinforced the team in charge of confirmatory applications, which should bring tangible results in the medium term. Secondly, the Commission proactively publishes a wide variety of legal, policy, administrative and other documents on different websites and registers.

The Commission has taken additional steps in improving its systems for proactive publication and request handling, such as the updated version of the Register of Commission Documents, which became operational on 17 May 2021. Also, the EASE portal was launched in September 2022 to facilitate public access to documents and interaction with requesters. It is part of the Commission's effort to improve its systems for proactive publication and request handling, and allows citizens to submit initial and confirmatory applications, see their ongoing and closed requests, receive replies electronically, and search for documents disclosed to other applicants. It additionally constitutes a new case management system, allowing Commission staff to handle the applications for access to documents.

Finally, the Commission duly notifies the applicants regarding the available remedies. It is noteworthy that in 2022, the European Ombudsman found instances of maladministration in only two of the 44 inspected cases. In the same vein, in 2022, the General Court handed down 26 judgments or orders in proceedings to which the Commission was a party in relation to decisions concerning access to documents, and it ordered the full or partial annulment in only three cases. This further confirms the high standards of the Commission's implementation of Regulation 1049/2001, in all circumstances, including in the unprecedented pandemic and geopolitical situation which characterised the past years.

Ioan-Rareș Bogdan, în numele grupului PPE. – Domnule președinte, Excelențele Voastre, dezbaterile pro și contra transparenței îndreptătesc cetățenii să se întrebe – oare ce au unii de ascuns? De ce trebuie reglementat bunul simț? De ce avem în fiecare an această discuție la nivelul Europei? Poate sunt eu idealist, dar am fost jurnalist și nu unul comod, unul important și dur, iar atunci când o instituție ezită să spună cum a stabilit planul de investiții sau răspunsul venea după câteva luni, intram la bănuiele. Este regretabil faptul că în 85 dintre cazurile analizate de Ombudsman, Comisia nu a răspuns în termen legal, majoritatea întârzierilor fiind mai mari de două luni și ne mai mirăm că unii oameni, cetățeni europeni, își pierd încrederea în eurosistem.

Doamnelor și domnilor comisari, faceți, vă rog, un pas în spate și priviți toată fotografia momentului. Veți constata că Uniunea Europeană se află sub asediu – asediul celor care o dinamitează din interior cu ajutor de la Moscova, iar îngrijorarea privind tendința de vot este reală. Nu-i păcat de construcția noastră europeană? Avem un vecin care vrea să ne dea foc la casă, iar noi o stropim cu benzină și aruncăm un trabuc? Apropos de trabuc, Winston Churchill a spus așa: „Nu veți ajunge niciodată la destinație dacă aruncați cu pietre în fiecare câine care vă latră”. Câinele de pază al democrației este întotdeauna, a fost, este și va fi presa, presa liberă.

Fiți convinși de buna-credință a celor care vă solicită anumite chestiuni și vedeți dacă nu cumva au dreptate. Accesul public la documente este prevăzut în tratate și în Carta drepturilor fundamentale. Acesta nu este un fleac. Cetățeanul nu este un detaliu mărunț. Cetățeanul european plătește impozite și taxe. Cetățeanul european votează și uneori ne semnalează și nouă, eurodeputaților, probleme grave. Noi interpelăm, iar răspunsurile vin cu mare întârziere – prea mare întârziere, iar uneori sunt fără noimă, lipsite de conținut sau răspund la altceva.

Doamnelor și domnilor comisari, vreau să vă spun că respect în mod deosebit munca pe care o desfășurați. Vă cer însă să luați măsuri urgente și să le dovediți cetățenilor europeni că pot avea încredere în instituțiile europene. Vă solicit să respectați dreptul stabilit prin lege, acela de a avea acces și de a fi informați cât mai repede.

Juan Fernando López Aguilar, en nombre del Grupo S&D. – Señor presidente, señora comisaria, el derecho al buen gobierno, a la buena administración, a la transparencia y al acceso a los documentos son derechos fundamentales protegidos por los artículos 40 y 41 de la Carta. Y aún más, resulta que hay un Reglamento —vinculante, por tanto, para los Estados miembros— de 2001 que este Parlamento ha intentado actualizar en consonancia con la Carta durante años y que lleva nada menos que trece años bloqueado por el Consejo.

Pero, afortunadamente, también es un derecho fundamental acceder al Defensor del Pueblo y, de manera todavía más afortunada, resulta que tenemos una defensora del pueblo europea elegida por este Parlamento, Emily O'Reilly, que ha puesto en marcha una investigación de iniciativa que pone de manifiesto que hay un retraso sistémico e inaceptable en el acceso a los documentos de las administraciones e instituciones europeas que debe ser corregido.

Deben proporcionarse, por tanto, los recursos necesarios y el personal necesario para corregir este inaceptable nivel de retraso sistémico y generalizado en el acceso a los documentos, para que se cumpla de una vez ese derecho fundamental protegido por la Carta que es el acceso a los documentos y, ojalá, en la próxima legislatura veamos desbloqueado el Reglamento relativo al acceso del público a los documentos de las instituciones europeas, para que podamos de una vez actualizar también ese Reglamento europeo.

Sophia in 't Veld, *on behalf of the Renew Group*. – Mr President, Madam Commissioner colleagues, I very much welcome the special report by the European Ombudsman, but it is unfortunate that it had to come to this. I don't know about you, but I have been here for 20 years now. I'm probably one of the MEPs doing most access to documents requests, and I think never once did I get my documents on time. Never once! If you can find me one instance where I got them on time, I'm going to buy you a drink. But that says everything, apart from all the official figures.

The problem here is not just – as the European Ombudsman has flagged up – a lack of capacity, but there is a lack of political will. It is clear that the current Commission is not just disinterested, but actively reluctant to provide more transparency. But without transparency, there is no scrutiny. Without scrutiny, there are no checks on power. Without checks on power, there is no democracy. The Commission will have to do better, and this House will have to do better in holding the Commission to account. Soon there will be elections and we will get a new chance, and this should be one of our key issues.

Tineke Strik, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – Mr President, Commissioner, this is an election year. How can citizens judge the performance of Commissioners in charge if their right to access to information is denied? Unjustified secrecy hampers to address corruption, violation of fundamental rights and simply hurts democratic scrutiny of the EU.

The Ombudsman's examples of delayed access to information in its special report relate to issues that are of extremely high public concern: human rights violations at the borders; the spending of billions of euros from the Recovery Fund; COVID vaccines; sanctions against Russia. I want to ask the Commission, are you satisfied with the status quo? Are you alarmed by the Ombudsman's findings? And most importantly, what are you going to change in order to make substantial progress on transparency in the next five years? Will you commit to: proactive transparency; disclosure of all documents unless there are real justified grounds not to do so; more staff and resources to treat applications; and preventing Commission and agencies from charging legal fees to civil society or journalists trying to access documents in the public interest?

If you are serious in bringing Europe closer to the citizens, practise what you preach.

Dorien Rookmaker, *namens de ECR-Fractie*. – Voorzitter, dank voor uw toelichting. Ik pas mijn toespraak daar een beetje op aan, want dit verslag is natuurlijk gebaseerd op cijfers uit 2021. Ik begrijp dat er al heel veel gebeurt om de situatie te verbeteren. Al neem ik ook in overweging dat mevrouw In't Veld, die hier al jaren rondloopt, slechte ervaringen heeft met de situatie zoals die is. De Commissie dus moet van ver komen. Ik hoop dat dit absolute prioriteit krijgt.

Waarom? Een voorbeeld: Ursula von der Leyen gaf in Davos bij het Wereld Economisch Forum al aan dat het risico op nepinformatie een van de belangrijkste risico's is waar we tegenwoordig mee te dealen hebben. Als je nepinformatie wil tegengaan, dan moet je zorgen dat je transparantie heel goed op orde is. Want als je daar niet goed mee omgaat en mensen moeten wachten op het openbaar maken van documenten, dan krijgen mensen die nepnieuws willen verspreiden, het veel te makkelijk. Dus ik hoop, dat in ogenschouw nemend, dat dit voldoende prioriteit krijgt (*de Voorzitter onderbreekt de spreker*) in het verkiezingsjaar.

Gunnar Beck, *on behalf of the ID Group*. – Mr President, Max Weber 100 years ago wrote, 'Every bureaucracy seeks to increase the superiority of the professionally informed by keeping their knowledge secret and by hiding its action from criticism'.

One year ago, I asked the European Commission to grant me access to EIOPA's report into the revocation of Euroins's business licence in Romania. The Commission stated it never received the report. EIOPA eventually sent me a heavily redacted version, citing commercially sensitive information as a doubtful reason. Why did EIOPA really withhold information? Might it be the fact that Superbet, the company standing to profit from the liquidation of Romania's last motor insurer, is chaired by the Commission President's own brother? The Euroins Romania case is a shocking reminder of Weber's words and of the Commission's colonisation by private and business interests. A reminder because the proof was delivered by the Pfizer contracts three years ago.

Jiří Pospíšil (PPE). – Pane předsedající, je sice pokročilá hodina, ale já tuto debatu považuji za mimořádně důležitou, protože to, jak orgány veřejné moci, v tomto případě Evropská komise, poskytují informace občanům, je důležitá zpráva o tom, nakolik veřejná moc v Evropské unii funguje, nakolik tedy občan je partnerem orgánů veřejné moci, v tomto případě Komise, nakolik má právo získávat včas dokumenty, které požaduje, nebo nakolik zkrátka si veřejná správa dělá trochu, co chce, a zákonné lhůty nerespektuje. A občan, který je partnerem, se stává tím, kdo čeká a kdo se zkrátka nemůže bránit. Já se velmi omlouvám, paní komisařko, je to velmi důležité a nadmíru symbolické, to, že v mnoha případech Komise nedodržuje zákonné lhůty. A je to hlavně pro mě naprosto nepřijatelné. Je to nepřijatelné, pokud žijeme v demokracii, pokud žijeme v právním státě, kde veřejné orgány, orgány veřejné moci, tedy i Komise, poskytují službu občanům, poskytují službu těm, kteří je ze svých daní platí.

Já opravdu moc prosím, udělejte vše pro to, aby tato zpráva, kterou zde projednáváme, byla minulostí, aby do budoucna nic takového nenastalo. Určitým řešením je, že maximální množství dokumentů bude primárně zveřejňováno a občané tedy o ně nebudou muset žádat. Moc prosím, ta symbolika těch špatných statistik je mimořádně alarmující.

Cyrus Engerer (S&D). – Mr President, I've taken transparency quite strongly here since I've been a Member of this House and I must say, I'm very disappointed in the failure of the Commission to provide timely access to documents. Everything is delayed, everything is late, sometimes they don't even arrive these documents.

This transparency is very crucial for public scrutiny and it is very crucial also for trust that our citizens must have in our European institutions. But it is not only the Commission. I must urge also governments in the different Member States to take transparency seriously. It is unacceptable to have journalists being denied freedom of information requests and then needing to go in front of the courts to get public documents that should be everyone's.

I would like to highlight the wonderful job of the European Ombudsman O'Reilly for keeping the pressure on the Commission and for providing us with figures, but also for the introduction of a fast-track procedure by the Ombudsman to deal with so many complaints in this field.

It is crucial for citizens, but also for journalists to be provided quickly those accesses and this is important for the well-functioning of our democracy. So Commission, Member State governments, delaying so much public access to documents is not only unacceptable, we need to make sure that transparency...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Elisa Ferreira, Member of the Commission. – Mr President, I've been listening carefully to what you have been saying, but the Commission would like to underline that it has already taken the necessary steps in order to address most of the recommendations in the European Ombudsman's special report. The Commission regularly revises existing administrative practices and is developing new IT tools in order to adapt to the reality of the 21st century, also taking into account the relevant case-law of the European Union courts.

While the Commission notes that certain delays occur at the confirmatory stage due to the increasing number, complexity and sensitivity of the requests, it would like to reiterate that the overall numbers indeed confirm the timely handling and high standards of the Commission's implementation of Regulation 1049/2001.

While Regulation 1049/2001 on public access to documents remains the legal instrument for the handling of applications for access to documents, I would like to reiterate that two legislative proposals to recast this regulation have been pending for quite a long time. The Commission does not see, for the moment, the willingness from co-legislators to engage in a revision process, but it stands ready to support further legislative and political discussions.

Thank you again for your attention and for the possibility to speak on behalf of the Commission on this point.

President. – The debate is closed.

I have received one motion for a resolution¹ to wind up this debate. The vote will be held tomorrow.

¹ See minutes.

23. Röstförklaringar

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

23.1 Europeisk mediefrihetsakt (A9-0264/2023 – Sabine Verheyen)

Oral explanations of vote

Miriam Lexmann (PPE). – Vážený pán predsedajúci, *you didnt hear me before? Thank you.* Ochrana novinárov a sloboda médií sú čoraz pálčivejšími otázkami, a to nielen v kontexte stupňujúcich sa útokov a nátlaku proti médiám, ale napríklad aj pokusom slovenskej vlády oklieštiť slobodu médií.

Je preto potrebné zaviesť jasné pravidlá na ochranu novinárov a ich zdrojov. Oceňujem tiež striktné pravidlá pre transparentnosť vlastníctva a financovania médií. Slobodné a pluralitné médiá sú jedným zo základných pilierov našej demokratickej spoločnosti a pokusy o ich obmedzovanie sú jedným z prvých znakov toho, že sa v danej krajine niečo deje.

Nedovoľme, aby sa to ešte niekedy skončilo tak, ako u nás na Slovensku vraždou novinára a jeho snúbenice. Práve preto som hlasovala za toto nariadenie a verím, že poskytne základný dôležitý rámec pre to, aby médiá boli slobodné a aby sme sa my, občania, mohli na ne spoľahnúť.

23.2 Rättsakten om artificiell intelligens (A9-0188/2023 – Brando Benifei, Dragoș Tudorache)

Oral explanations of vote

Miriam Lexmann (PPE). – Vážený pán predsedajúci, akt o umelej inteligencii som podporila od začiatku. Predstavuje obrovský úspech a základný krok pri úprave tejto rýchlo sa rozvíjajúcej technológie.

Mojou hlavnou prioritou pre rokovania o nariadení bol silný humánno-centrický prístup. Umelá inteligencia totiž musí vždy byť zameraná na človeka, jeho dobro a ochranu jeho dôstojnosti a práv. Jednoducho musí byť dobrým sluhom a nie zlým pánom.

Podporujem taktiež prístup založený na hodnotení rizík, ktoré konkrétny typ umelej inteligencie môže predstavovať pre ľudí, ich základné práva a demokraciu. Som presvedčená, že dosiahnutá dohoda o texte ochráni našich občanov a podporí naše podniky a inovácie, keďže im dá jasné pravidlá, a tým aj právnu istotu.

Zároveň tiež pôsobí ako príklad pre ďalšie krajiny. Technológia umelej inteligencie totiž nepozná hranice a nato, aby sme zmiernili jej riziká a využili jej plný potenciál, musíme spolupracovať s našimi demokratickými partnermi.

23.3 Typgodkännande av motorfordon och motorer med avseende på utsläpp och batteriers hållbarhet (Euro 7) (A9-0298/2023 – Alexandr Vondra)

Oral explanations of vote

Ангел Джамбазки (ECR). – Г-н Председател, така е, Европейските институции мразят бедните хора. Те не искат да притежават лични автомобили и да имаме свободата да се придвижваме както намерим за добре.

Евро 7 е позор. Като се има предвид забраната за двигатели с вътрешно горене, какво излиза? От 2035 г. ще бъдат забранени двигатели с вътрешно горене, но въпреки това ще се затыга все повече и повече изискването за производство дотогава, в това няма никаква логика. Не стига това, ами наскоро се появиха предложения на Европейската комисия да бъде забранен и ремонтът на стари автомобили с двигатели с вътрешно горене. Това е антипазарно, антилогично и антиевропейско.

Обръщаме се към гражданите на Европейския съюз. Идват избори и всеки един от тях трябва да мисли как да гласува, защото изборът днес има реално влияние върху живота утре. На тези, които се опитват да правят такива забрани ще кажа, че през комунизма се забраняваха автомобилите и движението, там всички трябваше да се знае къде пътуват и как пътуват. По ирония на съдбата това се повтаря и днес. Хората, които твърдят, че се грижат за здравето на хората, всъщност забраняват на някакви хора да се придвижват със своите автомобили.

23.4 Den europeiska planeringsterminen för samordning av den ekonomiska politiken: sysselsättningsprioriteringar och sociala prioriteringar för 2024 (A9-0050/2024 – Dragoș Pîslaru)

Oral explanations of vote

Ангел Джамбазки (ECR). – Г-н Председател, Европейският семестър за координация на икономическите политики, социални приоритети и приоритети в областта на заетостта за 2024 г. -докладът относно това, е добър случай да се разгледат тенденциите, що се отнася до икономически и фискални политики.

За съжаление в този доклад фокусът е изместен върху социални политики и политики, свързани със заетостта. Това, което най-много ме притеснява в този доклад, е призивът за планове за възстановяване и устойчивост, които трябва да продължат след 2026 г., когато всъщност трябва да бъдат завършени. Всъщност това е първият сигнал за приближаващия провал на гръмко прокламиран пакет от стимули, който беше изтеглен като дълг и ще трябва да бъде плащан от всички европейски граждани.

Истината е, че към момента огромна част от средствата не се усвояват, а основната причина е в това, че националните планове бяха пренаписани няколко пъти, за да се угоди на един друг, втори, трети или пети европейски бюрократ. В текста има призови за още публични средства за зелен преход, постигане на целите на зелената сделка, а в същност резултатите от всичко това ги виждаме всеки ден, деиндустриализация на Европа, потъващ бизнес и най-вече превръщането на Европа в икономическо джудже, което е вносител на всичко нужно, за да оцелява.

Целта на Европейския семестър за координация на икономическите политики трябва да бъде растежа и просперитетата на нашата икономика, а не бутафорни неща като зелена сделка и други възможни алабализми. Затова гласувах въздържал се.

23.5 Närmare förbindelser mellan EU och Armenien och behovet av ett fredsavtal mellan Azerbajdzjan och Armenien (RC-B9-0163/2024)

Oral explanations of vote

Ангел Джамбазки (ECR). – Г-н Председател, по-тесните връзки между Европейския съюз и Армения и необходимостта от мирно споразумение между Азербайджан и Армения са важно нещо.

Гласувах в подкрепа на резолюцията на Европейския парламент, която призовава за по-тесни връзки с Армения, както и необходимостта от мирно споразумение между азербайджанците и арменците. За съжаление арменският народ отново е в ролята на народ мъченик, както го е нарекъл великият български поет и революционер Пейо Яворов. За съжаление, отново се допуска една диктатура в лицето на управляващите в Азербайджан да осъществят истински геноцид, истински геноцид, срещу арменците по този начин, по който правеше и Турция през 1915 г. в Османската империя.

Армения е една от най-старите християнски държави, затова смятам, че макар и закъсняло, сближаването между Европейския съюз и Армения е повече от необходимо. В този свят на несигурност и войни ние трябва да протегнем ръце към този народ и да помогнем в неговото оцеляване, заклеши между диктатурите на Ердоган и на Алиев. Над 100 хиляди арменци бяха прогонени от домовете си и преди това бяха държани изолирани, без достъп до храна, медицински грижи и какво ли още не. Затова е време за споразумение и за връщането на Арцах в ръцете на Армения.

President. – That concludes the explanations of vote.

24. Föredragningslista för nästa sammanträde

President. – The next sitting will take place tomorrow, Thursday, 14 March, at 9.00. The agenda has been published and is available on the European Parliament website.

25. Justering av protokollet från detta sammanträde

President. – The minutes of this sitting will be submitted to Parliament for its approval tomorrow at the beginning of the afternoon.

26. Avslutande av sammanträdet

(The sitting closed at 22.32)

Teckenförklaring

*	Samrådsförfarande
***	Godkännandeförfarande
***I	Ordinarie lagstiftningsförfarande (första behandlingen)
***II	Ordinarie lagstiftningsförfarande (andra behandlingen)
***III	Ordinarie lagstiftningsförfarande (tredje behandlingen)

(Det angivna förfarandet baseras på den rättsliga grund som angetts i förslaget till akt.)

Förkortningar för utskottens namn

AFET	Utskottet för utrikesfrågor
DEVE	Utskottet för utveckling
INTA	Utskottet för internationell handel
BUDG	Budgetutskottet
CONT	Budgetkontrollutskottet
ECON	Utskottet för ekonomi och valutafrågor
EMPL	Utskottet för sysselsättning och sociala frågor
ENVI	Utskottet för miljö, folkhälsa och livsmedelssäkerhet
ITRE	Utskottet för industrifrågor, forskning och energi
IMCO	Utskottet för den inre marknaden och konsumentskydd
TRAN	Utskottet för transport och turism
REGI	Utskottet för regional utveckling
AGRI	Utskottet för jordbruk och landsbygdens utveckling
PECH	Fiskeriutskottet
CULT	Utskottet för kultur och utbildning
JURI	Utskottet för rättsliga frågor
LIBE	Utskottet för medborgerliga fri- och rättigheter samt rättsliga och inrikes frågor
AFCO	Utskottet för konstitutionella frågor
FEMM	Utskottet för kvinnors rättigheter och jämställdhet mellan kvinnor och män
PETI	Utskottet för framställningar
DROI	Underutskottet för mänskliga rättigheter
SEDE	Underutskottet för säkerhet och försvar
FISC	Underutskottet för skattefrågor
SANT	Underutskottet för folkhälsa

Förkortningar för de politiska grupperna

PPE	Europeiska folkpartiets grupp (kristdemokrater)
S&D	Gruppen Progressiva förbundet av socialdemokrater i Europaparlamentet
Renew	Gruppen Renew Europe
Verts/ALE	Gruppen De gröna/Europeiska fria alliansen
ECR	Gruppen Europeiska konservativa och reformister
ID	Gruppen Identitet och demokrati
The Left	Vänstergruppen i Europaparlamentet – GUE/NGL
NI	Grupplösa