

PEŁNE SPRAWOZDANIE Z OBRAD 7 LUTEGO 2018 R.

(C/2024/3198)

PARLAMENT EUROPEJSKI

SESJA 2017-2018

Posiedzenia od 5 do 8 lutego 2018 r.

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PEŁNE SPRAWOZDANIE Z OBRAD 7 LUTEGO 2018 R.

VORSITZ: RAINER WIELAND

Vizepräsident

1. Otwarcie posiedzenia

(Die Sitzung wird um 9.00 Uhr eröffnet.)

2. Debata nad przypadkami łamania praw człowieka, zasad demokracji i państwa prawa (ogłoszenie o złożonych projektach rezolucji): patrz protokół

3. Negocjacje przed pierwszym czytaniem w Parlamencie (zatwierdzenie) (art. 69c Regulaminu): Patrz protokół

4. Skład Parlamentu Europejskiego (debata)

Der Präsident. – Als erster Punkt der Tagesordnung folgt die Aussprache über den Bericht von Danuta Maria Hübner und Pedro Silva Pereira im Namen des Ausschusses für konstitutionelle Fragen über die Zusammensetzung des Europäischen Parlaments (2017/2054(INL) (A8-0007/2018).

Danuta Maria Hübner, rapporteur. – Mr President, today we will vote on the composition of the European Parliament for the European elections of 2019. In times when democracy as a system is called into question by some, elections are the most important expression of citizens' democratic will. The European Parliament directly represents its citizens in the European Union, so we as Members of Parliament form the direct link between citizens and the Union, and it is the prerogative of the European Parliament to propose its composition to the European Council and to have a final say on the European Council decision for each legislative period.

A distribution of Parliament's seats that is fair, that follows subjective principles and that respects the EU Treaties was the objective that we as co-rapporteurs set ourselves when we were entrusted with this task. We listened to the concerns of our colleagues in the House and the Member States and proposed a composition that fully respects the principle of digressive proportionality, as required by the Treaty. This principle ensures a fair and balanced representation of citizens by Member State. Observance of this principle, in combination with the distribution of some of the UK's vacated seats, allows us to address the under-representation of some Member States in the House.

Brexit has undoubtedly created a new situation for the Union that affects the composition of our House. One of the most populous Member States is leaving the Union, and we believe that this should be reflected in the future distribution of seats. We have the opportunity here not only to address the problem of under-representation of some Member States but also to leave a number of seats available for future enlargements and, depending on the creation of the proper legal basis, for the creation of transnational lists for European elections.

By reducing the size of Parliament from 751 to 705 Members, we would also allow for savings, thereby freeing up resources that can be used for other purposes. I think these are the right signals to send to our citizens.

Brexit has also made our task more challenging due to legal uncertainties as to the precise date and terms on which the EU acquis will cease to apply to the UK. That is why we have also envisaged a fall-back option in case the UK has not formally withdrawn from the Union by the time of the next elections.

In conclusion, I would like to highlight that this report garnered 80% support in the Committee on Constitutional Affairs. I hope that we will manage to achieve a large majority in today's vote in plenary as well, in order to ensure fair representation of our citizens. I call, in this regard, on the European Council to take heed of the European Parliament's position with regard to its composition.

(Applause)

Pedro Silva Pereira, relator. – Senhor Presidente, Caras e Caros Colegas, o relatório sobre a composição do Parlamento, que apresento com a minha colega Danuta Hübner, pretende conseguir o que nunca foi feito: assegurar um Parlamento com uma representação mais justa e garantir ao mesmo tempo que nenhum país perde lugares. Isto parece simples, mas nunca foi feito. Sempre que foi necessário no passado ajustar a composição do Parlamento, foi preciso que alguns perdessem para que outros pudessem ganhar. E sabemos porque é que agora é diferente: discutimos a recomposição do Parlamento no contexto do Brexit e, portanto, temos a oportunidade de distribuir pelo menos alguns dos lugares do Reino Unido.

Naturalmente, no passado, as tensões entre ganhadores e perdedores impediram sempre desvios ao *status quo* e levaram a soluções pragmáticas em que os compromissos políticos possíveis ficaram sempre aquém de uma representação mais justa. Nada disso acontece agora nesta proposta, porque temos a fantástica oportunidade de ter finalmente um Parlamento mais justo que represente mais fielmente a população dos Estados-Membros e ao mesmo tempo garantir que nenhum Estado-Membro perde lugares no Parlamento.

Isto agora, de facto, é possível e não devemos perder esta oportunidade. É certo, a redistribuição dos lugares do Reino Unido deve ser limitada porque os cidadãos não compreenderiam que saísse um país grande da União Europeia e a dimensão do Parlamento não fosse reduzida. Mas alguma distribuição é necessária se não queremos perder esta oportunidade. E, por isso, depois de ouvir atentamente os peritos, depois de ouvir este Parlamento, a começar pelos relatores-sombra, a proposta que eu e a minha colega Danuta Hübner apresentamos é esta: primeiro, que todos os países mantenham o número de deputados que têm agora. É, diria, o princípio básico, ninguém perde lugares. Segundo, que, adicionalmente, 27 dos 73 lugares do Reino Unido, que serão deixados vagos, sejam distribuídos por aqueles Estados que estão hoje subrepresentados. É uma proposta justa, equilibrada, politicamente viável, que mereceu já a aprovação da Comissão dos Assuntos Constitucionais e que espero seja hoje aprovada também por este plenário.

A nossa chave de repartição não é a aplicação de nenhuma das muitas fórmulas matemáticas que foram discutidas e que não lograram consenso nem político nem técnico. Mas também não é uma simples solução pragmática como a que vigorou até agora. O que propomos é uma solução baseada em princípios, o princípio da proporcionalidade regressiva e o princípio de que nenhum Estado perde lugares.

Redistribuindo apenas 27 dos 73 lugares, estamos naturalmente a propor também uma redução do Parlamento e a deixar uma margem de 46 lugares disponíveis para futuros alargamentos ou para a eventual criação das listas transnacionais.

E permitam que vos diga agora apenas duas palavras sobre as listas transnacionais. E a primeira é para desfazer um equívoco. Este relatório é sobre a composição do Parlamento, não é sobre as listas transnacionais. Através deste relatório, o Parlamento, tal como já fez em 2015, reconhece que compete ao Conselho, em sede de reforma da legislação eleitoral, decidir por unanimidade sobre a criação de uma eventual circunscrição comum europeia. E, por isso, o relatório diz que essa decisão do Conselho é uma pré-condição.

É isto que está em causa e não mais do que isto. Espero que nenhuma divergência pontual impeça este Parlamento de dirigir uma mensagem clara ao Conselho e de propor um parlamento ...

(O Presidente retira a palavra ao orador)

György Schöpflin, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – Mr President, I congratulate the two co-rapporteurs. I think they have done an excellent job on a very difficult file. I, for my part, want to focus on the transnational list. I have made no secret of my view that, as far as I am concerned, the transnational list is a bad idea. Here are my reasons.

There are several. First, the transnational list (TNL) is based on an idea that out there somewhere there is a European demos just waiting to be represented, and that the TNL will do just this. This is an error. There is no European demos and to claim the contrary is an illusion. Have European citizens ever been asked if they want to be represented by a transnational list? Again, the answer is no.

So, in real terms, what we are looking at is a top-down, elite-driven project, presumably starting from the belief that, if the transnational list comes into being, so will the European demos. Why on earth should it? It is a fatal assumption that the TNL will generate a supranational European consciousness. If anything, those putatively elected on the TNL will be remote from the electorate, and that will not do the reputation of this Parliament any good.

It's magical thinking that the transnational list will somehow produce the European demos. If the transnational list does happen, then this Parliament will have 27 free-floating MEPs answerable to none. They will have power without an electorate, they will have power without accountability and power without responsibility.

So where are the checks and balances? I shouldn't have to say that power without responsibility is the high road to arbitrariness. That, if you ask me, is about as undemocratic as it gets.

Mercedes Bresso, *a nome del gruppo S&D*. – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, intanto anch'io voglio ringraziare i relatori e mi auguro che questa più equilibrata organizzazione del Parlamento possa essere approvata anche dal Consiglio. Mi auguro anche che possa essere approvata dal Consiglio la parte relativa alle liste transnazionali, che mi auguro anche sia approvata dal Parlamento come è stata approvata in commissione.

Al collega Schöpflin e ai tanti che in questi giorni si sono pronunciati contro le liste transnazionali ricordo che noi oggi già rappresentiamo tutti i cittadini europei. Quindi io sono lontanissima quando sono a Bruxelles da un elettore greco che pure rappresento, come sono lontana anche dai miei elettori che rappresento, ma non rappresento solo gli elettori del mio collegio. L'aver una lista transnazionale con candidati se possibile di tutti i paesi europei – e l'emendamento lo consentirebbe –, guidata dai candidati presidenti della Commissione, creerebbe in effetti uno spazio di dibattito politico europeo.

È inutile che noi continuiamo a dire che si parla solo di questioni nazionali alle elezioni europee. Lo diciamo continuamente. Il modo per parlare di elezioni europee è quello di avere dei veri candidati europei, che in qualche modo guidino il dibattito a livello europeo. Non è vero che non esiste un demos europeo, oggi è tutto pieno di movimenti – *Pulse of Europe, Stand Up for Europe, Wake Up Europe, Civic Europe* – che si stanno autonomamente muovendo per creare questo spazio politico di dibattito europeo.

Allora vuole farlo anche il Parlamento? Vuole sentire la voce dei cittadini europei che chiedono di poter parlare d'Europa anche con i propri parlamentari, anche con coloro che li rappresentano e non solo fra di loro? Io credo che questo sia il momento. Non capisco come il collega Schöpflin, che tanto si è attivato sull'iniziativa dei cittadini europei, non capisca che questo è un altro strumento per dare spazio e voce a chi vuole, in occasione delle elezioni europee, parlare d'Europa e non dei propri problemi nazionali.

Kazimierz Michał Ujazdowski, w imieniu grupy ECR. – Panie Przewodniczący! Darzę szacunkiem posłów sprawozdawców, ale nie mogę poprzeć tego sprawozdania w obecnym kształcie. Po pierwsze uważam, że mogliśmy przemyśleć niedystrybuowanie miejsc po Brytyjczykach. Byłaby to szansa na Parlament bardziej efektywny, oszczędny i wydaje mi się, że spotkałoby się to z bardzo dobrym przyjęciem ze strony obywateli.

A drugą kwestią jest specjalny transnarodowy okręg wyborczy. Również tutaj ECR ma stanowisko krytyczne. Jest argument podniesiony przez pana posła Schöpflina o właściwie przymusowym budowaniu podmiotu politycznego. Wczoraj pan premier Plenковиć słusznie zauważył, że w takim okręgu wyborczym kampania wyborcza byłaby fikcją. Po raz kolejny pomysł federalistów, a właściwie federalistów w dogmatycznym wariacie, przyniesie efekt odwrotny do zamierzonego. Zamiast zwiększyć więź między posłami a obywatelami, osłabi ją i będzie wskutek tego sprzyjać raczej populizmowi i eurosceptycyzmowi. Członkowie Parlamentu Europejskiego powinni być wybierani w państwach członkowskich, powinni być bliżej obywateli. Nawet jeśli reprezentują wszystkich mieszkańców Unii Europejskiej, to powinno być miejsce bliskiego związku.

Guy Verhofstadt, on behalf of the ALDE Group. – Mr President, first of all I want to thank the rapporteurs for their work, for their wisdom and for their patience in this long discussion. You may remember the former president of the European People's Party who was my predecessor as Prime Minister of Belgium and who was, I can say quite easily, a very dedicated European, Wilfried Martens.

Wilfried Martens was a true believer in and defender of transnational lists and he understood what was at stake: he understood that without a strong link between the citizens and Europe, eurosceptics and populists would in the end always win the game. And he understood that transnational lists will not alienate the citizen: quite the contrary. Why? Because, in the proposal that you have before you, people will have two votes. One vote is for a national candidate, for a national list, to keep the link between the citizen and his or her MEP; and a second vote is for transnational candidates, to strengthen the link between the citizen and the European Union.

In my view, this is the only way to create what I call a European demos – which cannot arrive by accident, or spontaneously of itself – and I think it is also needed to make the *Spitzenkandidaten* process really democratic. Today the *Spitzenkandidaten* process is still undemocratic and non-transparent, a backroom deal within political parties or between political parties. What *Spitzenkandidaten* alone will not deliver, and what transnational lists will deliver because they complement the *Spitzenkandidaten* process, it is that it becomes a democratic process. It will be the people, the citizens, who will decide on the *Spitzenkandidaten* and the President of the Commission.

I have not heard any serious arguments against it. People say federal states don't have it: wrong! Federal states want it. My country, Belgium, is a federal state and many want a federal constituency. It is separatists who make war against it. A second example is the United States of America: a federal state. It's because there is no single constituency that it is Mr Trump who is President and not Hilary Clinton, who received three million votes more than Donald Trump.

Secondly, another argument I hear is that transnational lists are good for populists. I have to tell you that is also wrong. You could argue that democracy is only good for populists, so let's abolish democracy and let's abolish elections. I can tell you one thing: that's nonsense. You have to beat the populists, not to fear them, and to do that you need transnational lists.

The third argument, that transnational lists are only good for big Member States, is also wrong. No political party can afford to participate in elections without putting all the countries on the transnational list. What counts is not size, Mr Rangel, what counts is the vision, the passion, the commitment of all of us. That is what counts.

And let us be honest about big Member States. Our colleagues from Spain, Poland, France, Italy and Germany today need at least double the number of votes received by us representatives of small and medium-sized Member States, but I nevertheless tabled, together with Pascal, an amendment to ensure that small and medium-sized Member States will be represented on the list.

I am concluding. I know you're a very tough President, Mr Wieland.

Let's not waste this historic opportunity. Brexit will never come back. Never again will we see half of the Member States in favour of this European constituency. And finally, Mr President, Altiero Spinelli, the father of this European Parliament, would turn in his grave if we missed this unique opportunity.

(Applause)

Helmut Scholz, *im Namen der GUE/NGL-Fraktion*. – Herr Präsident! Am Montag informierte die EVP-Fraktion die Presse, dass die von ihr ausgehandelte Vereinbarung zur Reduzierung der Parlamentssitze nach 2019 diese Woche Priorität habe. Fake News nennt man das. In der Realität reichte die Kraft der zerstrittenen EVP bekanntlich nur dafür, das für zukünftige Sitzverteilungen dringend benötigte permanente System zu verhindern. Der vorliegende Bericht folgt auch nicht dem verbreiteten Schielen nach dem Einsparpotenzial des Brexit, sondern rückt das Beheben des anhaltenden Rechtsbruchs bei der Sitzverteilung in den Mittelpunkt. Das halte ich für richtig, und hier danke ich auch den beiden Ko-Berichterstatlern.

Verteilungsgerechtigkeit unter den Mitgliedstaaten, transnationale Listen für politische Parteien und Bewegungen sowie zukünftige Erweiterung sind die politischen Stichworte, für die die potenziell frei werdenden britischen Sitze genutzt oder geparkt, aber nicht zurückgegeben werden sollen. Das ist für mich richtig.

Für uns als GUE/NGL war aber klar, dass der Bericht den Brexit juristisch ernst nehmen muss, der politische Prozess aber offengehalten gehört. Denn Geschichte ist offen, auch für die Menschen im Vereinigten Königreich, einschließlich der Achtung des Karfreitag-Abkommens.

Der erzielte Kompromiss ist pragmatisch und politisch sinnvoll. Aber seien wir ehrlich: Es hätte dringend auch einer Debatte über die notwendige Stärkung der demokratischen Untersetzung europäischer Politik bedurft, d. h. über die Möglichkeit, wie sich die Bevölkerungen mit ihren Interessen und Bedürfnissen Gehör verschaffen können, und vielleicht auch darüber, wie das Europäische Parlament – zum Beispiel gestärkt durch das Initiativrecht – als von Bürgerinnen und Bürgern direkt gewählte Institution die Gestaltung ihres Alltags übernehmen kann. Das aber war mit dem politischen ...

(Der Präsident entzieht dem Redner das Wort.)

Philippe Lamberts, *au nom du groupe Verts/ALE*. – Monsieur le Président, chers collègues, nous avons la charge de défendre l'intérêt général européen. Pourtant, chacun d'entre nous est élu dans sa circonscription nationale, voire régionale, ce qui peut nous pousser à privilégier des intérêts nationaux ou régionaux par rapport à cet intérêt général.

Pour prendre un exemple concret, notre monnaie commune, l'euro, pour pouvoir être viable, a besoin de mécanismes de solidarité financière forts entre les États, ce qui ne peut aller évidemment sans une gestion responsable des affaires et des dépenses publiques.

Il est très facile aujourd'hui à un candidat allemand de défendre la responsabilité dans la circonscription allemande comme il est très facile à un candidat grec de défendre la solidarité dans la circonscription grecque. L'inverse est beaucoup plus difficile, mais c'est ce que devront faire les candidats et les candidates qui se présenteront au niveau européen. Ils devront formuler et défendre un projet qui puisse parler et convaincre non seulement dans un pays de l'Union, mais dans toute l'Union. C'est la condition d'un véritable débat démocratique en Europe.

Le départ des élus britanniques est l'occasion de donner au débat cette dimension véritablement européenne sans supprimer de sièges au niveau national, les sièges transnationaux venant s'ajouter aux sièges nationaux et non s'y substituer.

Chers collègues, il y a cinq ans, nous avons aussi innové en évoquant cette idée de candidats «figures de proue», les *Spitzenkandidaten*. Osons innover, une fois encore, avec cette circonscription transnationale. Certes, ces deux hirondelles ne feront pas le printemps démocratique européen, mais je suis convaincu qu'elles y contribueront largement.

Fabio Massimo Castaldo, *a nome del gruppo EFDD*. – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, siamo oggi chiamati a compiere un'opera delicatissima e dobbiamo sentire tutto il peso della responsabilità che ne deriva. Il Parlamento europeo è infatti l'unica istituzione dell'Unione direttamente eletta dai cittadini. Parliamo quindi della rappresentanza diretta di questi ultimi. L'uscita della Gran Bretagna lascerà 73 seggi vacanti dentro il Parlamento e i colleghi relatori, che ringrazio, nella relazione hanno avanzato una proposta di redistribuzione di alcuni di essi, che risulta a mio giudizio abbastanza equilibrata.

Ma la grande novità introdotta dalla relazione è però un'altra. Si tratta dell'assegnazione di alcuni seggi ad una circoscrizione unica coincidente con l'intero territorio dell'Unione. Per questi concorrerebbero candidati suddivisi in liste transnazionali. Come Movimento 5 Stelle abbiamo sempre avuto perplessità sul fatto che i popoli europei siano pronti a un passo simile, ma abbiamo deciso di accettare la sfida. Accettarla sì, ma a patto che tanto questo progetto quanto gli *Spitzenkandidaten* rendano possibile la creazione di vere piattaforme per l'aggregazione di esperienze provenienti anche dai movimenti, anche dalla società civile, e non siano invece esclusivo appannaggio dei partiti.

Queste liste non possono e non devono diventare un paracadute a disposizione dei partiti per fare eleggere politici non più in grado di raccogliere i consensi, ma al contrario devono costituire un'occasione per allargare e rafforzare il dibattito democratico e il legame dei cittadini con le istituzioni europee e con il processo di integrazione. Questo e non altro deve essere per noi l'unico vero faro guida dell'attuazione di questa riforma, imprescindibilmente.

Georg Mayer, im Namen der ENF-Fraktion. – Herr Präsident, fühlen Sie sich direkt angesprochen! Ich denke, Sie halten es mit George Orwell: Alle Tiere sind gleich, aber manche Tiere sind gleicher. Also, dass Sie den Kollegen Verhofstadt 50 Sekunden über die Zeit sprechen lassen, finde ich schon ganz schön beachtlich, wenn Sie andere nach fünf Sekunden abdrehen.

Es wird in diesem Zusammenhang immer von Bürgernähe gesprochen. Kollegen, wissen Sie, was echte Bürgernähe in diesem Fall bedeutet hätte? Echte Bürgernähe hätte bedeutet, dass wir die 73 Sitze, die nach dem Brexit frei werden, einsparen. Das hätte den europäischen Bürgern wirklich etwas gebracht. Nun ist der Plan also – zumindest wenn es nach dem Ausschuss geht –, dass 27 Sitze auf Mitgliedstaaten verteilt werden und die anderen 46 frei bleibenden oder frei werdenden Sitze auf transnationale Listen verteilt werden. Ich bin schon sehr gespannt, wie der Rat die Initiative dieses Hauses sieht. Ich kann mir nur sehr schwer vorstellen, dass dies dort eine Zustimmung findet.

Gut, über die Verteilung von Sitzen kann man gut und gerne streiten. Aber wenn schon, dann wäre es nur logisch und recht gewesen, diese frei werdenden Sitze insgesamt auf alle Mitgliedstaaten zu verteilen.

46 Sitze auf transnationalen Listen – was bedeutet das? Was, meinen Sie, bringt Sie da den Bürgern näher? Ich denke, da irren Sie gewaltig, wenn Sie sich das ausdenken. Die Konsequenz wird ja sein, dass diese vermeintlichen „Spitzenkandidaten“ am Ende nur aus den großen Mitgliedstaaten kommen werden, denn dort gibt es dann de facto die Stimmen zu holen, mit der Folge, dass in den kleinen Mitgliedstaaten diese Spitzenkandidaten relativ unbekannt sein werden.

Herr Präsident, ich denke, auch mir werden Sie ein paar Sekunden jetzt gönnen. Aber ich weiß schon, in welche Richtung das geht. Das geht in Richtung Bundesstaat. Aber das kann ich Ihnen sagen: Das hätten Sie aus dem Brexit lernen können – gerade das wollen die Bürger nicht.

Der Präsident. – Vielen Dank, Herr Mayer! Herr Mayer, Sie haben mich direkt angesprochen. Wenn Sie öfter da wären, anstatt immer nur zu reden und dann wieder zu verschwinden, dann würden Sie bemerken, dass ich eine einigermaßen einheitliche Praxis habe und dass bei mir jeder in dem Maße, in dem er Redezeit hat, auch ein paar Sekunden drüber hat. Das können Sie im Archiv des Europäischen Parlaments sehr genau nachverfolgen. Gelegentlich bin ich selber unaufmerksam – ich bin auch nicht perfekt –, und der Herr Kollege Verhofstadt ist unterbrochen worden. Bei der ersten Runde der Debatte – auch bei Ihnen – bin ich ohnehin etwas milder. Am Schluss muss man eben bis 12.00 Uhr hinkommen. Die Sitzungspräsidenten, die nach mir folgen, sollen auch nicht in Atemnot kommen und besonders streng sein müssen, um den Zeitplan einzuhalten. Gehen Sie gerne ins Archiv oder lassen Sie Ihre Mitarbeiter das nachprüfen!

Diane Dodds (NI). – Mr President, the democratic decision to leave the European Union will be implemented in every region of the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland. The Committee on Constitutional Affairs recommends that following the UK's exit a number of parliamentary seats will be redistributed. This is, of course, a matter for the European Union. However, if, as some believe, Brexit was driven by a democratic deficit, then the inclusion of transnational lists in this report will only entrench that position further.

Despite all of its grandstanding, Sinn Féin's attempts to allocate three more seats to the Irish Republic to directly replace the seats lost when Northern Ireland leaves was rightly rejected in committee. That people living in Northern Ireland have a right to Irish citizenship, and therefore EU citizenship, is effectively a statement of fact, but to infer that this confers voting rights is a political stunt with no basis in law or reality.

The EU Treaties make it clear that the rights of those holding an Irish passport do not include voting rights unless ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Paulo Rangel (PPE). – Mr President, we fully support the composition and allocation of seats designed by the co-rapporteurs, but we are very worried about the transnational list political recommendations in this report.

We have managed to build a sound and trustworthy democracy here in the European Union, where there is an equilibrium and balance between majorities and states. If we accept the constitutional Frankenstein monster that is the transnational list, we accept something that does not exist in any federal state, as Mr Verhofstadt has proved here today because he cannot give one example of it, not even in Belgium that has quite a similar system. If we are not a federation, why should we have a joint constituency that not even federations have?

Do we really need, in order to build a democracy in the European Union, to have a top-down elite selected and co-opted by European parties, or – what is really very dangerous – put forward by European movements of national parties that can divide, even in regional terms, the European Union's public sphere? Please think about it and vote against the transnational lists paragraph.

(Applause)

Jo Leinen (S&D). – Herr Präsident, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Wir haben heute die Chance, einen großen Schritt zu mehr europäischer Demokratie zu machen. Wir wollen den Bürgerinnen und Bürgern bei der Europawahl zwei Stimmen geben: eine für die existierenden nationalen Listen und dann – neu –, eine zweite Stimme für die transnationalen europäischen Listen.

Die Europawahlen haben ein fundamentales Problem: Sie sind kein Europawahlen. Sie sind im Gefängnis nationaler Wahlkämpfe, nationaler Wahllisten, nationaler Wahlgesetze. Wir haben es doch erlebt, Europa ist zweitklassig; es findet oft gar nicht statt, weil es sich um innenpolitische Auseinandersetzungen dreht.

Ich bin der Meinung, 40 Jahre nach der Einführung der Direktwahl ist es höchste Zeit, den nächsten Schritt zu machen und wirklich das Europäische an der Europawahl auch zu realisieren. Wir haben mittlerweile europäische Parteien, aber was können sie tun? Nichts. Sie können nicht um Mandate kämpfen. Deswegen sind sie keine richtigen Parteien. Wir haben einen Spitzenkandidatenprozess, wo die Leute den gar nicht wählen können. Sie können ihn nur im eigenen Land wählen. Das *missing link* ist in der Tat die europäische Liste, die die europäischen Parteien demokratisch aufstellen können, und dass die Bürgerinnen und Bürger in der ganzen Union ihre Spitzenkandidaten für das Amt des Kommissionspräsidenten wählen können.

Es ist erstaunlich, dass dieses Parlament 1998 — genau vor 20 Jahren — einen Beschluss über die europäischen Listen gefasst hat, mit ganz großer Mehrheit, auch quer über die politischen Familien. Es ist etwas ernüchternd zu sehen, dass wir 20 Jahre später nicht einen Schritt nach vorne machen, sondern mit Argumenten, die damals schon da waren, stagnieren und bestenfalls einen Schritt nach hinten machen.

Ich meine, die Europaskeptiker und Europagegner haben Recht, dagegen zu sein, weil sie riechen, dass wir hier einen Durchbruch für europäische Öffentlichkeit, europäische Wahlkämpfe, die Formierung eines politischen Demos auf europäischer Ebene erleben. Aber dass die Europabefürworter hier dagegen sind, das irritiert mich. Vor allen Dingen, weil ich das kleinkarierte Argument gehört habe, Macron würde eine Liste mit *Europe en marche* machen und das wollte man 2019 nicht. Wie kleinkariert und kurzsichtig!

Morten Messerschmidt (ECR). – Hr. formand! Det sker ofte, når vi har vigtige afstemninger her i salen, at vi bliver bestormet med henvendelser fra borgere i form af e-mails og breve og med alle mulige tilkendegivelser fra borgere, som er bekymrede for miljøet eller økonomien, eller hvad det nu måtte være. Men lige i denne sag – spørgsmålet om transnationale lister – har der været bemærkelsesværdigt stille. Der er end ikke, ja, lad os sige mange borgere, der har fundet det uljgheden værd at finde ind i salen her for at følge denne spændende debat. Dermed må man sige: Ønsket fra borgerside, fra civilsamfundet er næppe overvældende. Derfor må jeg sige: Det argument fra flere her i salen om, at det skulle være et krav fra europæerne at få de transnationale lister, finder jeg temmelig bizart!

Det med transnationale lister er grundlæggende ueuropæisk og udemokratisk: Ueuropæisk, fordi Europa er vores alle sammens medlemslande, hvor vi har meget, der samler, og noget, der skiller. Men hvor det, der samler, er så meget mere! Hvor vi kender hinanden! Hvor vi taler det samme sprog! Hvor vi måske kan være uenige! Men hvor vi har forudsætningerne for at være sammen om at træffe også svære beslutninger. Og det er udemokratisk, dels fordi det vil føre til et A- og et B-medlemskab her i parlamentssalen, eftersom de medlemmer, der skal være valgt på transnationale lister, ikke vil have et medlemsland, et nationalt parlament at stå til ansvar overfor, dels fordi det konfronterer hele den myte, fortælling og identitet, som Europa er.

Derfor håber jeg, i Europas navn, at dette forslag det vil falde.

Maite Pagazaurtundúa Ruiz (ALDE). – Señor presidente, la sociedad tendrá mucho interés si se llegan a aplicar las listas transnacionales porque cambiarán muchas de las cosas de la política que conocemos. Hoy hacemos un llamamiento nuevamente sobre la importancia de un sistema permanente para la distribución justa y transparente de los escaños del Parlamento Europeo. No tenemos un sistema y volvemos a dejar el asunto para el futuro de forma incomprendible. Esta es la única mala noticia de este informe porque, por fin, esta propuesta cumple con el principio de la proporcionalidad decreciente y, por supuesto, está la cuestión de las listas transnacionales.

Votar a favor de ellas es votar a favor de recuperar el espíritu de integración europea. Avanzar hacia un mayor acercamiento del ciudadano a las instituciones con un europeísmo, creo, si sale, muy activo. Significa encaminarse hacia la superación de la suma de las legislaciones nacionales. Es pensar en grande. Yo quiero felicitar a los responsables del informe, y no tiene riesgos; podemos realizar esta operación, evaluarla y solo el miedo nos paralizaría.

Martina Anderson (GUE/NGL). – The joint report on Brexit from December says that the people of the North of Ireland 'who are Irish citizens will continue to enjoy rights as EU citizens where they reside'. It also states there will be 'no diminution of rights', recognising that 'rights, safeguards and equality of opportunity' are important provisions of the Good Friday Agreement and our peace process. Only 50 years ago, the Civil Rights Association in the North was campaigning for the right to vote. The Brexit DUP/Tory agenda will result in the fundamental denial of people's right to vote.

In my lifetime, our rights have been denied by Unionism and by the British government, and only recently the Taoiseach said that we in the North will never again be left behind. So, the Dublin government and the EU must stand up for, and with, the people of the North of Ireland and make sure that the North of Ireland has seats in the European elections.

Pascal Durand (Verts/ALE). – Monsieur le Président, deux sujets de démocratie nous sont offerts aujourd'hui pour pouvoir modifier le fonctionnement de l'Europe.

Le premier, c'est celui d'une représentation plus juste des États. Je crois que nous sommes tous accord pour faire en sorte que les États soient mieux représentés au sein du Parlement. Mais un deuxième sujet nous est ouvert aujourd'hui. C'est celui de la circonscription unique européenne, celui de la mise en œuvre concrète, ici et maintenant, du destin commun de 500 millions d'Européennes et d'Européens.

Que l'Europe des murs, des barbelés, des nations de l'extrême droite s'oppose à cette modification, c'est cohérent et logique. Mais je me tourne vers mes collègues proeuropéens, ceux qui défendent une Europe sans frontières pour les marchandises, les biens, pour la finance, pour les flux, ceux qui veulent une Europe libre. Comment se peut-il qu'en face de cette Europe-là, ils ne veulent pas, aujourd'hui, mettre en place une Europe de la démocratie, une Europe des citoyens, une Europe de l'intérêt général européen qui dépasse l'Europe des intérêts nationaux.

Nous devons construire pour les millions de gens qui nous élisent, ici, cet espace de l'intérêt général européen qui dépasse les intérêts nationaux, qui soit celui d'un destin commun au-delà d'un hymne, au-delà d'un drapeau, qui soit celui d'un espace démocratique qui veuille vivre fièrement ses valeurs, fièrement sa capacité à porter dans le monde la force d'une Europe unie.

Non, ça n'est pas Paris, Berlin ou Varsovie qui doit diriger l'Union européenne, c'est l'Europe elle-même qui doit se prendre en main. N'ayez pas peur, n'ayez pas peur, faites en sorte que nous soyons fiers de porter une Europe unie et diverse.

Jörg Meuthen (EFDD). – Herr Präsident, meine Damen und Herren! Wir sprechen hier über die künftige Verteilung der 73 Sitze der britischen Abgeordneten nach deren Austritt aus dem Europäischen Parlament. Ich stelle dazu drei Punkte fest: Erstens: Hier wird das Fell des Bären verteilt, bevor er überhaupt erlegt ist. Zweitens: Wenn ein Mitgliedstaat austritt, muss folgerichtig auch die Anzahl der Sitze im Europäischen Parlament entsprechend verringert werden. Es ist nichts neu zu verteilen, es ist zu streichen. Doch das wird ausdrücklich abgelehnt, die Selbstbedienungsmentalität ist hier grenzenlos. Drittens: Bei der vorgesehenen Neuverteilung der freien Sitze geht Deutschland leer aus. Damit bleiben die deutschen Bürger die am schlechtesten repräsentierten Bürger in der Straßburger Versammlung.

Dieses Europäische Parlament erteilt ständig Lektionen in Demokratie, doch es erfüllt offenkundig selbst die Ansprüche nicht, die es an andere stellt. Ich fordere die deutsche Bundesregierung auf, weder die Nichtstreichung aller britischen Sitze noch den gewählten Verteilerschlüssel zu akzeptieren und beides im Rat zu blockieren. Die systematische Benachteiligung der deutschen Bürger im Europäischen Parlament muss beendet werden.

Um auf den Unfug transnationaler Listen hier noch einzugehen, fehlt die Zeit. Es ist zentralistischer und bürgerferner Unfug. Punkt.

Laurențiu Rebegea (ENF). – Domnule președinte, toată lumea știe că Europa trebuie reformată, dar noi discutăm aici despre cu totul alte lucruri, nu discutăm cum să facem reformă. În schimb, ne preocupă împărțirea prăzii după Brexit. Cu tot respectul, ne aflăm într-o situație care, în România, ar fi caracterizată ca „a pune căruța înaintea cailor”. Prin urmare, prima critică pe care vreau să o aduc este că acest lucru se referă la inversarea priorităților. Deci, nu cred că locurile Regatului Unit trebuie să fie ocupate înainte de a decide viitorul Uniunii Europene. Este mai simplu, mai economic și mai onest față de cetățenii noștri. În al doilea rând, propunerea comisiei AFCO seamănă foarte mult cu mărul oferit Evei de șarpele biblic. Combinarea redistribuirii unor locuri cu așa zisele liste transnaționale poate să seducă statele membre subreprezentate, dar este, în realitate, o manevră prin care se știrbește grav democrația și reprezentarea cetățenilor.

Diane James (NI). – Mr President, welcome to the European Union's 2018 incarnation of Georgia Orwell's 1984. This proposal completes the end-stage of the European Union project – national sovereignty smothered and, finally, the first open, and equally transparent, step towards a truly federalist Europe with a political governing body, with seats given to unelected, unselected MEPs occupying those transnational seats.

The goal of the United States of Europe as a concept is well documented. The extinguishing of national sovereignty is also well recognised. We now have absolute clarity, though, with this proposal and the dangerous and thoroughly anti-democratic suggestion of getting to that objective via transnational seats. The European Union openly questions and frequently questions itself, asking why there is a democratic deficit among Member States. You've only got to look to this report and the detail within it to answer that question.

Markus Pieper (PPE). – Herr Präsident! Zunächst freuen wir uns, dass offensichtlich eine Einigung für die künftige reguläre Sitzverteilung gefunden wurde für den Fall, dass die Briten denn wirklich gehen. Wir hätten uns noch weniger Abgeordnete gewünscht, sehen aber auch, dass jetzt Unwuchten, Ungerechtigkeiten ausgeglichen werden können.

Drei Punkte für die Zukunft: Erstens müssen wir endlich eine Formel beschließen, die die Sitzverteilung auf Dauer berechenbar macht und die juristisch auch standhält. Zweitens müssen die EU-Staaten mit erheblichem Bevölkerungsrückgang irgendwann auch akzeptieren, dass mit geringerer Bevölkerungszahl auch weniger Abgeordnete da sein müssen. Drittens dürfen transnationale Listen nicht kommen. Diese Listen sind ein Einfallstor für Populisten wie Wilders oder Le Pen. Ich frage mich wirklich: Warum erleichtern wir bekannten, aber radikalen Europagegnern so den Einzug ins Parlament, und warum entfernen wir uns immer weiter von den Menschen und ihren Problemen?

Glauben wir im Ernst, glauben Sie im Ernst, dass die Honoratioren einer transnationalen Liste oder Radikale von links und rechts, glauben Sie im Ernst, dass sich diese Herrschaften um die Probleme in den Regionen kümmern, um Mittelstand, um Auflagen in der Landwirtschaft oder darum, wie das Geld aus dem Sozialfonds wirklich an die Bedürftigen kommt? Das wird diese transnationalen Superpolitiker nur am Rande interessieren – wenn überhaupt. So generieren wir eine politische Kunstwelt, die sich nicht für Details und nicht für Wahlkreisarbeit interessiert. Deshalb sollten wir gegen die transnationalen Listen ...

(Der Präsident entzieht dem Redner das Wort.)

Ramón Jáuregui Atondo (S&D). – Señor presidente, quiero felicitar a los dos ponentes, porque creo sinceramente que se ha hecho un informe muy interesante y muy apropiado. Primero, porque reduce el número de escaños; segundo, porque compensa a los países que estaban mal tratados; y tercero, porque ningún país pierde.

Pero quiero referirme al debate —digamos— más apasionado sobre las listas transnacionales trasladándoles mi opinión de que creo sinceramente que una circunscripción europea, que el doble voto de los europeos es bueno. Porque yo soy europeísta. Creo que es mejor para Europa, para hacer más Europa, para hacer mejor Europa y para mejorar la democracia europea.

Permítanme una simple reflexión histórica. El padre fundador, Jean Monnet, decía que Europa se haría paso a paso. Y así ha sido. Cuando se creó la Unión Europea no había Parlamento, señorías. Se creó más tarde. El Parlamento Europeo fue un paso de la construcción europea. A ese Parlamento venían diputados de los Parlamentos nacionales. No eran elegidos por los ciudadanos, sino diputados de los Parlamentos nacionales. El siguiente paso fue, efectivamente, las elecciones en toda Europa. Un día para elegir al Parlamento Europeo, a la soberanía europea.

Este paso que hoy damos, señorías, es un paso, como diría Jean Monnet, para construir Europa. Es para que haya un doble voto. Para que los ciudadanos conecten con la idea europea, y ojalá que un *Spitzenkandidat* encabece cada familia política para elegir al presidente de la Comisión. Eso es construir Europa. Para mí, el paso que estamos dando es una señal política extraordinariamente importante en favor de esta idea que se construye poco a poco. Es una larga historia, pero es una bella historia. Es una maravillosa historia la de construir, sobre las naciones, un espacio de paz y de progreso.

Y hoy damos un paso con esta señal política que reclama al Consejo que conceda en la ley electoral europea la posibilidad de que los europeos voten en el país dos listas, la nacional y la europea.

Ulrike Trebesius (ECR). – Herr Präsident! Ich bedaure ausdrücklich, dass meine britischen Kollegen demnächst nicht mehr in diesem Hause sind, und ich lehne die Pläne des Parlaments ab, einen Teil dieser Sitze nun neu zu verteilen, anstatt sie einfach komplett entfallen zu lassen.

Die neue Verteilung der Sitze verzerrt immer mehr die Stimmgewichtung zu Lasten meines Landes – Deutschland. In Zukunft werden die deutschen Bürger in der EU das am schlechtesten repräsentierte Land sein. Ein maltesischer Bürger ist der EU ungefähr zwölfmal soviel wert wie ein deutscher. Noch überraschender finde ich allerdings, dass alle deutschen Kollegen dieser Benachteiligung des eigenen Landes im Ausschuss auch noch zugestimmt haben. Ich gehe davon aus, dass dies auch die meisten deutschen Kollegen heute hier im Plenum tun werden.

Die Sitzverteilung wird die Position der Deutschen weiterhin schwächen. Mit den Briten wird uns also nicht nur eine wichtige Stimme der Vernunft hier in der Europäischen Union fehlen, wir werden allen Zentralisierungswünschen, allen Wünschen nach europäischen Steuern, europäischen Finanzministern, einer Bankenunion, einer Einlagensicherung und so weiter weniger Gegenstimmen entgegensetzen können. Deshalb muss die Botschaft für Deutschland sein, der EU keine weiteren Kompetenzen und keine zusätzlichen finanziellen Mittel zur Verfügung zu stellen.

Der Schlingerkurs in eine neue alte große Koalition in meinem Land lässt mich allerdings hier Schlimmes befürchten.

Charles Goerens (ALDE). – Monsieur le Président, cette fois-ci, le Parlement européen peut aborder le débat sur sa future composition en toute sérénité, du moins pour ce qui est de la première partie de la proposition.

En effet, le principe de proportionnalité dégressive, tel qu'appliqué dans la présente proposition, reflète la volonté du législateur d'avoir une assemblée à la fois équitable et respectueuse de l'impératif de la représentation des principaux courants politiques dans tous les États membres. Ajoutons que la tâche a été facilitée par cet accident de l'histoire que constitue le Brexit. En même temps, il s'agit d'une occasion unique de progresser dans l'établissement d'une liste transnationale. J'aimerais souhaiter aux membres du Conseil de l'Union d'avoir la hauteur de vues susceptible de faire de cette avancée démocratique un grand succès.

Soyons nombreux à voter en faveur du présent texte en vue de convaincre les gouvernements qui, pour une raison ou une autre mais en tout cas pas nécessairement pour une raison européenne, expriment encore des réserves à ce propos.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL). – Senhor Presidente, o que está em causa neste debate é muito mais do que as chamadas listas transnacionais, uma criação artificial que assenta numa visão federalista que nada tem a ver com a realidade da Europa e que contraria a necessidade de uma Europa de cooperação entre Estados soberanos e iguais em direitos.

Mas não queiram fazer das listas transnacionais um biombo para esconder tudo o resto. E tudo o resto é uma proposta de composição do Parlamento Europeu que prolonga desequilíbrios existentes, que reduz possibilidades de representação mais fiel, porque mais plural, da vontade de cada povo, que agrava injustiças relativas ao abdicar da possibilidade de compensar, como era possível e justo, alguns Estados-Membros pela perda de deputados aquando dos alargamentos. As propostas de alteração que apresentamos ao relatório visam corrigir estes desequilíbrios e a injustificada discriminação de países como Portugal.

Retomando a discussão em bases mais justas, e mesmo no quadro das regras fixadas no Tratado, é possível chegar a uma proposta justa e aceitável, coisas que esta não é, nem justa nem aceitável.

Josep-Maria Terricabras (Verts/ALE). – Mr President, transnational lists are an important step in the process towards a single European constituency. Having the opportunity to vote for a list with candidates from different Member States helps to create in the imagination of citizens a sense of European general interest and a feeling of belonging. Transnational lists can open the window to the creation of solidarity and a redistribution of wealth and can reinforce the idea of a European public sphere. All in all, we are debating something that can strengthen democracy.

We have an opportunity to reinvigorate the European project and to rethink it, especially from a bottom-up perspective – for instance, by allowing Member States to assign seats to regions having legislative powers. This is today the case in the Åland Islands and tomorrow it could be the case in others. It is a matter of political will. Today, the European Parliament has a chance to deliver a beneficial, transformative proposal.

Bill Etheridge (EFDD). – Mr President, we have a debate today about picking over the carcass of the folly of UK Membership of the EU. We see all sorts of solutions and ideas being put forward to split up the seats that the UK will thankfully be vacating. The real thing that should be happening here is that those seats should be left empty. The truth of the matter is that when you put forward ideas such as transnational lists what you actually do is take the semblance, the pretence, of democracy even further from the citizens. It is hard enough to get around a huge region like my own in the West Midlands and to be seen, and to let people know they have got a representative. Do you really think you can represent people in different countries on the same mandate? It is, frankly, impossible and it takes it further and further from the people.

Of course, what has been achieved by the negotiations between the EU and the nest of traitors in the UK Government is a period called the transitional period where, during that time, EU rules and regulations will apply. British taxpayers' money will still come to the EU but we will have no representation whatsoever. These seats should remain empty as a monument to the absolute betrayal of democracy and of the British people that is taking place.

This could not be further from the dream of governance for the people, by the people, of the people. It is not happening. The demos is not there. This is not democratic. You look to bring people to a parliament where, if there is any semblance of debate you have to hold up a card. It is then up to the President on the day whether or not it is accepted, and then it is up to the person to whom you are asking the question whether they are prepared to answer the question. How on earth can you kid anyone that this is democracy?

Quite frankly, the people of the United Kingdom have seen what is going on and this year we, the people, in the United Kingdom, will rise and in a democratic revolution we will say no to this, no to taxation without representation, and no to further treatment of the UK as a vassal state of the EU. The time is coming.

Gilles Lebreton (ENF). – Monsieur le Président, le Parlement européen compte actuellement 751 membres. Le Brexit va libérer, en 2019, les 73 sièges du Royaume-Uni.

J'estime qu'on devrait éviter de redistribuer ces 73 sièges pour faire des économies et réduire l'effectif à 678 députés. Je suis donc hostile au projet de l'Union européenne de redistribuer une partie de ces 73 sièges aux 27 États membres.

Ce projet prévoit, certes, de donner 5 sièges de plus à la France, mais je ne suis pas prêt à sacrifier mes principes pour un tel plat de lentilles, car ce projet heurte profondément mes convictions nationalistes en prévoyant, d'autre part, de créer des listes transnationales. Or, je suis contre les listes transnationales car elles constitueraient un pas de plus vers la transformation de l'Union européenne en un État fédéral déconnecté des réalités nationales.

C'est une Europe des nations qu'il nous faut, pas une Europe supranationale.

Mairead McGuinness (PPE). – Mr President, I think we should actually acknowledge that today is a sad day for the European Parliament. I want to say on the record that I, for one, will miss the constructive engagement with many colleagues from the United Kingdom, who are in the ECR Group, the S&D Group, the ALDE Group and the Greens. We will miss their efforts to do good by the European Union and we should acknowledge that today.

Mr Etheridge, I am not so sure I will weep tears for your departure. It may well be the opposite. But let me say something much more directly to you, as you have stayed in the Chamber. You were questioning how Members from one Member State could talk for citizens in another country. Well, if we did not have the support in Ireland from colleagues across this House on the Northern Ireland hard border issue, we would be in a difficult place. You were not thinking of the possibility of a hard border when you voted and pushed for Brexit. We needed the support of Members of this House from all Member States – not UKIP. You are creating problems for my country.

Let me be calm again. I welcome that we will get two extra seats for Ireland in the redistribution of seats.

On transnational lists, I have listened to this debate and my God it is passionate on either side. My Taoiseach last month supported the transnational list and perhaps it comes down to this: it is a concept, but maybe it is not of its time now. However, Mr Etheridge, I like the idea that colleagues from one country will speak up for citizens in other Member States.

(Applause)

Claudia Țapardel (S&D). – Domnule președinte, dragi colegi, după luni de negocieri dure și complicate în Comisia pentru Afaceri Constituționale, iată-ne ajunși în plenul Parlamentului European pentru votul final. Felicitări colegilor raportorii!

Dragi colegi, odată cu ieșirea Marii Britanii din Uniunea Europeană, a devenit o prioritate pentru noi să găsim o redistribuire echitabilă și reprezentativă a mandatelor, pentru o Uniune Europeană cu 27 de state membre. Așadar, propunerea înaintată spre vot astăzi reprezintă un compromis pragmatic, un compromis care poate compensa dezechilibrele existente în actualul sistem de vot, prin care 14 țări sunt subreprezentate.

Vorbind acum în calitate de europarlamentar român, consider că este firesc ca România să primească un mandat în plus. Ca una dintre cele mai importante țări din regiunea Europei de Est, România merită o reprezentare în raport cu statutul său, de cea de-a șasea cea mai importantă țară din punct de vedere demografic din Uniunea Europeană după ieșirea Marii Britanii. Nu în ultimul rând, aceasta este o reparație pentru pierderea suferită în anul 2014, odată cu aderarea Croației.

Dragi colegi, dacă vrem ca această legislatură să fie amintită prin realizările și prin reușitele sale, atunci trebuie să le dăm cetățenilor europeni o soluție viabilă, care va aduce totodată și o certitudine legală în privința desfășurării alegerilor. Îndemn astfel toate delegațiile naționale să sprijine cu un vot pozitiv această nouă formulă de redistribuire a mandatelor, pentru a evita eventualele blocaje sau soluții ad-hoc înaintea alegerilor din 2019. Vom avea un Parlament European format din 705 membri, bazat pe principiul conform căruia nicio țară nu va pierde niciun mandat, dar și pe principiul conform căruia trebuie făcute anumite reparații în cazul statelor care nu aveau o reprezentare direct proporțională cu mărimea și importanța lor.

Da, domnule președinte, am două minute.

Să nu uităm totuși că acest raport este despre compoziția Parlamentului European și nu în mod exclusiv despre liste transnaționale și îmi exprim regretul că dezbateră a fost acaparată de această temă.

Așadar, dragi colegi, vă îndemn să mergeți acasă și să orientați guvernele dumneavoastră să ia decizia corectă la masa negocierilor care vor avea loc ulterior la nivelul Consiliului Uniunii Europene.

Anneleen Van Bossuyt (ECR). – Voorzitter, ik vind het onbegrijpelijk dat we vandaag deze discussie hier voeren. De Britten verlaten de Europese Unie. Een kleinere Unie betekent dus ook een kleiner Europees Parlement. Zo simpel is het.

Maar nee, blijkbaar moeten er 27 van die zitjes toch naar een transnationale kieslijst gaan. Als we alle zitjes zouden verwijderen, dan besparen we dertig miljoen euro belastinggeld per jaar. Dertig miljoen euro die we kunnen besteden aan jobs, veiligheid en de aanpak van migratie.

Ik hoor hier trouwens ook zeggen dat die Europese kieslijst Europa dichterbij de burger zou brengen. Ik heb daar mijn twijfels over. De mensen weten nu amper wie er op de eigen kieslijsten staat, laat staan dat ze zouden stemmen voor een Fransman, een Bulgaar of een Est.

Tot slot wil ik nog een woordje richten tot collega Guy Verhofstadt. Ik hoor hem zeggen dat België een federale kieskring zou willen, maar dat enkel de separatisten tegen zijn. Wel, Koen Geens van CD&V – bezwaarlijk een separatist te noemen – is het idee ook niet genegen.

(De spreker gaat in op een "blauwe kaart"-vraag (artikel 162, lid 8, van het Reglement))

Miapetra Kumpula-Natri (S&D), sinisen kortin kysymys. – Arvoisa puhemies, äskeinen puhuja esitti, että kun unionin jäsenmaiden määrä vähenee, niin parlamenttikin pienenee, ja sitäähän tämä pohjalla oleva esitys myös tekee.

Tässä ei jaeta kaikkia paikkoja, joten säästöjä voidaan myös tehdä. Oma maani Suomi on ollut jäsenenä nyt reilut 20 vuotta, ja kun aloitimme, meitä oli 17 ja nyt meitä on 13. Tämä paikkajako antaisi meille yhden paikan lisää, ja silti se on täysin looginen myös edelleen sen suhteen, kuinka monta henkilöä yksi meppi edustaa.

Äsken samasta poliittisesta ryhmästä esitettiin, että Saksa ei tässä saa lisää paikkoja ja Maltalla on kaksinkertainen edustusmäärä. Toivottavasti ryhmämme kanta ei ole niin, että Maltalta pitäisi olla vain puoli edustajaa tai nolla edustajaa. Minusta on tärkeää, että tällainen suhteellisuus täällä säilyy. Esitys on sen pohjalta täysin looginen.

Anneleen Van Bossuyt (ECR), *“blauwe kaart”-antwoord*. – Dank u wel voor uw vraag. Dit gaat over het hele systeem van de degressieve proportionaliteit. Daar kunnen we volgens mij perfect een correctiemechanisme op toepassen, uitgaande van het huidige aantal min de 73 zitjes. Dat aantal kunnen we opnieuw bekijken om de fouten in de degressieve proportionaliteit op die manier aan te passen. Maar ik denk heus niet dat we daarvoor die Britse zitjes moeten gaan gebruiken.

Nils Torvalds (ALDE). – Herr talman! När Finland för 100 år sedan blev självständigt uppstod det ett problem som gällde Ålands kulturella autonomi. Det löstes 1921 genom Nationernas förbund, kanske en av de få sakerna Nationernas förbund överhuvudtaget lyckades lösa, och det har garanterat den åländska autonomin och dess utveckling.

När Finland sedan blev medlem av Europeiska unionen överfördes en del av befogenheterna från den åländska självstyrelsen till EU, vilket betydde att ålänningarna hade färre chanser och mindre möjligheter att påverka beslutsprocessen. Av den orsaken efterlyser vi nu ett valsystem som skulle ge dessa självstyrande regioner en bättre möjlighet att försvara sina intressen.

Samtidigt vill vi påminna alla närvarande ledamöter om att det i Europa finns cirka 50 minoriteter, största delen av dem illa behandlade av sina centralstater. Det handlar alltså egentligen om att skapa en mer fungerande och välordnad demokrati inom Europeiska unionen.

Miguel Urbán Crespo (GUE/NGL). – Señor presidente, saludamos que se den pasos hacia un reparto más proporcional de los escaños entre los diferentes países y, por ello, vamos a votar a favor justamente de este informe. Sin embargo, nosotros creemos que hay que ser mucho más ambiciosos, que los principales problemas que atañen a este Parlamento y a la ciudadanía no son ni el número de escaños ni cómo se eligen esos escaños, sino la falta de una democracia real en las instituciones europeas.

Necesitamos más competencias para el Parlamento Europeo, que es el único órgano directamente elegido por los europeos y las europeas. Si queremos combatir la desafección ciudadana hacia el proyecto europeo, lo que verdaderamente necesitamos son propuestas sociales y económicas que mejoren la vida de la gente, como, por ejemplo, una armonización fiscal, una renta básica europea, el combate efectivo contra los paraísos fiscales o poner bajo control social al Banco Central Europeo.

Hoy se cumplen veintiséis años del Tratado de Maastricht. Un verdadero sabotaje neoliberal al proyecto europeo. Urge emprender un giro de 180 grados en las políticas europeas y no contentarnos simplemente con reformas cosméticas.

Alain Lamassoure (PPE). – Monsieur le Président, notre commission constitutionnelle a proposé de réserver un contingent de 27 sièges à des listes transnationales. Cette innovation me semble saugrenue mais elle peut permettre un progrès démocratique de l'Europe à trois conditions.

La première, c'est de profiter de ce nombre pour préciser dans la loi électorale que chaque liste devra comporter un citoyen de chaque État membre, et un seul. La seconde, que chaque famille politique européenne s'engage à mettre son candidat tête de liste (*Spitzenkandidat*) à la tête de sa liste transnationale – cela paraît évident. La troisième, enfin, que chaque gouvernement s'engage à proposer en premier choix comme commissaire issu de son propre pays la citoyenne ou le citoyen figurant sur la liste qui emportera le plus de voix chez lui.

Au fond, la liste transnationale serait ainsi la liste des candidats commissaires et c'est le vote populaire qui désignerait la composition de l'organe exécutif et non plus les gouvernements en place. Les gouvernements qui proposent la liste transnationale nous jurent la main sur le cœur que c'est pour le bien de l'Europe, mais leur engagement démocratique est-il prêt à aller jusque-là?

Pervenche Berès (S&D). – Monsieur le Président, chers corapporteurs, bravo, parce que vous proposez à notre Assemblée un rapport qui nous permet d'avoir un nouvel équilibre plus juste entre les États membres, ce qui signifie plus de légitimité pour notre institution.

Vous réduisez le nombre global de membres, ce qui est normal puisque que malheureusement nous perdons le Royaume-Uni. Vous permettez aussi qu'aucun État membre ne perde de siège, vous prévoyez une réserve pour les prochains élargissements et vous confirmez la position de ce Parlement en faveur d'une liste transnationale, que nous pouvons enfin mettre en œuvre à l'occasion du départ regretté, du Royaume-Uni.

Mon regret est que nous ayons à nouveau raté le rendez-vous d'un mécanisme permanent d'attribution des sièges. Ce sera pour nos successeurs.

Avec ce rapport, il me semble que le Parlement européen envoie au Conseil un double message extrêmement fort.

Je nous invite à regarder le résultat de l'appel nominal qui sera fait sur l'article 3 de l'annexe, celle qui répartit les sièges entre États membres. La proposition de nos corapporteurs n'est pas une surenchère, elle est équilibrée, et le Conseil aurait tout intérêt à garder telle quelle est, sans rouvrir les marchandages entre petits amis.

Puis, l'autre message fort, c'est cette question des listes transnationales. Tout le monde a à la bouche l'idée de plus de démocratie européenne. Le cœur battant de cette démocratie européenne est dans cette enceinte. Quelle meilleure traduction de cette démocratie que des listes transnationales? J'invite toutefois les États membres qui soutiennent cette idée de listes transnationales à un minimum de cohérence. Les listes transnationales vont de pair avec les candidats commissaires ou les candidats présidents, les fameux candidats têtes de liste (*Spitzenkandidaten*).

J'espère que ce message sera soutenu fortement par cette Assemblée et entendu par le Conseil.

Richard Sulík (ECR). – Pán predsedajúci, ak krajina k Európskej únii pristúpi, automaticky rastie počet poslancov. Ak krajina z Európskej únie vystúpi, tak sa ukáže, že verejné výdavky poznajú iba jeden smer. A to je smerom hore. Je to preto, lebo väčšina politikov s obľubou míňa peniaze cudzích ľudí. A keďže týchto politikov je väčšina, schvália sa pravidelne aj tie najväčšie hlúposti.

Po brexite bude chýbať v rozpočte EÚ 9 miliárd EUR. Preto je logické a správne, aby klesol počet poslancov o 73. To sú tí, ktorí zastupujú dnes Veľkú Britániu.

Čo sa týka tých európskych kandidátok spoločných, nie je možné zastupovať záujmy občana Portugalska a Fínska súčasne. Rovnako ako nie je možné robiť jednu menovú politiku pre Grécko a pre Nemecko.

Cristian Dan Preda (PPE). – Monsieur le Président, je vais tout d'abord féliciter mes collègues Hübner et Silva Pereira pour leur rapport. On voit que la composition du Parlement européen est une opération un peu délicate, d'autant plus que nous sommes confrontés à cette sortie regrettable du Royaume-Uni, qui pose aussi un problème d'ordre constitutionnel.

Je voudrais tout d'abord saluer le fait que la redistribution d'une partie des mandats britanniques va prendre en compte ce que j'ai demandé par des amendements dans la commission des affaires constitutionnelles, c'est-à-dire de tenir compte des États membres qui ont perdu des mandats en 2014. Je suis content de voir que, conformément à ce rapport, mon pays, la Roumanie, va revenir à 33 mandats.

Ensuite, je voudrais dire qu'à la différence de certains de mes collègues, je suis en faveur des listes transnationales. Je trouve que cela donne du sens à la citoyenneté européenne. Au fond, les partis qui existent actuellement ne sont pas de vrais partis européens. Nous pourrions avoir des vrais partis européens si nous avons des listes qui ne sont pas uniquement composées de candidats d'un seul État membre.

Dans un parlement, les partis existent avant les élections. Chez nous, on a fabriqué l'idée – comme au début de la politique au 19e siècle – que les partis n'existent qu'au niveau des groupes parlementaires. Dépassons ce seuil, faisons ce que la politique nationale a fait au 19e siècle pour l'Europe, c'est cela le sens de nos engagements.

Evelyn Regner (S&D). – Herr Präsident, sehr geehrte Damen und Herren! Der Bericht ist pragmatisch, er ist demokratisch, er ist europäisch, und er nimmt vor allem auch Bedenken ernst. Ich freue mich, dass die Sitzverteilung in Zukunft fairer wird. Österreich bekommt einen Sitz mehr und damit stimmt das Repräsentationsverhältnis wieder.

Wir sind alle Bürgerinnen und Bürger der Europäischen Union. Wir haben gemeinsame europäische Interessen: soziale, wirtschaftliche, steuerliche und außenpolitische – das lässt sich fortsetzen. Um diese gemeinsamen europäischen Interessen wahrzunehmen, müssen wir auch europäisch denken und handeln; die transnationale Liste der trägt dazu bei.

Im EU-Vertrag, Artikel 14 Absatz 2, steht: Das EU-Parlament ist ein Organ zur Vertretung der Unionsbürgerinnen und -bürger. Ein gesamteuropäischer Wahlkreis, grenzüberschreitende europäische Wahlprogramme können dazu beitragen, dass dieses Konzept der Unionsbürgerschaft wieder lebendiger gemacht wird – und damit die europäische Demokratie.

Othmar Karas (PPE). – Herr Präsident, meine Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Ich habe fünf Punkte. Wir begrüßen die im Bericht vorgeschlagene neue Verteilung der Sitze nach dem Ausscheiden des Vereinigten Königreichs. Weniger Bürger in der EU heißt weniger Mandatare und gerechtere Verteilung.

Zweitens: Wir sagen Ja zum Spitzenkandidatenmodell. Es hat den Kommissionspräsidenten, es hat die Kommission, es hat das Europäische Parlament gestärkt, und es hat den Einfluss der Bürgerinnen und Bürger auf den Kommissionspräsidenten erhöht. Wir haben alle davon profitiert. Es darf keinen Schritt zurück hinter die Beschlüsse von 2014 geben.

Zum Dritten: Der Bericht setzt den Weg der Stärkung der europäischen Demokratie durch die Schaffung eines europäischen Wahl-Raumes und durch die Initiative für europäische Listen fort. Die europäische Demokratie ist viel mehr als die Summe der kommunalen, regionalen und nationalen Demokratien. Es gibt ein eigenes Demokratiemodell. Daher begrüße ich die ergänzende Einführung von europäischen Listen, Grundmandate auf nationalen Listen, ergänzende Reststimmen und Zweitstimmen auf europäischen Listen.

Viertens: Die europäischen Listen sollten aber gekoppelt werden an die Gründung von europäischen Parteien – wir sind eine europäische Parteien- und parlamentarische Demokratie.

Zum Fünften und zum Schluss: Ich bedaure, dass wir das Modell der europäischen Listen nur theoretisch diskutieren, weil die Rechtsgrundlage noch fehlt und kein klares Modell auf dem Tisch liegt.

(Der Präsident entzieht dem Redner das Wort.)

Monika Beňová (S&D). – Pán predsedajúci, kolegyne a kolegovia, u nás je také porekadlo, že porúčame medveďa, ktorý ešte behá po hore. Je mi veľmi ľúto, ak to dospeje k tomu, že Veľká Británia skutočne odíde z Európskej únie, a bude mi ľúto za všetkými kolegami, aj za tými, ktorí nie vždy mali pozitívne postoje k spoločným európskym témam.

Rovnako sa teším, že z tých 27 postov jeden dostane Slovenská republika. Mali sme trinásť poslancov, budeme mať štrnásť. Aj keď osobne nevidím veľký progres v tom, či má krajina o jedného poslanca viacej alebo menej. Ide skôr o kvalitu a pripravenosť poslancov diskutovať a riešiť problémy, ktoré máme spoločne v Európskej únii.

Dovoľte mi krátko, aby som sa vyjadrila k transnacionálnej alebo spoločnej európskej kandidátke. Kolegyne a kolegovia, v EÚ, v ktorej nie sme ochotní akceptovať, že Rumunsko, Bulharsko a Chorvátsko sú plnohodnotnými členmi, ak nie sme schopní ich pripustiť do spoločného schengenského priestoru, v Európskej únii, kde zamestnanci v rovnakých podnikoch v iných krajinách zarábajú aj o tretinu menej, je úplne zbytočné a virtuálne baviť sa o spoločnej kandidátke do Európskeho parlamentu.

Jérôme Lavrilleux (PPE). – Monsieur le Président, mes chers collègues, je voudrais commencer mon propos par un chiffre, un chiffre symbolique qui, pour vous, ne veut pas dire grand-chose, mais qui, pour moi, veut dire beaucoup. Ce chiffre, c'est le 589, celui de ma place dans l'hémicycle.

Cette place, je ne l'ai pas choisie. En effet, dans cette Assemblée, nous sommes élus chacun dans notre pays, mais nous ne siégeons pas par pays. Nous siégeons par affinité politique et, à l'intérieur de nos groupes politiques, nous ne siégeons pas non plus par délégation nationale, nous siégeons par ordre alphabétique. Si chacun des députés a sa propre nationalité, chacun d'entre nous est aussi le représentant de l'ensemble des citoyens de notre Union. C'est pourquoi je défends les listes transnationales, qui sont dans les gènes du PPE, auquel j'appartiens.

Je suis pour que nos concitoyens, à l'occasion des élections européennes, puissent à la fois voter pour une liste nationale portée par un parti national et, en même temps, voter pour une liste européenne portée par un parti européen sur des orientations politiques européennes. Donner deux bulletins de vote à nos concitoyens, ça n'est pas leur enlever du pouvoir, c'est leur en donner deux fois plus. C'est plus démocratique.

Quant à l'idée selon laquelle les listes transnationales favoriseraient les extrêmes, cela me fait penser à ces médecins qui essaieraient de soigner la fièvre en cassant le thermomètre. Non, c'est en parlant à nos concitoyens, en essayant de les convaincre et en obtenant des résultats que l'on fera baisser la fièvre, et non pas en les empêchant d'utiliser deux bulletins de vote.

Paul Tang (S&D). – Mr President, in the interests of public support for the European Union, it is essential that the EU becomes more democratic and more political, and breaks away from the old combination of legalistic bureaucracy and backroom deals. To be fair, the report under discussion has this in mind, but it is limited in its opportunities: it only addresses the British seats. Should one really start a discussion on European democracy with the implementation of degressive proportionality or with the reserving of a handful of seats? I would say no. Should one start a discussion on the consequences of Brexit, keeping in mind that the UK is a net contributor, with a claim for more seats in the European Parliament? I have to say no again.

Despite all good intentions, this report does not help us in the discussion on European democracy or on Brexit. For the Dutch delegation of Socialists and Democrats, the *Spitzenkandidat* process is far more important.

Having said all that, I very much appreciate the efforts by the rapporteurs, Ms Hübner and Mr Pereira.

Dubravka Šuica (PPE). – Gospodine predsjedniče, želim se zahvaliti gospođi Danuti Hübner i Silvi Pereiri na ovom izvješću jer je bio vrlo delikatan. Drago mi je da, obzirom da ima manje građana, također ima i manje zastupnika i to je pravedno i pravednije.

Ovog puta se i Hrvatska vratila na broj 12, koji je imala i 2013. i zato se želim zahvaliti kreatorima ovog *reporta*. Međutim, rasprava ide u smjeru transnacionalnih lista. Osobno, smatram koncept dobrim, međutim, u ovom trenutku ne vidim da smo spremni za taj koncept ni politički ni financijski ni organizacijski. Isto tako, bila bih odmah za ovaj koncept danas kad bi sve zemlje bile u Eurozoni i kad bi sve zemlje bile u schengenskoj zoni. Budući da to nije situacija, onda smatram da trebamo pričekati da svi na neki način dobijemo ista prava i da na taj način postanemo transnacionalno prepoznatljivi da bismo se i mi mogli kandidirati kao i oni iz velikih zemalja koji su prepoznatljivi.

Alfred Sant (S&D). – Mr President, my one question concerning the making of adjustments to the seating arrangements in this Parliament is this: as a result of these adjustments, will European citizens feel more committed to this Parliament? At present, they are not. This Parliament and its Members project too distant an image among our constituents. Participation in the last three elections dropped to close to 43%. Given Brexit and the openings for EU enlargement, the proposal to maintain national entitlements for seats is the right thing, but then the proposal also is to create new transnational constituencies in order to bring Parliament closer to the voters. This approach will have the opposite effect. It will continue to dislocate perceptions about the European Parliament away from the daily concerns of citizens, especially in smaller Member States. Being asked to vote for people they do not know or care about on party lists that cross country borders will sound like a gimmick. Chosen by political groups, these MEPs will only be accountable to their party chiefs, generating a greater distance between voters and elected MEPs. This distance can probably only be eliminated if Members of this House are directly elected and not through their position on party lists whether national or – least of all – transnational.

Michaela Šojdová (PPE). – Pane předsedající, po brexitu musíme upravit složení Evropského parlamentu a já souhlásím se snížením křesel na 705 a s přerozdělením 27 mandátů mezi ty členské státy, které měly doposud nižší počet křesel, než by jim spravedlivě náležel.

S čím ale zásadně nesouhlasím, jsou nadnárodní kandidátní listiny. Vypadá to lákavě. Občané budou mít dva hlasy. Ale já to považuji za nebezpečnou hru, na kterou nejsme připraveni. Už nyní je pro naše občany těžké identifikovat se s volenými zástupci v Evropském parlamentu. Navíc je zjevné, že nadnárodní listiny favorizují velké země. Kampaň pro nadnárodní kandidáty by mohla vést k manipulaci a zjednodušení. My jsme to zažili v poslední prezidentské kampani. Kolegové a kolegyně, stačila čtyři slova na billboardech k těsnému vítězství populistického kandidáta. Jestliže naším cílem má být přiblížení Evropské unie občanům, nadnárodní listiny vedou zcela opačným směrem. Je mi to líto.

(Řečnice souhlasila s tím, že odpoví na otázku položenou zvednutím modré karty (čl. 162 odst. 8 jednacího řádu).)

IN THE CHAIR: MAIREAD McGUINNESS

Vice-President

Hilde Vautmans (ALDE), *“blauwe kaart”-vraag*. – Collega, ik heb hier vandaag van de tegenstanders eigenlijk weinig inhoudelijke argumenten gehoord waarom zij tegen die transnationale lijsten zijn. Ik hoor alleen maar zeggen: er kan bedrog zijn, de kiezer is niet betrokken.

Ik denk dat de kiezer bij die transnationale lijsten net meer betrokken is. De argumenten die u aanhaalt, gelden evenzeer zo. Laten we eerlijk zijn, als we ons werk in dit Parlement naar behoren willen doen en echte Europese oplossingen voor Europese uitdagingen willen vinden, dan hebben we een Europese kieskring nodig. Jullie hebben angst voor verandering. Angst is een slechte raadgever, heeft mijn vader mij geleerd. Laten we ons werk serieus nemen en gaan voor die transnationale lijsten.

Michaela Šojdrová (PPE), *odpověď na otázku položenou zvednutím modré karty*. – Neslyšela jsem tam sice otázku, slyšela jsem tam, že se bojíme. Paní kolegyně, já se nebojím, já se v žádném případě nebojím a nepovažuji se ani za Vašeho protivníka, protože já chci, aby Evropský parlament byl volen demokraticky. Aby se všichni zapojili. Aby všichni občané věděli, koho a proč volí. A to je ten problém. Jestli se něčeho obávám, pak je to populismus, pak je to zjednodušování, pak jsou to ty kampaně, které bohužel zažíváme. Jeden brexit mi stačil, paní kolegyně.

Andrejs Mamikins (S&D). – Madam President, the creation of transnational lists would be a sign of a more united Europe, but let us not stick to appearances. First, we need a pan-European social policy, a pan-European fiscal policy and a pan-European vision of our foreign policy.

Do we want to show our citizens that the European Parliament has a real European dimension? Yes, we do, but in order to be credible we must show a European dimension in their everyday lives. Look at the turnout at the last European elections. There was a decrease of 20% compared with the first elections in 1979. Last time it was only 42% across the EU. Will transnational lists change that figure? Will they give our citizens more trust in the EU as a whole? That is what we have to ask ourselves before we work for the new electoral proposal.

We have to ask ourselves another question too, colleagues. How will the electoral campaigns of this new pan-European constituency be financed and are we really sure we are able to guarantee democratic oversight of this financing? When we have sensibly answered these questions, and when we start a real discussion, we will also have to start the discussion in our national parliaments.

Elmar Brok (PPE). – Frau Präsidentin, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Transnationale Listen sind ein Sündenfall gegen den Föderalismus. Nicht umsonst haben alle föderalen Staaten keine nationalen Listen, weil sie nicht den Zentralismus zum Ausdruck bringen wollen, weil sie Bürgernähe haben wollen. Ich möchte nicht auf einer Liste von Helsinki bis Lissabon gewählt werden, wo kein Bürger mich als seinen Ansprechpartner sieht. Ich möchte in Ostwestfalen-Lippe, ich möchte zu Hause gewählt werden. Legitimation entsteht durch Bürgernähe und nicht über Ferne, und das ist der entscheidende Punkt für jedes Parlament.

Wir müssen deutlich machen, dass der Spitzenkandidatenprozess der Weg ist, europäische Gedanken in einer Kampagne europaweit zu tragen; dies muss gestärkt werden. Der Spitzenkandidat führt dazu, dass der Bürger über die Europawahl den europäischen Regierungschef feststellt. Dies kann nicht über die 27 Leute der transnationalen Liste gemacht werden, sondern dies müssen die 705 Abgeordneten entscheiden, die vom Bürger vor Ort gewählt worden sind. Das ist, glaube ich, eine Frage von großer Legitimation, und wenn ich mir vor Augen halte, dass eine Reihe Regierungschefs, die für transnationale Listen sind, jedoch gegen den Spitzenkandidaten sind, dann bedeutet das, dass auf diese Art und Weise die transnationalen Listen eine Alibiveranstaltung zur Schwäche Europas sind und zur Entmündigung des Bürgers führen, um die 27 Leute, die keine Rolle spielen, hier in den Mittelpunkt zu stellen.

(Der Redner ist damit einverstanden, eine Frage nach dem Verfahren der „blauen Karte“ gemäß Artikel 162 Absatz 8 der Geschäftsordnung zu beantworten.)

Doru-Claudian Frunzuliță (S&D), *blue-card question*. – The European Parliament is probably the most important democratic institution of the European Union. Don't you think that, through these elections, we ought to send the important message that we need more cohesion inside the European Union? Then we could make the switch to transnational lists. We can see currently that the eurozone represents a hard core of the European Union, while there are still countries that are not members of the eurozone, not members of Schengen, and so on and so forth. Don't you think that we ought to wait a bit for more cohesion, and then move on to the next step?

Elmar Brok (PPE), *Antwort auf eine Frage nach dem Verfahren der „blauen Karte“*. – Ich bin der Auffassung, dass die Bürger in ihren Wahlkreisen, in ihren Regionen wählen müssen und dass uns dies zusammenführt in diesem Haus, in der Fraktion, um gemeinsame europäische Interessen wahrzunehmen. Und dass wir darauf Wert legen müssen, dass die Bürgerentscheidung vor Ort dazu beiträgt, dass wir einen Kommissionspräsidenten, einen Regierungschef bekommen, der aus dem Willen dieser Bürger vor Ort kommt und nicht aus einer artifiziellen Veranstaltung von 27 Leuten aus Sammlungsbewegungen, damit Präsidenten und *Prime Minister* hier dieses Haus manipulieren können und uns Alibiveranstaltungen geben.

Roberto Gualtieri (S&D). – Signora Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, volevo esordire con una nota di mestizia, perché dietro questi 73 seggi ci sono i volti di tanti colleghi, amici del Regno Unito. Questo è un lato triste della Brexit.

La relazione equilibrata riduce i seggi del Parlamento e migliora la proporzionalità e soprattutto apre la strada all'introduzione di liste transnazionali che contribuiranno a rafforzare la qualità della democrazia europea.

Noi oggi abbiamo un *gap*, lo misuriamo, tra la dimensione europea delle politiche necessarie ad affrontare i nostri problemi e la segmentazione nazionale del dibattito della politica, *politics*. Lo *Spitzenkandidat* contribuisce a ridurre questo *gap*, ma se non è sostenuto da un'europeizzazione vera del dibattito elettorale di questa casa sarà insufficiente, perché noi lo sappiamo che i cittadini poi non hanno votato tanto sapendo chi era lo *Spitzenkandidat*, se era Juncker o se era Schulz, ma hanno votato in base a una discussione politica nazionale. Quindi, una lista transnazionale che si aggiunge a quelle locali rafforzerà la dimensione europea del nostro spazio comune.

(L'oratore accetta di rispondere a una domanda «cartellino blu» (articolo 162, paragrafo 8, del regolamento))

Nuno Melo (PPE), *Pergunta segundo o procedimento «cartão azul»*. – Senhora Presidente, com brevidade, apenas para perguntar como é que se reforça a qualidade da democracia da União Europeia com listas transnacionais onde só os representantes de alguns países serão eleitos, invariavelmente os maiores que, como é da natureza humana e da dimensão dos países, controlam por isso o essencial dos grupos políticos.

Numa lista transnacional, serão eleitos os primeiros dessas listas. Acredita mesmo que no topo dessas listas estarão os representantes dos países pequenos e médios da União Europeia? Essa é a pergunta que eu lhe deixo.

Roberto Gualtieri (S&D), *risposta a una domanda «cartellino blu»*. – Non è scritto da nessuna parte quale sarà l'ordine delle liste e sarebbe saggio e intelligente da parte di tutti i partiti politici europei avere una rappresentazione equilibrata. Noi oggi abbiamo un Presidente della Commissione che viene dal Lussemburgo e quindi francamente non mi sembra questo un argomento sensato. È quella che un filosofo italiano chiamava «paura dei pericoli», vedere sempre il rischio più che l'opportunità di un cambiamento, che peraltro si aggiunge in misura molto limitata, un meccanismo elettorale basato sulla proporzionalità degressiva, che attualmente e giustamente sovrarappresenta i paesi minori.

Sylvia-Yvonne Kaufmann (S&D). – Frau Präsidentin! Ich unterstütze den Bericht, und ich hoffe vor allem, dass der Vorschlag zur Einführung transnationaler Listen heute eine Mehrheit erhält, denn ich bin davon überzeugt, dass transnationale Listen gut sind für die europäische Demokratie.

Ich bedaure es sehr, dass mein Kollege Elmar Brok, den ich sehr schätze, im Moment nicht mehr im Plenarsaal ist. Ich muss sagen, dass mich seine Argumente und auch die anderer hier heute überhaupt nicht überzeugt haben. Ich habe heute früh ein Rundfunkinterview gehört, wo Kollege Brok sagt, die Bürgerinnen und Bürger müssten wissen, wen sie anrufen können und wem sie E-Mails oder Briefe schreiben könnten. Das wäre der Bezug sozusagen zum Abgeordneten vor Ort, und er möchte ja auch nur in Westfalen-Lippe gewählt werden.

Ich bekomme Briefe, mich rufen Bürgerinnen und Bürger nicht nur aus Berlin an, sondern aus ganz Deutschland. Ich kriege auch Mails und Briefe aus ganz Europa, weil die Bürgerinnen und Bürger unsere Adressen kennen. Sie wissen, dass wir hier über ihre Belange entscheiden, und sie schreiben uns und nehmen Kontakt zu uns auf.

Ich finde, bei transnationalen Listen könnte Herr Brok genauso weiter auf der nationalen Liste, nämlich in Ostwestfalen-Lippe, kandidieren oder auf der transnationalen. Das ist doch seine Entscheidung.

Catch-the-eye procedure

Milan Zver (PPE). – Danes smo veliko slišali dobrih argumentov za in proti transnacionalnim listam, „špicenkandidatih“, pa tudi o volilnih enotah.

Rad bi poudaril, da ta neposredni stik med izvoljenim in volilnim telesom, je izjemno pomemben.

Prihajam iz relativno majhne občine, z vzhoda Slovenije, s približno 2500 ljudmi. In tudi ta majhna lokalna skupnost ni enovita volilna enota, ampak so zaradi tega, da bi poslanci ostali v stiku s svojimi volivci, razdelili na tri volilne enote. Ta logika se mi zdi zelo pomembna.

Tak unitarističen pogled na demokracijo, ki predpostavlja, da je demokracija zgolj tekmovanje političnih elit za glasove, se mi ne zdi v redu.

Demokracija je bistveno širši pojem, predvsem pa temelji na odgovorni zavezi, povezavi med tistim, ki je izvoljen, in tistim, ki voli.

Maria Grapini (S&D). – Doamnă președintă, stimam colegii, sigur, a fost un raport foarte complicat. Vreau să îi felicit pe raportori pentru echilibrul pe care l-au adus, însă nu pot să nu mă refer la două lucruri.

Cel legat de repartizare: am fi vrut să nu fie un Brexit și să nu avem ocazia să repartizăm. Este greu să explicăm că s-a respectat întru totul principiul proporționalității degresive, dacă ne uităm că țări ca Grecia, Cehia nu au primit niciunul și alte țări cu mărime apropiată au primit trei. Dar s-a discutat foarte mult despre listele naționale, deși raportorii spun foarte explicit aici că nu avem un temei juridic încă. Eu cred că trebuie să ne întoarcem acasă la noi, să discutăm în parlamentele noastre naționale, cu cetățenii noștri, pentru că, da, e o viziune bună poate, de viitor, dar sunt pregătiți cetățenii?

Și mai am o întrebare pentru raportor, poate răspund când vor face încheierea: vor exista două categorii de europarlamentari?

Pentru că eu acum știu că reprezintă toți cetățenii europeni, nu numai pe cei din țara mea.

Vom avea eurodeputați de gradul unu și de gradul doi?

Νότης Μαρίας (ECR). – Κυρία Πρόεδρε, πρώτα απ' όλα, για να έχουμε διεθνικά ψηφοδέλτια πρέπει να υπάρχει ένας ενιαίος δημόσιος ευρωπαϊκός χώρος. Κάτι τέτοιο δεν υπάρχει, τουλάχιστον αυτή τη στιγμή, πολύ δε περισσότερο καθώς δεν υπάρχει κοινή γλώσσα. Δεύτερον, μιλάμε για μια τεράστια εκλογική περιφέρεια, η οποία υποτίθεται ότι θα ψηφίζει υποψηφίους που -είμαι βέβαιος- ούτε καν θα τους γνωρίζει και αυτοί που θα ενισχύονται θα είναι φυσικά τα μεγάλα κόμματα- όσοι έχουν τη δυνατότητα χρηματοδότησης. Άρα, στην πράξη, τα συμφέροντα θα επιβάλουν και ρυθμίσεις. Τρίτον, δεν πρόκειται για διεθνικό ψηφοδέλτιο αλλά για διεθνική λίστα, δηλαδή μια λίστα που θα διαμορφωθεί από ποιους; Από τα ευρωπαϊκά πολιτικά κόμματα. Από ποια κόμματα; Από τις γραφειοκρατίες, από τους ηγέτες, από τους «party bosses». Αυτοί θα τα δημιουργούν, διότι δεν υπάρχουν μέλη στα ευρωπαϊκά πολιτικά κόμματα- είναι κόμματα κομμάτων- είναι γραφειοκρατίες. Άρα, θα είναι μια αντιδημοκρατική επιλογή.

Izaskun Bilbao Barandica (ALDE). – Señora presidenta, construir la Unión Europea, convertirla en un actor global, requiere movimientos en dos direcciones. Hacia arriba necesitamos fortalecer el *demos* europeo que existe, que nos une. Y las listas transnacionales son una buena idea, porque transmiten y representan el espíritu de lo que estamos construyendo. Una Unión en la que hay políticas que necesitan un enfoque global, actuaciones que ganarán en cohesión fortaleciendo las organizaciones políticas de alcance europeo, percibidas y actuando como tales.

Por eso, apoyamos esta propuesta y el principio de que cada una de estas listas esté encabezada por un candidato de cada familia política sin apellido nacional. Es la mejor forma de convertir un problema como el *brexit* en una oportunidad. Pero del mismo modo esa integración debe inspirarse en el lema de nuestra Unión —«Unida en la diversidad»- y construirse de abajo hacia arriba desde las instituciones más próximas a sus ciudadanos.

Por eso, es una buena idea la enmienda suscrita por el presidente de nuestro grupo, Guy Verhofstadt, que abre la puerta a asegurar la presencia, también aquí, de regiones con competencias legislativas.

Marisa Matias (GUE/NGL). – Senhora Presidente, o Parlamento Europeu é o único órgão europeu, a única instituição que é eleita diretamente pelos cidadãos e de forma proporcional e creio que assim deve continuar a ser. Já temos desproporção suficiente no que diz respeito às outras instituições europeias, em particular em relação ao Conselho Europeu, onde seis países detêm 70 % dos votos, e é por isso que eu não sou favorável às listas transnacionais. Não creio que elas acrescentem democracia, creio que subtraem democracia.

Mas devo dizer, Senhora Presidente, que, quanto à composição do Parlamento, a proposta que é apresentada pelos relatores é uma proposta séria e a mais justa de todas as que vimos até hoje. É a única proposta onde os países pequenos e médios não perdem representação, e eu sei que é muito popular dizer que todos deveríamos ganhar e que os nossos países deveriam estar mais representados, mas também sei que, ao dizer isso, teríamos que ter um Parlamento muito acima do limite consagrado nos tratados e que obviamente teria que se tirar alguém, só não se diz quem se vai tirar. Não é satisfatório...

(A Presidente retira a palavra à oradora)

Max Andersson (Verts/ALE). – Madam President, transnational lists are a magnet that will draw power away from citizens and their parties in the Member States and give it to the leadership of European parties. That is why some people like them, but this is not going to be good for democracy.

The European parties will decide who gets on the list. The European parties will decide what manifesto they run on, and the national parties will be under enormous pressure to align their policies with the policies of their European party. This will alienate the voters, who will no longer be able to vote for a party in the Member State that represents their policies and their preferences. Instead, they will have to vote for someone who in reality represents a European party.

Let's oppose it: let's learn something from Brexit.

Λάμπρος Φουντούλης (NI). – Κυρία Πρόεδρε, με την αποχώρηση του Ηνωμένου Βασιλείου από την Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση δημιουργείται ένα κενό 73 θέσεων. Με εξαίρεση μία ελάχιστη αναδιανομή μεταξύ των υπόλοιπων κρατών μελών, το Ευρωκοινοβούλιο προσπαθεί τις 46 από τις θέσεις αυτές να τις δεσμεύσει σε μία κοινή πανευρωπαϊκή λίστα. Αν και, θεωρητικά, θα μπορούσε κάποιος να βρει αρνητικά και θετικά στην εν λόγω πρόταση, η πραγματικότητα είναι κάπως διαφορετική. Στην ουσία, εάν υιοθετηθεί η προτεινόμενη αλλαγή, απλά θα μεγαλώσει η διαφορά στην επιρροή που διαθέτουν τα μεγαλύτερα κράτη εντός της Ένωσης. Επιπλέον, θα μεγαλώσει ακόμη περισσότερο η ήδη τεράστια απόσταση μεταξύ των ευρωπαϊκών θεσμών και των ευρωπαίων πολιτών. Πλέον, οι ευρωβουλευτές που θα εκλέγονται από αυτές τις υπερεθνικές λίστες θα είναι παντελώς άγνωστοι στην τεράστια πλειοψηφία των πολιτών, ενώ είναι τελείως αόριστο ποιον ακριβώς θα εκπροσωπούν και σε ποιον θα λογοδοτούν. Τέλος, η πρόσφατη εμπειρία μάς έχει δείξει ότι η Ένωση δεν αντιμετωπίζει ισότιμα τα κόμματα όλων των πολιτικών αποχρώσεων, αλλά -αντιθέτως- προσπαθεί με κάθε μέσο να καταπιέξει τις πατριωτικές και εθνικιστικές φωνές, φαινόμενο που αναμένεται να ενταθεί μετά την υιοθέτηση των υπερεθνικών λιστών.

Seán Kelly (PPE). – Madam President, when Brexit occurred and we started discussing the redistribution of seats, I felt we were moving a bit hastily. This was confirmed for me a month ago when both Donald Tusk and Jean-Claude Juncker said that the door was open for the British to change their minds. But if they change their minds, their seats will have gone – thankfully not all, but some – and I welcome Ireland being given two extra seats because of its growing population, etcetera.

So, what do we do? In relation to the transnational lists, many people, our Taoiseach included, have outlined many good reasons why we should consider them but, as Othmar Karas said, this is theoretical at this stage. Before the theory can become practice, we have to see how, in practice, these elite MEPs would operate. Will they be elected by everybody and accountable to no one? That needs to be answered before theory becomes practice.

Doru-Claudian Frunzulică (S&D). – Madam President, yes, I agree to give more seats to under-represented countries. I agree on degressive proportionality. At the same time, we should have to take into consideration the number of citizens of each and every country: citizens some of whom – in the case of Romania about three million – live in other European Union countries.

I believe that the proposal to create transnational lists aims to define European direct representation while respecting the degressive principal, as required by Article 14 of the Treaty. But we are not yet ready for this. I agree that we can apply the system starting in 2024 but not in 2019.

At the same time I would ask all of you: what are we going to do about the extremist parties, the political parties in Europe that are against the European Union?

(The President cut off the speaker)

António Marinho e Pinto (ALDE). – Senhora Presidente, quero, antes de mais, felicitar os relatores deste relatório pela justiça que o mesmo consubstancia na repartição dos lugares de deputados entre os vários Estados-Membros. Finalmente se realizou, de forma plena, o princípio da proporcionalidade regressiva.

Mas esta justiça relativa, aqui conseguida, ficará sempre incompleta se não formos capazes de dar, nesta fase do processo de construção europeia, o passo decisivo no sentido de uma maior integração e no sentido de realmente pormos as instituições da União a discutir problemas europeus nas campanhas eleitorais.

As campanhas eleitorais nos vários Estados-Membros para o Parlamento Europeu centram-se em torno de problemas nacionais, são um *remake* das eleições nacionais. É preciso, portanto, dar o passo decisivo, discutir a Europa nas eleições para o Parlamento Europeu. Que este Parlamento seja o representante do povo europeu e não dos resultados nacionais.

Γεώργιος Επιτήδειος (NI). – Κυρία Πρόεδρε, τα διεθνικά ψηφοδέλτια δεν εξυπηρετούν τις ανάγκες των λαών της Ευρώπης. Επιδιώκουν να δημιουργήσουν μία περιορισμένη ευρωπαϊκή ελίτ που θα αποτελείται από προβεβλημένους ευρωβουλευτές, οι οποίοι στην ουσία θα υπακούνε στις εντολές της ηγεσίας της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης και θα είναι αποκομμένοι από τους ψηφοφόρους τους, των οποίων τα συμφέροντα δεν θα μπορούν να υπηρετήσουν.

Επιπλέον, δεν ανταποκρίνονται στην αρχή της αναλογικότητας και, μαζί με τα ψηφοδέλτια για τους Επιτρόπους, τους «Spitzenkandidaten», στρέφονται κατά των μικρών κομμάτων και των μικρών χωρών και προωθούν τα συμφέροντα των μεγάλων χωρών και των μεγάλων κομμάτων. Γι' αυτόν ακριβώς τον λόγο πρέπει να καταψηφιστεί αυτή η πρόταση. Δεν ανταποκρίνεται σε δημοκρατικές ανάγκες και, επιπλέον, αποτρέπει τους πολίτες από το να ασχολούνται με τα ευρωπαϊκά θέματα.

Anneli Jäätteenmäki (ALDE). – Arvoisa puhemies, brexit luo meille historiallisen mahdollisuuden pienentää Euroopan parlamentin kokoa, luoda päätöksenteosta tehokkaampaa ja vastuullisempaa.

En kannata ylikansallisia listoja, koska katson, että ne eivät lisää demokratiaa, päinvastoin, ne vieraannuttavat äänestäjät mepeistä. Perustelen tätä sillä, että demokratian ydin on se, että meillä europarlamentaarikoilla ja europarlamentilla on yhteys kansalaisiin. Ylikansalliset listat etäännyttävät kansalaisia ja parlamenttia toisistaan, ja tämä ei ole kenenkään etu.

Se voisi myös luoda kahden kerroksen väkeä meidän meppien kesken. Kun kuuntelee täällä keskustelua, niin me, jotka vastustamme ylikansallisia listoja, me muka pelkäämme tai emme ole hyviä eurooppalaisia. Entä sitten, jos jako on toteutettu, silloin tämä...

(Puhemies keskeytti puhujan.)

(End of catch-the-eye procedure)

Danuta Maria Hübner, *rapporteur*. – Madam President, I would just like to raise a few issues. As we heard during the debate, there are very different opinions on some issues, such as transnational lists, but I would say that very few colleagues questioned the core of this report, which is the composition of our House as of 2019.

I believe that the proposal which we put forward is the middle ground between all points of view on the matter, and in the light of all the special – I would say extraordinary – circumstances we are facing this time around, this is the best solution available with regard to the composition of Parliament for the forthcoming term.

I would also like to reiterate my request to the European Council to heed Parliament's wishes in relation to its own composition, and I hope that the report will be approved by the European Council in the version that will, hopefully, pass through Parliament today. I would also like to make it clear to colleagues that the bigger the majority with which we adopt the composition proposal, the more likely it is that the Council will not change it. I am confident that, with this report, Parliament is sending a strong signal to citizens that it will remain efficient, while managing to reduce its size by 46 seats owing to the withdrawal of the UK from the Union.

I hope that the European Council will support us in this proposal because it is fair, equitable and in full compliance with Treaty principles. It is, above all, also in the interests of European citizens.

Pedro Silva Pereira, *relator*. – Senhora Presidente, dois pontos ficam a marcar este nosso debate. Primeiro, como seria de esperar, a discussão sobre as listas transnacionais, mas eu quero insistir que o que este relatório faz é deixar um conjunto de lugares disponíveis que podem ser utilizados no futuro, quer em alargamentos, quer numa eventual criação das listas transnacionais.

Porque, quanto ao mais, este relatório reconhece, como o Parlamento já tinha reconhecido em 2015, que a criação de listas transnacionais é matéria da lei eleitoral e portanto depende, como pré-condição, de uma decisão unânime do Conselho. Mais importante é que este debate revelou um consenso muito alargado sobre a proposta dos relatores para a distribuição de lugares e isso é muito importante.

Creio que há boas razões para um apoio muito alargado a esta proposta, não apenas por parte daqueles que veem a sua injusta subrepresentação finalmente corrigida, mas também por parte daqueles Estados pequenos ou médios que partiram para este debate com receio de perder mais uma vez lugares e que veem triplamente garantida a sua representação. Primeiro, porque a proposta não reduz lugares a nenhum Estado-Membro, segundo, porque não consagra nenhuma fórmula matemática que implique perda no futuro, e terceiro, porque dá a garantia de que, mesmo em caso de alargamento e mesmo em caso de listas transnacionais, essa distribuição de lugares não é afetada.

Espero, portanto, que possamos ter uma mensagem clara deste Parlamento ao Conselho para uma proposta que permite um Parlamento mais justo e que reforça a democracia europeia.

President. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place shortly.

Written statements (Rule 162)

José Blanco López (S&D), *por escrito*. – El 11 de noviembre de 2015 el Parlamento Europeo (PE) adoptó su propuesta de modificación del Acta de 1976 relativa a la elección de los diputados al PE por sufragio universal directo, que introduce una serie de medidas destinadas a reforzar la dimensión europea de las elecciones y garantizar una mayor igualdad electoral a los ciudadanos de la Unión. Lamentablemente, desde entonces cinco Presidencias del Consejo (Luxemburgo, Países Bajos, Eslovaquia, Malta y, ahora, Estonia) han trabajado sobre la propuesta del Parlamento (ejercida de conformidad con el artículo 223, apartado 1, del TFUE), pero ninguna ha transmitido al PE resultados formales o informales de las deliberaciones del Consejo, poniendo en evidencia la falta de voluntad de los Estados miembros para armonizar la norma actual que data de 1976. Por eso, una vez más pedimos al Consejo que no siga bloqueando la mejora de las normas relativas a la elección de los diputados al PE y que, teniendo en cuenta que el

expediente debe concluirse, a más tardar, en la próxima primavera, presente cuanto antes al PE una decisión.

Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), in writing. – This report states that the ‘distribution of the European Parliament’s seats must follow the general provisions of Article 14 of the Treaty on European Union’ and makes some useful suggestions as to how the allocation of seats might be improved in future. I represent Scotland, where a majority voted to remain in the EU, and I regret that much of this report is based upon the likelihood that the UK will leave, thereby making 73 seats available for redistribution. Considering the proposals on their merits, I support in principle the Committee’s suggested redistribution of seats, which will correct some of the current distortions and improve on the degressive proportionality principle. I also support the idea of reserving the remaining seats for potential future enlargements of the EU. Indeed I very much hope that Scotland will choose to become a normal independent nation again, and perhaps make use of such an arrangement when we return as a fully-fledged EU Member State. I am totally opposed to the notion of using some EP seats to create a transnational list, and I will vote in favour of the various amendments which seek to delete that principle from the report.

Claude Rolin (PPE), par écrit. – En prévision des élections européennes de 2019, je soutiens cette proposition de créer des listes transnationales européennes qui, concrètement, devraient permettre aux citoyens de voter, à côté d’eurodéputés élus sur des listes nationales, pour les mêmes parlementaires européens partout en Europe.

Dans ma vision de l’Europe, qui allie fédéralisme et réalisme, je pense que la mise en place de ces circonscriptions uniques contribuera à créer un lien plus fort avec le citoyen européen et, en ce sens, favorisera plus de démocratie européenne. Ces listes transnationales permettront en effet de mieux «exporter l’Europe», d’avoir davantage de débats et, je l’espère, de renforcer le sentiment d’appartenance européenne.

Elles permettront, enfin, de donner aux élections européennes un vrai caractère européen. Le problème des élections européennes – au-delà des faibles taux de participation – c’est qu’elles sont la somme des lois électorales nationales.

Avoir des listes transnationales qui dépassent les clivages géographiques pourra donner à ces élections une vraie dimension européenne, au-delà des frontières des États membres. La mise en place des circonscriptions uniques doit, toutefois, s’inscrire dans un projet bien plus large et être suivie d’autres mesures qui permettront de relancer le projet européen qui, plus que jamais, a besoin d’un nouveau souffle.

Monika Smolková (S&D), písomne. – Po odchode Veľkej Británie z EÚ bude mať EP o 73 poslancov menej. Diskusia o tom, či tieto uvoľnené kresla prerozdeliť všetky, alebo nechať voľné, prebiehali na pôde EP od brexitu. Medzi kolegami, poslancami EP, boli názory, aby sme ich prerozdělili všetky, ale boli aj takí, ktorí mali rovnaký názor ako aj ja, aby sme nič nedelili, aby sme ušetrené finančné prostriedky investovali do rozvojových projektov pre mladých ľudí alebo na ochranu vonkajších hraníc, prípadne na podporu menej rozvinutých regiónov. Následne po vstupe nových štátov do EÚ by sa im postupne prideliť voľné miesta. Zjednotiť sa nebolo ľahké, preto je potrebné poďakovať spravodajcom za rozumný kompromis, ktorý prerozděljuje 27 kresiel a 46 necháva voľných pre budúcich členov EÚ. Som rada, že Slovensko takýmto návrhom získa o jeden mandát viac, čím budeme mať po roku 2019 štrnásť poslancov. Celkom iný názor mám na vytvorenie nadnárodného volebného zoznamu, pretože to považujem za nereálne, aby si ktokoľvek robil kampaň pred voľbami do EP v celej EÚ, aby sa následne nevedel zodpovedať svojim voličom za svoju prácu. Poslanec musí vedieť, kto sú jeho voliči, musí byť s nimi v kontakte a počas volebného obdobia musí vedieť s nimi komunikovať.

Tibor Szanyi (S&D), írásban. – A Brexit olyan döntési kényszerhelyzetet idézett elő az európai intézmények működése, esetünkben a Parlament jövőbeni összetétele szempontjából, amely egyúttal új esélyeket kínál működésünk hatékonyabbá és jogszerűbbé tételére. Fontosnak tartom, hogy ezt a korrekciós folyamatot, a jogalkotástól a végrehajtásig, az EP tartsa kézben és üdvözlöm a jelentős erre irányuló szándékát. A jelenlegi javaslatok a gyakorlatias kompromisszum jegyében születtek, megvalósulásuk az európai intézmények és az egész Unió demokratikus működésének kiteljesedését, az EP szerepének erősítését szolgálják majd.

Konkrétan az EP létszámának csökkentését, a tagállamonkénti képviselet terén a degresszív arányosság jobb érvényesülését is támogatom, azzal együtt, hogy saját tagállamom nem kapna plusz helyet. Fontos ugyanakkor, hogy a változás egyetlen tagállam esetében se jelentsen csökkenést, amely elvet szerintem bármely jövőbeni változás esetén is érvényesíteni kell. Az európai integráció további fejlődése szempontjából a javaslatcsomag legjelentősebb eleme számomra a páneurópai lista, a közvetlen európai képviselet, illetve a közös lista perspektívája.

A szkeptikus véleményekkel szemben úgy vélem, ezek bevezetése már a következő parlament mandátuma idején lehetséges, a szükséges jogalap kellő politikai akarat esetén időben megteremthető. Az uniós döntéshozatal demokratikus tartalmának, polgár-közelségének erősítése mellett egy ilyen történelmi jelentőségű változás hozzájárulhat az EU több tagállamában – sajnos talán leginkább saját hazámban – erősödő nacionalista nyomás és Európa-ellenesség visszaszorításához is.

Carlos Zorrinho (S&D), por escrito. – O relatório que estabelece a composição do Parlamento Europeu na sequência da saída do Reino Unido define um modelo adequado, que permite corrigir alguns desequilíbrios de representação, garantir que nenhum Estado Membro perde mandatos e deixar folga para eventuais futuros alargamentos ou para a concretização do princípio aprovado anteriormente pelo Parlamento, de constituição de listas transnacionais.

Saliento o excelente trabalho realizado pelos relatores e por aqueles que com eles mais diretamente trabalharam, que, entre outras coisas, conseguiram assegurar que nenhum País perderá representantes, facto que a acontecer, seria muito difícil de explicar às opiniões públicas nacionais num quadro de libertação de vagas resultante da saída dos deputados britânicos.

O relatório realça ainda a competência exclusiva do Conselho para, se assim o entender e de forma unânime, promover o quadro legal para a introdução das listas transnacionais. Considero que estas podem ser um passo positivo no aprofundamento da democracia europeia, desde que sejam evitadas distorções na representação democrática dos diversos Estados-Membros e dos diversos grupos e movimentos políticos no quadro institucional da União.

5. Przegląd porozumienia ramowego w sprawie stosunków między Parlamentem Europejskim i Komisją Europejską (debata)

President. – The next item is the report by Esteban González Pons, on behalf of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, on revision of the Framework Agreement on relations between the European Parliament and the European Commission (N8-0065/2017 – C8-0366/2017 – 2017/2233(ACI)) (A8-0006/2018).

Esteban González Pons, ponente. – Señora presidenta, en este informe, además de las enmiendas, lo que se discute es si la Comisión es un órgano con responsabilidad política que responde ante el Parlamento y ante los electores —un verdadero gobierno de Europa como quiere este Parlamento—, o solo un órgano administrativo que habla en el Parlamento pero responde ante el Consejo, o sea, un títere de los Gobiernos europeos.

Si ustedes votan a favor de este informe, votarán por un gobierno europeo; si ustedes votan en contra, votarán por una Comisión de los Gobiernos de los países de Europa. Son dos modelos muy diferentes. Ayer el presidente Juncker nos alertó de que dentro del Consejo hay voces que quieren eliminar la figura del candidato a presidente de la Comisión. Déjenme que les diga que en mi opinión eso sería un paso atrás para la democracia europea. No digo un paso atrás para la construcción europea, que también, digo que unas elecciones europeas sin candidato a presidente de la Comisión son unas elecciones menos democráticas, casi unas elecciones fallidas.

La figura del candidato a presidente de la Comisión permite a los ciudadanos acudir a las urnas sabiendo cuál es el programa de cada partido y cuál es el candidato de cada partido. Lo normal. Porque en las elecciones europeas no solo se elige un Parlamento, también se elige un gobierno europeo, y sería una anomalía democrática que los ciudadanos no puedan elegir ese gobierno o ni siquiera sepan quiénes son los candidatos a dirigir ese gobierno.

Esta Unión Europea es todavía una democracia en construcción y, por lo tanto, vulnerable. A los enemigos de Europa les basta con oponerse a la democracia europea. No se puede ser amigo de Europa y contrario a la democracia europea. Para los nacionalpopulistas, es más fácil atacar a una Unión Europea con déficit democrático que a una Unión Europea que se construye y se sustenta sobre el voto de los ciudadanos. Los nacionalpopulistas vienen a las instituciones europeas para destruirlas, se disfrazan de demócratas para atacar la democracia y utilizan el Estado de Derecho para acabar con el Estado de Derecho. Solo la verdadera democracia desenmascara a los falsos demócratas.

Por eso, nuestro mayor problema es que cada día más y más ciudadanos compran el discurso populista porque sienten que las instituciones comunitarias están lejos de la gente normal; porque sienten que las instituciones comunitarias viven en el universo de las estadísticas y las grandes cifras en vez de en el mundo real de los precios del supermercado y de las enfermedades de los hijos; porque sienten que las instituciones europeas rinden cuentas ante el Consejo pero no ante el pueblo.

Esta desafección creciente solo puede acabar si se incrementan las posibilidades de participación política: que los ciudadanos puedan elegir con más democracia europea, no con menos. Cuando decimos solo «necesitamos más Europa» en vez de decir «necesitamos más democracia europea», lo que se entiende es que estamos buscando más burocracia europea y no más política europea.

Si no construimos una Europa democrática, si Europa sigue siendo solo otra alianza histórica entre las naciones europeas, todo el esfuerzo que hemos hecho los demócratas europeístas tras la Segunda Guerra Mundial y tras las dictaduras del Este y del Sur de Europa no habrá servido para nada.

Que los ciudadanos conozcan y puedan votar a los candidatos a presidente de la Comisión no es un capricho, ni siquiera es una exigencia democrática; que se sepa la cara que tiene el candidato es lo normal y lo raro sería que insistiéramos en que se pueda elegir un presidente del gobierno europeo sin que los ciudadanos sepan ni qué cara tiene ni de qué nacionalidad es ni cuál es su nombre, ni siquiera cuál es su género.

Por eso en mi informe propongo que el Parlamento Europeo esté preparado para rechazar cualquier candidato a presidente de la Comisión propuesto por el Consejo que no haya sido previamente designado como candidato principal en las elecciones europeas. Este no es un conflicto entre el Consejo y el Parlamento. Este es un conflicto entre el poder y la democracia. Y este no puede ser el primer Parlamento de la historia que, entre poder y democracia, elige poder.

Frans Timmermans, *First Vice-President of the Commission*. – Madam President, let me start by saying that the Code of Conduct is here to hold Members of the Commission to the highest levels of integrity. I believe that we have a strong Code of Conduct, strengthened over the years as we have learned from our mistakes.

To paraphrase Alexander Hamilton, if people were angels, we would not need rules. It is in this vein that on 13 September last year we proposed to improve transparency, strengthen democratic legitimacy and enforce our collective high standards through a renewed statute for the funding of political parties and movements. We are doing this in order to close loopholes that are clearly prone to abuse. I believe Parliament and the Council are not that far apart, and I look forward to the swift adoption of that proposal so as to be in time for the next parliamentary elections in 2019.

But let me now turn to the Code of Conduct again. The Commission would welcome support for allowing Commissioners to stand in, and campaign for, European elections without having to take leave; and for revising the framework agreements between the European Parliament and the Commission accordingly. Article 10 of the new Code of Conduct makes the safeguards in relation to Commissioners participating in elections very clear. In line with paragraph 4 of this article, Parliament will be informed of the measures taken to ensure respect for the principles of independence, integrity and discretion. Present Juncker has tasked the Commission secretariat-general with preparing guidance on this matter in time for the next European election.

Parliament's reply to the consultation on the new Code of Conduct came in time to allow most of its provisions to enter into force on 1 February this year as planned. At the same time, it is clear that the provisions governing participation in European elections will enter into force only once the amendments to the Framework Agreement have been formally adopted by Parliament. The Commission addresses in the new Code of Conduct as many of the concerns expressed by Parliament as possible.

President Tajani has written a letter to President Juncker regarding the areas where Parliament would deem further changes desirable. The Commission has analysed these carefully and I know that President Juncker will respond in a letter which he will send out shortly.

You also take the opportunity in your report to restate Parliament's support for the process of 'lead candidates' or *Spitzenkandidaten*. Yesterday morning President Juncker spoke clearly about the lead candidate system, as well as the question of transnational lists. He noted that both issues, in their own way, generate political debate between EU institutions. The Commission will contribute constructively to that debate in the form of a contribution to the leaders' meeting on the 23rd of this month, and in that context I will listen carefully to your contributions to this debate today.

Manfred Weber, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – Madam President, first I want to thank Esteban González Pons for his work on this dossier. This morning we are discussing the fundamental question of how we can organise democracy on a European level. The EU is not a state, but it's already a key decision-maker in a lot of important areas in the daily life of citizens. That's why it's important to discuss this issue. The Lisbon Treaty was already a big step: today, the European Parliament, now directly elected, is powerful, and we decide together with the Council. People and states are deciding – that is Europe.

Now it's a question of whether there is a need for another approach at European level to practising democracy. I would say not. There is no need for an innovative approach on this. In my small village, where my home is in Bavaria, when we elect a mayor, we have a candidate and we have a programme. When in October of this year we hold an election in Bavaria for the Prime Minister of Bavaria, we will have candidates from the different parties and each candidate will have a programme, a profile.

When people in France vote in the presidential elections for a President of France, they have a candidate and this candidate has a programme. Sorry, dear friends, but I am fed up of asking for the same procedure, which is established at all other levels, to be allowed at European level, too – to present people, before we go to vote, with a candidate and with a programme. That is democratic and that is what we should also do in 2019.

Dear friends, Churchill said once that it is the people who control the government, not the government the people. This sentence is also true for the heads of states and governments around Europe. President Macron, for example, is making a lot of effort to strengthen the European Union, but on the top candidate concept, we need a clear answer from him, too. If Macron wants to stick to a democratic Europe then he has to agree to the lead candidate process. I hope that the President is listening to our debate here today. He can read our lips when we say very clearly that the EPP Group will not accept a candidate for Commission President who was not presented during the campaign as lead candidate of a democratic party and cannot bring together a qualified majority in the newly-elected European Parliament.

We need a President of the European Commission who is elected, and not selected behind closed doors. I appeal to the European Council: let's not now start a power game among the institutions; let's simply practise democracy. I'm very, very pleased that LeoVaradkar, Andrej Plenković and Sebastian Kurz – who gave his support in an interview on Saturday – and now finally Jean-Claude Juncker, the current Commission President, were absolutely clear that they support the concept. So there is growing support for this idea, even in the Council. Let's make Europe democratic, let's fight for the top candidate concept.

(Applause)

Pedro Silva Pereira, *em nome do Grupo S&D*. – Senhora Presidente, Caros Colegas, quero saudar o relator, Sr. González Pons, pela sua proposta e pela cooperação que mantivemos nas últimas semanas. Esta proposta não se limita a regular a candidatura eventual dos comissários ao Parlamento Europeu, salvaguardando os princípios da transparência e da independência. Isso é importante, mas não chega. Este Parlamento deve aproveitar a oportunidade para reafirmar o seu apoio político ao processo dos candidatos cabeça-de-lista ou *Spitzenkandidaten* iniciado com sucesso nas últimas eleições europeias.

Não podemos voltar atrás neste mecanismo se queremos enfrentar o défice democrático para dar à escolha dos cidadãos uma consequência e para reforçar a legitimidade democrática da Comissão. Estamos perante uma oportunidade de enviar a partir do Parlamento uma mensagem a favor de uma maior aproximação entre as instituições europeias e os cidadãos. Pela nossa parte, não perderemos essa oportunidade.

Kazimierz Michał Ujazdowski, *w imieniu grupy ECR*. – Pani Przewodnicząca! Koleżanki i Koledzy! Unia Europejska potrzebuje przede wszystkim wzajemnego zaufania, a nie radykalnej przemiany instytucjonalnej, zaufania między szczeblem europejskim a państwami członkowskimi. Mam wrażenie, że raport pana Ponsa odbiera zaufanie państwom i próbuje je przenieść w inne miejsce. I to nie są obywatele Unii Europejskiej, tylko wybrane europejskie partie polityczne. Bardzo przestrzegam przed tym rozwiązaniem, także ze względu na respekt dla ducha traktatów europejskich. Wedle traktatów Komisja Europejska nie jest ciałem ściśle politycznym. Ma być ciałem o wysokich kompetencjach, szczególnie odpowiedzialnym za strzeżenie wspólnego interesu. Szef Komisji Europejskiej musi się cieszyć zaufaniem ze strony państw członkowskich w Radzie i rzeczywiście aprobatą Parlamentu Europejskiego. Nie naruszajmy delikatnej równowagi, która istniała i istnieje po dziś dzień. Nie przesuwajmy zaufania z państw członkowskich na europejskie partie polityczne. Radykalizm bywa wrogiem dobrego.

Maite Pagazaurtundúa Ruiz, *en nombre del Grupo ALDE*. – Señora presidenta, esta legislatura ha sido histórica porque hemos procedido a inaugurar el proceso de *Spitzenkandidaten*, como bien ha dicho el ponente. Y, de esta manera, 500 millones de ciudadanos europeos van a tener una intervención muchísimo más democrática en la elección del presidente de la Comisión Europea.

Efectivamente, hay una cuestión de democracia y hay una cuestión de poder, como ha indicado el ponente. Este cambio de refuerzo democrático va a aumentar la capacidad de control también del Parlamento Europeo. Y eso también es una cuestión de democracia. El proceso hace más real el componente político de la Comisión, que no es un coro de arcángeles. No son técnicos: son políticos. Y, por eso, hay que regular claramente las reglas de juego para que se puedan presentar, en qué condiciones, pero lo deben poder hacer con facilidad.

Quiero destacar la buena colaboración que hemos tenido con el ponente, con el señor Esteban González Pons. El resultado ha sido muy rápido y muy eficaz, en nuestra opinión. Muchísimas gracias, a todos los que han colaborado. Muchísimas gracias, ponente.

Barbara Spinelli, *a nome del gruppo GUE/NGL*. – Signora Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, leggo l'articolo 17, paragrafo 3, del trattato: «La Commissione esercita le sue responsabilità in piena indipendenza. I membri della Commissione non sollecitano né accettano istruzioni da alcun governo, istituzione, organo o organismo». La relazione in esame richiama tale precetto ma contemporaneamente ne avalla l'esplicita deroga, consentendo ai Commissari di continuare a svolgere le proprie funzioni, anche se candidati alle elezioni europee sotto l'ombrello di un partito, quindi come portatori di interessi politici particolaristici.

In uno studio del Parlamento del 2014 si dice chiaramente che la previsione regolamentare di un congedo elettorale non retribuito rappresenta una *best practice* da estendere ad altre istituzioni UE. Trovo paradossale che oggi se ne discuta l'abolizione. Il fatto che il nuovo codice di condotta dei Commissari abbia soppresso tale previsione non rappresenta per il Parlamento un alibi per suggellarne la scomparsa anche nell'accordo quadro. Il codice di condotta del 2011 prevedeva il congedo in qualsiasi tipo di campagna elettorale. Ora si distingue: i Commissari devono prendere congedo se candidati in elezioni nazionali, non devono se si candidano in Europa. La cosa mi è del tutto incomprensibile.

Pascal Durand, *au nom du groupe Verts/ALE*. – Madame la Présidente, je tiens, moi aussi, à rendre hommage au travail qui a été fait par le rapporteur, M. González Pons. En même temps, si le sujet n'était pas aussi sérieux, le débat que nous avons eu ce matin prêterait à rire, parce que nous avons beau être souples, le grand écart est difficile à tenir.

Or, nous avons pendant une heure et demie entendu, ici, les représentants de la droite dans cet hémicycle nous expliquer que les listes transnationales seraient une régression pour la démocratie européenne, et, là, vous venez de nous expliquer, à juste titre, que le fait qu'il y ait un candidat tête de liste pour l'Europe sur un programme européen, qui dépasse les intérêts nationaux, serait une belle et grande avancée pour l'Europe!

Je partage votre opinion, Monsieur González Pons, mais on ne peut pas à la fois dire que nous portons un intérêt général européen qui ne soit pas la somme des intérêts nationaux, comme d'ailleurs la Commission s'y engage et le fait, et, en même temps, nous opposer à ce qu'une démocratie européenne voie enfin le jour, avec des candidates et des candidats élus sur un programme commun européen qui dépasse les logiques nationales.

Je me tourne donc encore une fois vers vous. Le vote n'a pas encore eu lieu. Défendez, Monsieur González Pons –dans la même logique que celle qui vous fait défendre aujourd'hui un candidat tête de liste européen–, défendez les listes transnationales! Elles sont la réponse démocratique au fait que nous ayons aboli les frontières pour les biens, pour les marchandises et pour les services.

Fabio Massimo Castaldo, *a nome del gruppo EFDD*. – Signora Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, con questa decisione in merito all'accordo quadro sulle relazioni tra il Parlamento europeo e la Commissione si sancisce normativamente la possibilità per i Commissari europei di partecipare alle elezioni europee senza dover prima rassegnare le dimissioni.

Personalmente ho forti perplessità in merito, soprattutto per quanto riguarda il conflitto di interesse. I Commissari dispongono, senza dubbio, di una qualità e quantità di risorse di altissimo livello, che attribuiscono loro un potenziale vantaggio concorrenziale che è sotto gli occhi di tutti.

Inoltre, durante la campagna elettorale potrebbero facilmente avverarsi situazioni in grado di minare proprio quell'indipendenza che, secondo i trattati, caratterizza la figura del Commissario. Negare il problema non lo risolve certo. A nostro avviso, l'unico modo per ovviare ai problemi esposti è proprio che i membri della Commissione siano chiamati a dimettersi una volta che abbiano deciso di partecipare alla competizione elettorale. Riteniamo quindi convintamente che il Parlamento debba respingere la richiesta di modifica dell'accordo interistituzionale.

Sulla questione dello *Spitzenkandidat* riteniamo che un modellamento chiaro di tale figura possa effettivamente favorire una maggiore vicinanza dei cittadini europei alle istituzioni, ma ciò non è possibile se la nuova procedura di individuazione rimane appannaggio esclusivo dei partiti politici europei. Verrebbero infatti in questo modo tagliati fuori dalla competizione tutti quei movimenti che rappresentano la società civile e che non vogliono costituirsi e non si richiamano alla forma di partito. I partiti fanno parte della democrazia, ma la democrazia è molto di più dei soli partiti. Questo è il messaggio che vogliamo ascoltare i nostri cittadini.

Gilles Lebreton, *au nom du groupe ENF*. – Madame la Présidente, le projet d'accord-cadre qui nous est soumis aujourd'hui est une infamie. En l'acceptant, le Parlement européen accentuerait le caractère fédéral de l'Union en renforçant la Commission au détriment du Conseil européen.

D'abord, il veut permettre aux commissaires de participer à la campagne électorale de 2019 tout en continuant à exercer leurs fonctions. Cela faussera la concurrence électorale car, de par leurs fonctions, ils seront en mesure de prendre des décisions pour influencer les électeurs. D'autre part, le projet contraint les partis politiques européens à présenter chacun un *Spitzenkandidat*, c'est-à-dire un candidat à la présidence de la Commission. Le mot utilisé trahit l'origine, allemande bien sûr, de cette idée fumeuse.

Officiellement, il s'agit de donner un vernis démocratique à la Commission, comme si ce tour de passe-passe suffisait à transformer le fer en or. En réalité, la Commission ne sera jamais l'équivalent du gouvernement d'un État démocratique, car pour qu'il y ait démocratie, il faut une nation. Or, il n'existe pas une nation européenne, mais des nations européennes. Seuls les États européens reposent sur une authentique base démocratique. L'Union européenne repose, quant à elle, sur une imposture.

Plutôt que de persister ainsi dans l'erreur, mieux vaudrait repenser la construction européenne. C'est une Europe respectueuse des nations dont les peuples ont besoin, non d'un monstre supranational dominé par des oligarques et par des lobbies.

Λάμπρος Φουντούλης (NI). – Κυρία Πρόεδρε, αναρωτιέμαι τι ακριβώς προσπαθούν να επιτύχουν τόσο η Επιτροπή όσο και το Ευρωκοινοβούλιο με την πρόταση αυτή, διότι δεν βλέπω κανένα πραγματικό νόημα, καμία ουσία. Μόνο δύο πράγματα έχω να επισημάνω και νομίζω πως ενδιαφέρουν ιδιαίτερα τους ευρωπαίους πολίτες. Αρχικά, ότι η εκλογή του προέδρου της Επιτροπής μόνο κατ' όνομα είναι δημοκρατική, ενώ στην πράξη είναι απλώς έγκριση του διορισμού του. Ακόμη χειρότερα είναι τα πράγματα όσον αφορά τους υπόλοιπους Επιτρόπους, μιας και αυτοί δεν χρειάζεται καν να είναι έστω υποψήφιοι ή να έχουν οποιαδήποτε άλλη σχέση με δημοκρατικές διαδικασίες, τις οποίες βέβαια προασπίζει με πάθος η Ένωση. Ας μην κοροϊδεύουμε λοιπόν τους Ευρωπαίους· κάποιοι διορισμένοι θα συνεχίσουν να επηρεάζουν σε μεγάλο βαθμό τις ζωές τους.

Τέλος, ένα επιπλέον σημείο, ενδεικτικό της λογικής που επικρατεί στους θεσμούς της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης, είναι το γεγονός ότι σπεύδεται να καταργήσετε την υποχρεωτική άδεια άνευ αποδοχών για όποιον Επίτροπο θέλει, παραδώσει, να τεθεί έστω μία φορά στην κρίση των πολιτών και να είναι υποψήφιος στις ευρωπαϊκές εκλογές. Διασφαλίσετε έτσι ότι θα συνεχίσει να απολαμβάνει τον μισθό του και ταυτόχρονα αδιαφορείτε για την καταφανή σύγκρουση συμφερόντων, μιας και θα συνεχίσει να ασκεί τα εκτελεστικά του καθήκοντα εν μέσω προεκλογικής περιόδου. Συγχαρητήρια!

Danuta Maria Hübner (PPE). – Madam President, let me start by emphasising that no way back can be accepted by this Parliament with regard to the democratisation of the procedure for electing the President of the Commission. This crystal clear message was delivered by the Committee on Constitutional Affairs when adopting, by a large majority, the report endorsing the revision of the Framework Agreement on relations between the European Parliament and the European Commission, two weeks ago.

The *Spitzenkandidaten* process is, for us, a matter of democracy and transparency. It is a matter of connecting Europe and its citizens, of building a bottom-up Europe. The European Parliament wants European citizens to have a say on the choice of the Commission President and this decision can no longer be made behind closed doors.

The *Spitzenkandidaten* process, launched in 2014, reinforces the political accountability of the Commission and gives a stronger role to the European political parties. The political tradition of these parties has always been to stand for a European approach in dealing with the challenges the European Union is facing. We have been through this process once already. The practice is already there, but we need a shared commitment on the part of the European institutions.

Enrique Guerrero Salom (S&D). – Señora presidenta, hemos estado debatiendo cómo se expresan mejor el consentimiento de los ciudadanos, sus intereses y sus preferencias a través de la elección de sus representantes y ahora debatimos cómo se refuerza el vínculo democrático, cómo se intensifica la relación política entre las instituciones, respetando la confianza inicial que este Parlamento tiene que dar al presidente de la Comisión y la continua rendición de cuentas ante el órgano elegido por los ciudadanos.

El tono del informe, el debate de ayer con el presidente Juncker, la propia expresión del ponente nos alertan de que hay señales de alarma. Señales de alarma de una vuelta atrás en relación con el *Spitzenkandidat* y otros elementos democráticos. Y yo me pregunto: si estamos apostando por una Unión Europea más global en su política exterior, más ambiciosa en la unión económica y monetaria, con más compromiso en la defensa y en la seguridad, ¿aceptaremos un paso atrás en la dimensión democrática y parlamentaria? Este Parlamento debe estar preparado para rechazar interferencias del Consejo.

Helmut Scholz (GUE/NGL). – Frau Präsidentin, Herr Vizepräsident! Der Bericht des Kollegen Pons konzentriert sich vor allem auf die Haltung des Parlaments zum Spitzenkandidaten-Verfahren; und zwar vor dem politischen Hintergrund, dass im Rat jegliche Rechtsgrundlage für einen solchen verhindert werden soll. Der gerade diskutierte Bericht zur zukünftigen Zusammensetzung des Parlaments beeinflusst ja dieses Verfahren, weil er das Thema der transnationalen Listen und damit in der Konsequenz auch das Amt des Spitzenkandidaten thematisiert. Zur Haltung des Rates werden wir hoffentlich heute Nachmittag etwas erfahren, und ja, die Abstimmung hier im Haus zur Zusammensetzung des EP ist auch noch nicht erfolgt.

Damit stellt sich für mich eine weitere Frage, und zwar das Problem der Teilnahme von Kommissaren am Wahlkampf. In dem Land, aus dem ich komme, ist der politische Wettbewerb im Rahmen von Wahlen verfassungsrechtlich unvereinbar mit einer gegebenenfalls parteiergreifenden Einwirkung von Staatsorganen oder deren Funktionsträgern? Wähler sollen sich ihre Meinung frei bilden können, und dies führt bei uns zu einem Neutralitätsgebot.

Nun ist die EU kein Staatswesen, wir haben auch keine Verfassung. Aber das Neutralitätsgebot sollte analog gelten. Dies wirft die Frage auf: Wann agiert ein Kommissar gerade mit der Autorität des Amtes und nimmt damit verbundene Ressourcen in Anspruch, und wann ist er nur parteipolitisch unterwegs? Konflikt- und auslegungsfrei und öffentlich nachvollziehbar kann dies nur auf dem Weg einer unbezahlten Freistellung von Kommissaren von ihren Aufgaben erfolgen.

(Der Redner ist damit einverstanden, eine Frage nach dem Verfahren der „blauen Karte“ gemäß Artikel 162 Absatz 8 der Geschäftsordnung zu beantworten.)

Paul Rübzig (PPE), *Frage nach dem Verfahren der „blauen Karte“*. – Frau Präsidentin! Meine Frage: Wie sehen Sie eigentlich, dass die Fraktionen und die europäischen Parteien die Chance geben, verschiedene Kandidaten zu nominieren, und dass sie dann auch dementsprechend gewählt werden? Wird es in Ihrer Fraktion auch so sein, dass Sie Spitzenkandidaten zur Verfügung stellen für eine dementsprechende transparente Auswahl der besten Kandidaten?

Helmut Scholz (GUE/NGL), *Antwort auf eine Frage nach dem Verfahren der „blauen Karte“*. – Herr Kollege Rübzig! Wie Sie wissen, haben wir verschiedene linke Strukturen und Parteien in unserer Fraktion, darunter auch Abgeordnete der Europäischen Linkspartei. Wir haben in der laufenden Legislaturperiode einen Spitzenkandidaten gehabt, das ist der heutige Ministerpräsident Tsipras. Insofern werden wir auch in der nächsten Europawahl einen solchen Kandidaten aufstellen, vielleicht mehrere.

Florent Marcellesi (Verts/ALE). – Señora presidenta, hoy puede marcar un antes y un después para Europa. Con el cabeza de lista paneuropeo y las listas transnacionales podemos derrumbar un poco más las fronteras democráticas. Porque estas dos propuestas son complementarias. Y son una forma potente, primero, de trasladar al espacio electoral lo que ya hace la ciudadanía europea: europeizar el debate.

Señor Pons, sean cuales sean nuestras posiciones sobre el glifosato o el CETA, estos debates y las movilizaciones ya no son solo nacionales, sino también europeos. Por eso, se trata de dar mayor legitimidad política al cabeza de lista paneuropeo, gracias a una lista, a una campaña transnacionales ante toda la ciudadanía europea. Y esto puede permitir también, a su vez, consolidar el sentimiento de pertenencia europea para una mayor solidaridad paneuropea.

Colegas, tras el *brexit* es el momento de dar este salto cualitativo. Es el momento de profundizar la democracia europea y europeizar la democracia.

Paulo Rangel (PPE). – Madam President, first I would like to underline the fact that the so-called *Spitzenkandidaten* procedure has nothing to do with transnational lists. Back in 2014 we had this procedure of *Spitzenkandidaten* and it was embraced at European level without any joint European constituency. So, one thing is totally different from the other.

Then, let me tell you something that is very important. We fully support this idea of the *Spitzenkandidaten* procedure but if the Council says ‘no we are not going to change our view’, we are not dependent on any regulation of the Council, because this is our interpretation of the Treaties. The Treaty says that the outcome of the elections should be considered and that a vote in Parliament is required. This is sufficient to give a constitutional basis to the *Spitzenkandidaten* process. So we prefer a clear and transparent Council regulation, but if we don’t have that we will have the same position, because this is our interpretation, our reading of the constitutional solution in accordance with the Treaties.

Nuno Melo (PPE). – Senhora Presidente, eu quero ser claro: as listas transnacionais são um mecanismo pouco democrático. Significam não aprender nada com os erros. Equivalem a dar como receita para resolver problemas mais daquilo que provocou esses problemas.

Sem mandato dos parlamentos nacionais, querem aprovar no Parlamento Europeu uma proposta que alterará radicalmente a forma da eleição dos representantes dos respetivos países.

Fique também claro: Portugal é um país, não é uma região europeia a mando do Sr. Verhofstadt. Considera-se normal ou aceitável que candidatos de países pequenos e médios sejam escolhidos por dirigentes dos grandes países que controlam os partidos europeus e que, como é óbvio, beneficiarão a começar os seus próprios interesses. Permite-se que um partido europeu que integre mais do que um partido do mesmo país possa excluir alguns partidos das listas em favorcimento dos outros que tenham mais influência na direção desses partidos. Não lhes importa sequer facilitarem que os candidatos radicais de alguns países possam espalhar a sua mensagem a todos os outros países onde também ganharão votos e influência.

Eu devo dizer que esses radicais ainda não chegaram a Portugal e eu não gostava de lá os ver a serem votados.

Finalmente, não ponderam sequer, como já foi abundantemente dito, que para o parlamento nacional dos estados federais se vota em listas estaduais e não em listas nacionais.

Termino, Senhora Presidente. As listas transnacionais são um disparate. Pior do que isso, são um disparate perigoso.

Catch-the-eye procedure

Jérôme Lavrilleux (PPE). – Madame la Présidente, sur le principe des têtes de liste, oui, c'est une avancée démocratique de faire en sorte que les candidats à la présidence de la Commission ne soient pas désignés à huis clos par les chefs d'État ou de gouvernement, mais par les partis politiques.

Je pense que c'est une avancée dans le bon sens et qu'il faut franchir un pas supplémentaire pour que les têtes de liste soient désignées par l'ensemble des peuples européens. C'est pour cela qu'il est cohérent selon moi de procéder à l'élection de listes transnationales qui iront dans ce sens. C'est un premier pas vers la démocratie, cher Monsieur González Pons.

Allons plus loin et, dans un prochain mandat, faisons en sorte que ce soient les peuples, et non pas simplement les partis politiques dans leur coin, qui puissent désigner, par le biais des listes transnationales, la personne qui sera chargée de diriger la Commission européenne.

Maria Grapini (S&D). – Doamnă președintă, de la bun început vreau să spun că susțin raportul. Mie mi se pare că am face o muncă de mers înapoi dacă, după ce am avut alegeri în 2014 cu un cap de listă, acum venim să zăpăcim cetățenii europeni, să venim cu altă metodă. Eu cred că trebuie să consolidăm această metodă, pe de o parte, iar, pe de altă parte, trebuie să venim cu mesaje foarte clare către cetățenii noștri. Care este raportul între cele trei instituții: Comisie, Parlament, Consiliu?

Din punctul meu de vedere, cred că Consiliul este un blocator, deși nu sunt membri aleși. Pentru că sunt guvernele acolo în Consiliu și, de foarte multe ori, noi, Parlamentul, care suntem instituția cea mai reprezentativă, avem probleme în Consiliu cu ceea ce noi decidem aici și cred că aici mai trebuie lucrat.

Mă bucur că se reamintește Comisiei că are acea perioadă de trei ani de incompatibilitate după ce nu mai sunt membri ai Comisiei. Sigur că rămâne dilema: ce va face comisarul care este încă în funcțiune și va candida?

Pe de altă parte, nu putem să-l lăsăm să-și dea demisia și să avem o perioadă goală, de șase luni, până când Comisia nouă va fi investită.

Așadar, eu voi vota acest raport și voi susține raportul în plen.

Nότης Μαρίας (ECR). – Κυρία Πρόεδρε, υπάρχει αρκετή διγλωσσία και ωραιοποίηση της διαδικασίας ορισμού του κορυφαίου υποψηφίου. Διότι, πρακτικά, τι θα γίνει; Πώς θα ορίζεται αυτός ο κορυφαίος υποψήφιος; Από τα ευρωπαϊκά πολιτικά κόμματα, όπως είναι το Ευρωπαϊκό Λαϊκό Κόμμα ή το Ευρωπαϊκό Σοσιαλιστικό Κόμμα. Είστε όμως κόμμα; Έχετε μέλη; Δεν έχετε μέλη τους πολίτες. Έχετε μέλη τα εθνικά κόμματα. Επομένως, είστε μια γραφειοκρατία, δεν είστε πραγματικό κόμμα. Αν θέλετε να είστε πραγματικό κόμμα, να είστε κόμμα μελών. Και αφού θα είστε κόμμα μελών, τα μέλη σας με δημοκρατικό τρόπο, ψηφίζοντας σε δημοψήφισμα, να επιλέγουν αυτόν τον κορυφαίο υποψήφιο. Επομένως, τι θα γίνει; Η γραφειοκρατία η δική σας και τα «party bosses» θα ορίζουν τον υποψήφιο. Άρα, θα ελέγχετε ποιος θα είναι αυτός υποψήφιος. Δεν είναι, λοιπόν, δημοκρατία αυτή. Δημιουργήστε πρώτα δημοκρατικά κόμματα, για να έχετε στη συνέχεια την απαίτηση να ορίζετε τους επικεφαλής υποψηφίους.

Izaskun Bilbao Barandica (ALDE). – Señora presidenta, quiero felicitar al señor González Pons por el trabajo realizado para gestionar este complejo informe que necesitamos y apoyamos todos los que de verdad creemos en la idea de Europa.

La experiencia de las pasadas elecciones europeas propició que los candidatos a presidente de la Comisión protagonizaran por primera vez debates electorales centrados en cuestiones comunitarias, y elegimos entre ellos. Hay que seguir así. Porque necesitamos que la ciudadanía europea conozca las propuestas, las características, las trayectorias, las virtudes y los defectos de las y los candidatos que aspiran a presidir la Comisión Europea. Que sienta, sepa y compruebe qué elige. Ojalá todos los *Spitzenkandidaten* sean, además, cabezas de una lista transnacional.

Tras los comicios, vamos a elegir aquí al jefe de la Comisión Europea como en cualquier parlamento que controla a un gobierno, garantizando que tiene los apoyos suficientes para poder gobernar. Volver a la dinámica del cuarto oscuro remite este proyecto de Unión a la imagen de zoco clandestino de intereses nacionales que ni necesita ni merece ni nos podemos permitir. No lo perdonaría la ciudadanía.

Ελευθέριος Συναδινός (ΝΙ). – Κυρία Πρόεδρε, η διαδικασία των κορυφαίων υποψηφίων που τα ευρωπαϊκά «πολιτικά κόμματα» θα προτείνουν για την επάνδρωση της Επιτροπής δεν ενισχύει την κοινοβουλευτική διάσταση της Ένωσης. Επιδιώκεται μια πολιτική νομιμοποίηση των θεσμών, μέσω της επαρκούς κοινοβουλευτικής πλειοψηφίας. Καταργείται, όμως, στην πράξη η αρχή της αναλογικότητας. Δείγματα αυτής της κοινοβουλευτικής απολυταρχίας έχουν βιώσει πολιτικές ομάδες, όπως το EFDD, το ENF και οι μη εγγεγραμμένοι βουλευτές, με τον αποκλεισμό τους από σειρά κοινοβουλευτικών διαδικασιών. Δυστυχώς για τη λεγόμενη «δημοκρατία», στην εν λόγω έκθεση υπάρχει μια ασάφεια προθέσεων που ουσιαστικά ακυρώνει κάθε προσπάθεια ανοιχτών και διαφανών διαδικασιών. Σε όλα αυτά θα αντιπρότεινα την απευθείας επιλογή υποψηφίων Επιτρόπων από τους πολίτες των κρατών μελών και την τελική εκλογή τους από τα μέλη του Ευρωπαϊκού Κοινοβουλίου.

(End of catch-the-eye procedure)

Frans Timmermans, First Vice-President of the Commission. – Madam President, I just want to thank the Members for their contributions to this debate. We are very much looking forward to the vote on this and we hope that we can amend the Framework Agreement in such a way that Commissioners could be allowed to stand in European elections without having to take leave. I have also listened carefully to the discussion on the process of lead candidates (*Spitzenkandidaten*) and, as I said earlier, we will take this into careful consideration when completing our contribution on this and other interinstitutional-related issues, and also in preparing for the leaders' meeting later this month.

Esteban González Pons, ponente. – Señora presidenta, quiero simplemente agradecer a todos mis colegas el apoyo que le han dado al informe, porque han sido capaces de entender que este es un informe transversal que no afecta a un grupo político, sino a todo un Parlamento.

En unas elecciones normales los votantes tienen candidatos, tienen programas y eligen a los gobiernos, y después en esos gobiernos los ministros pueden ser candidatos en unas elecciones. Eso hasta ahora no ocurría en Europa. A partir de ahora ocurrirá: habrá un candidato, habrá un programa, y los comisarios, que son como los ministros, podrán concurrir a las elecciones y los partidos tendrán algo que decir. Cuanto más se parezca la democracia europea a una democracia normal, más normalizaremos la Unión Europea y la haremos menos distante de los ciudadanos.

Solo quiero terminar, señora presidenta, con una advertencia. El próximo 23 de febrero el Consejo ha introducido entre los temas que va a debatir el *Spitzenkandidat*, el candidato principal. Es una práctica constitucional que creíamos que ya estaba asentada, lo que me lleva a preguntarme si es que el Consejo tiene previsto sugerir que en las próximas elecciones europeas no haya candidato principal a presidente de la Comisión. Si ese es el caso, para este Parlamento debería ser una ofensa, y una ofensa grave. Debería crear un conflicto institucional.

Yo, por eso —agradeciendo a todos los que desde distintas perspectivas han coincidido con el informe, de corazón—, quiero terminar con el mismo ruego con el que terminaba su discurso Manfred Weber. Decía mi presidente Weber que el Partido Popular no aceptará ningún candidato a presidente de la Comisión que no haya sido votado por los electores. Me gustaría que fuéramos capaces de hacer de ese compromiso del PP hoy un compromiso de toda la Cámara. Que este Parlamento no acepte ningún candidato a presidente de la Comisión que no haya dado la cara ante los que le tienen que votar, ante todos los europeos.

President. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place shortly.

Colleagues, the sitting is now suspended briefly, but I would remind you that today, before the votes, we will listen to an address by a representative of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), Nobel Peace Prize winners of last year.

(from 11.47 to 12.18, Members gathered for the address by a representative of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), 2017 Nobel Peace Prize winner)

PRESIDENZA DELL'ON. ANTONIO TAJANI

Presidente

6. Wznowienie posiedzenia

(La seduta è ripresa alle 12.18)

7. Głosowanie

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

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

7.1. Wcześniejsze odwołanie ze stanowiska wiceprzewodniczącego Parlamentu Europejskiego (Ryszarda Czarneckiego) (głosowanie)

Presidente. – Il primo punto delle votazioni è la cessazione anticipata della carica di un vicepresidente del Parlamento europeo.

Vi prego di fare attenzione. Voteremo ora sulla proposta della Conferenza dei presidenti relativa alla revoca della carica di un vicepresidente del Parlamento europeo, l'on. Ryszard Czarnecki.

Conformemente all'articolo 21 del regolamento, al fine di essere approvata, la proposta deve ottenere il voto favorevole della maggioranza di due terzi dei voti espressi, a favore e contrari, che rappresentino la maggioranza dei deputati che compongono il Parlamento, ossia 376.

Conformemente all'articolo 178, paragrafo 3, del regolamento, ai fini del raggiungimento della maggioranza dei due terzi necessaria, sono calcolati soltanto i voti espressi a favore e contro la proposta.

Vi prego di notare che il totale visualizzato nella parte superiore dello schermo includerà le astensioni, ma che i voti presi in considerazione saranno soltanto quelli contrassegnati dal segno «+» e dal segno «-».

Conformemente all'articolo 180 bis, paragrafo 2, del regolamento, i gruppi politici che hanno raggiunto la soglia alta hanno chiesto che il voto abbia luogo a scrutinio segreto.

Possiamo passare ora alla votazione.

Ryszard Antoni Legutko (ECR). – Mr President, I rise under Rule 184a to query the procedure for the vote we are about to take, which will disregard the rights of those Members who wish to abstain. In the Communication to Members last night, your services advised that abstentions will be discounted. I strongly protest. Rule 21 is not analogous to the election of Vice-Presidents. The vote of a Member who wishes to abstain is as valid as a vote cast by any other Member. It is the established practice of this Parliament that abstentions are taken into account.

Mr President, I insist that out of respect for parliamentary democracy you take due consideration of abstentions in determining whether or not the condition of two-thirds of votes cast has been satisfied. Mr Czarnecki was prevented from defending himself in the plenary, which is most irregular, and now we have this discounting of abstentions, which is also irregular, to say the least.

(Applause)

Presidente. – Per quanto riguarda l'interpretazione del regolamento, essendo la prima volta che si vota in base all'articolo 21, bisogna tener conto dell'interpretazione generale del voto in tutte le materie analoghe a questa.

Per le elezioni del Presidente, dei vicepresidenti e dei questori i voti di astensione non contano. Per quanto riguarda l'approvazione della rielezione di un qualsiasi testo, e quindi di qualsiasi proposta, entrano nel calcolo dei voti espressi, dice l'articolo 178, soltanto i voti a favore e contro, salvo nei casi per i quali i trattati prevedano una maggioranza specifica. Nessun trattato prevede nulla a proposito di questo e quindi intendo interpretare in maniera estensiva l'articolo 178 e tutte le altre regole che hanno sempre governato l'elezione delle persone. Quindi trattandosi di revoca di una elezione intendo interpretare il regolamento in questa direzione. Quindi confermo che i voti contati saranno solo quelli a favore e quelli contro.

Richard Corbett (S&D). – Mr President, I was the rapporteur that introduced this particular rule into the Rules of Procedure many years ago. It has never been used before and I can confirm that your interpretation is exactly what was intended.

(Applause)

Presidente. – Possiamo passare ora alla votazione a scrutinio segreto. Vi ripeto che serve una maggioranza di due terzi dei voti espressi. Verranno contati soltanto i voti a favore e i voti contrari.

(Il Parlamento approva la proposta di cessazione anticipata della carica)

7.2. Skład Parlamentu Europejskiego (A8-0007/2018 - Danuta Maria Hübner, Pedro Silva Pereira) (głosowanie)

— *Dopo la votazione sulla proposta di decisione:*

Mercedes Bresso (S&D). – Lei ha creato una grande confusione, non ha spiegato cosa stava accadendo e quindi la gente non sapeva cosa votava. Guardi che è così. Noi abbiamo delle liste di voto. Lei non ha spiegato cosa stavamo votando.

Presidente. – On. Bresso, se mi sta ad ascoltare le rispondo.

Brando Benifei (S&D). – Mr President, you did not explain that the Article 4(2) and Article 4(3) amendments would fall. You did not say that, so we thought we were voting on those, and not on Article 5.

Non lo ha detto, quindi non l'abbiamo capito.

Presidente. – Nelle liste di voto è indicato che, in caso di approvazione dell'emendamento, i paragrafi 2 e 3 decadono. In tutte le liste di voto è scritto così.

Io sono stato molto chiaro, ho parlato di votazioni di proposte di decisione seguite da votazione. Mi dispiace, on. Bresso, sono stato chiaro, parlo in italiano che è anche la sua lingua madre, credo che lei dovrebbe capirla meglio di altri.

James Carver (EFDD). – Mr President, you have obviously put the cat amongst the pigeons among colleagues. Perhaps a simple solution to this is that we actually take a vote on the proposal for a decision again.

Presidente. – E' stato già controllato, passiamo alla proposta di risoluzione.

On. Gualtieri, prego.

Roberto Gualtieri (S&D). – Mr President, Article 5 was put to the vote immediately after the adoption of the amendment on Article 4(1), but many of us were actually voting contrary to what was on our voting list because we were not aware that we were voting on Article 5. The screen was indicating something else. So we are simply asking you to repeat the vote on Article 5 and to continue on. A lot of colleagues and I have voted as if it was for the previous text.

Presidente. – Ma le votazioni sono state svolte. Non ho capito questo battere sui tavoli che cosa significa. Io sono stato molto chiaro per quanto riguarda l'emendamento. Prego, onorevole Reid.

Julia Reid (EFDD). – Mr President, the board said 'four'.

Presidente. – Un attimo, ho capito. Io non vedo lo schermo dietro e mi hanno detto che c'è stato un errore sullo schermo per quanto riguarda l'articolo 4 e l'articolo 5. Quindi rivotiamo dall'articolo 5. Votiamo l'articolo 5, il testo originale per appello nominale.

7.3. Przegląd porozumienia ramowego w sprawie stosunków między Parlamentem Europejskim i Komisją Europejską (A8-0006/2018 - Esteban González Pons) (głosowanie)

VORSITZ: EVELYNE GEBHARDT

Vizepräsidentin

7.4. Zautomatyzowana wymiana danych w Portugalii w odniesieniu do danych rejestracyjnych pojazdów (A8-0017/2018 - Ignazio Corrao) (głosowanie)

7.5. Ochrona i przeciwdziałanie dyskryminowaniu obywateli UE należących do mniejszości w państwach członkowskich UE (B8-0064/2018) (głosowanie)

7.6. Sprzeciw wobec aktu delegowanego: Dodanie Sri Lanki, Trynidadu i Tobago oraz Tunezji do wykazu krajów trzecich wysokiego ryzyka (B8-0074/2018) (głosowanie)

— *Vor der Abstimmung:*

Věra Jourová, Member of the Commission. – Madam President, we all share the responsibility in the fight against money laundering and terrorism financing. This Parliament has fought particularly hard with each upgrade of the Anti-Money Laundering Directive consistently to improve our legal framework in this respect.

The delegated act you will vote on now concerns Tunisia, a recognised, close and privileged partner of the European Union. I want to stress that this act will not undermine any political or financial commitments by the EU in respect of Tunisia. We recognise the progress Tunisians have made in recent weeks and the Commission will be very supportive of Tunisia to help to deliver the action plan agreed between Tunisia and the Financial Action Task Force in December.

We are in close and intense contact with our Tunisian friends in this regard. The Commission stands ready to provide support so that Tunisia removes the remaining deficiencies swiftly. Once we see the work done, we will initiate the delisting process, with the aim of Tunisia being delisted by the Financial Action Task Force and subsequently by the EU. I am convinced that, at the end of this process, Tunisia will serve as a benchmark for other countries and I praise its efforts and engagement.

Lastly, let me confirm that the Commission is working intensively on a systemic solution, so that the EU has its own autonomous analysis and list of high-risk third countries in order better to protect the EU and its citizens.

Marie-Christine Vergiat (GUE/NGL). – Madame la Présidente, je suis l’auteure de l’objection et M^{me} la Commissaire vient de prendre la parole.

Je voudrais juste dire à nos collègues que M^{me} la Commissaire n’a rien ajouté par rapport à ce que nous a dit la Commission en réunion commune LIBE-ECON et en plénière lundi soir.

Je voudrais ajouter que la question n’est pas les sanctions...

(La Présidente coupe le micro de l’oratrice)

C’est une pression inadmissible de la Commission sur le vote!

(La Présidente retire la parole à l’oratrice)

Die Präsidentin. – Wir können die Debatte, die schon stattgefunden hat, nicht wiederholen. Deswegen möchte ich jetzt abstimmen lassen und erinnere daran, dass für eine Zustimmung eine Mehrheit der Mitglieder des Parlaments erforderlich ist. Ich lasse jetzt abstimmen.

(Bei der elektronischen Abstimmung stimmen 357 Mitglieder für den Vorschlag, der somit nicht angenommen ist.)

7.7. Zero tolerancji dla okaleczania narządów płciowych kobiet (B8-0068/2018) (głosowanie)

Die Präsidentin. – Damit ist die Abstimmungsstunde geschlossen.

8. Wyjaśnienia dotyczące sposobu głosowania

8.1. Skład Parlamentu Europejskiego (A8-0007/2018 - Danuta Maria Hübner, Pedro Silva Pereira)

Mündliche Erklärungen zur Abstimmung

Jasenko Selimovic (ALDE). – Madam President, the question of what to do with 73 seats in this Chamber after the UK has left has been discussed and I have argued in my Member State that these seats should be re-allocated to the Member States, especially those who have been disadvantaged in the last composition. Some of the seats should be saved for the next EU enlargement, especially to the Western Balkans. But I want as well to express my support for the idea of joint constituencies as of the European elections in 2019. It is a way to enhance the direct link between citizens and EU policymakers.

I strongly believe that EU citizens should be able to vote for candidates that express ideas and visions for the whole European Union. It will allow the first candidate on each list to be considered for the European Commission, thus acknowledging the irreversibility of the *Spitzenkandidaten* process.

Момчил Неков (S&D). – Г-жо Председател, гласувах против предложението за мандат за състава на Европейския парламент за следващия мандат, защото смятам, че текстът в сегашния си вид е повод за притеснения поради много от неясните аспекти около нововъведенията в него. Смятам за дискриминативно и предложеното разпределение на местата в новия Парламент, въпреки че броят на населението в дадени държави членки като Нидерландия, Франция и Испания расте, но това в голяма степен е благодарение на нетната миграция от страни като моята България.

Не трябва да се пренебрегва и фактът, че броят на имащите право на глас от всяка държава членка всъщност е сравнително постоянен и ако има изменения в броя на членовете на Европейския парламент, то трябва да има пропорционално увеличение за всички, включително и за моята страна България.

Призовавам Европейската комисия и Съвета да вземат предвид тези фактори при обсъждане на предложението за бъдещия състав на Европейския парламент.

Jan Zahradil (ECR). – Paní předsedající, pokud jde o podobu Evropského parlamentu po odchodu Velké Británie, já se velmi divím tomu, že Evropský parlament ta místa prostě neškrtně. Nerozumím tomu, proč se tady přerozdělují mezi jiné členské země a nerozumím tomu, proč se jich dokonce přerozděluje jenom část, zatímco ta druhá část má zůstat v jakési rezervě. Nejrozumnější by bylo škrtnout je, snížit počet poslanců Evropského parlamentu. Nic by se nestalo. Ušetřily by se peníze.

Za druhé musím nicméně Evropský parlament dnes pochválit za to, že alespoň nepřistoupil na myšlenku transnacionálních, tedy celoevropských kandidátních listin ve volbách v roce 2019. Konečně snad někteří lidé tady pochopili, že žádný celoevropský lid nebo celoevropský národ neexistuje, že tedy nepotřebujeme panevropské kandidátní listiny a že europoslanci mají být vázáni ke svým národním státům a tyto státy mají reprezentovat.

Tomáš Zdechovský (PPE). – Paní předsedající, málokdy souhlasím se svým předřečníkem, ale myslím si, že v některých věcech měl prostě pravdu. Myslím si, že vytvoření nadnárodní kandidátky v době, kdy jsme vždycky zodpovědní ve svých vlastních státech a poslanec vlastně vychází ze země s určitými zkušenostmi, je prostě nesmysl a já naprosto souhlasím s tím, že to, jakým způsobem jsou dneska rozdělována a distribuována místa po poslancích z Velké Británie, je taky další nesmysl. Já jsem se do těch debat několikrát zařadil a myslím si, že to rozdělení prostě není spravedlivé a bude řada států a poslanců, kteří se budou cítit neoprávněně diskriminováni tímto rozhodnutím. Takže já jsem pro tuto zprávu nemohl hlasovat, i když jsem federalista a i když bych si přál, abychom v Evropě více spolupracovali.

Jonathan Arnott (EFDD). – Madam President, this report is absolutely none of my business. The whole basis of the report is that by the time any of this actually happens, the United Kingdom will not be in the European Union. I believe that it would be unethical for me to cast any affirmative vote on this subject because it would be just as wrong for me to tell the European Union what to do post-Brexit as it would be for the European Union to tell the UK what to do post-Brexit. For that reason the record will therefore show that I abstained on everything throughout this report.

Zoltán Balczó (NI). – Elnök Asszony! A brexitet követően 73 hely megürül az Európai Parlamentben, és ennek a legegyszerűbb célszerű megoldása az lett volna, hogyha ennyivel kevesebb képviselő lesz 2019 után. Ez jelentős anyagi megtakarítást is ad, és lehetővé teszi majd az esetleges, például nyugat-balkáni bővítést követően az új tagországok képviselőinek a megfelelő mandátumhoz jutását. Amit viszont pozitívnak tartok ebben a végső jelentésformában, hogy a módosító indítványok megszüntették azt a lehetőséget, hogy a felszabaduló mandátumokat egy közös, összeurópai listán használjuk föl. Vegyük tudomásul, hogy nem alakult ki az Európai Egyesült Államok, reméljük, hogy nem is fog, és egy ilyen, a szavazóktól nagyon távol levő megoldás, ez a transznacionális lista, ez teljesen elfogadhatatlan lett volna. Mindezekre tekintettel tartózkodtam a végszavazásnál.

Jiří Pospíšil (PPE). – Paní předsedající, já jsem se u této zprávy nakonec zdržel, připadalo mi jako čistější uvolnění případná místa po odchodu Velké Británie škrtnout. Takovéto částečné přerozdělení a částečné zablokování míst mně připadá, že je kompromis, který lze těžko občanům vysvětlovat.

Jinak se přiznám, že jsem rád, že neprošel nadnárodní volební obvod od roku 2019. Já jsem velký podporovatel myšlenky evropské integrace, Evropské unie, ale cítím, že je třeba posilovat vztah mezi evropskými politiky a mezi jejich voliči, mezi občany. Občan by zkrátka měl znát svého poslance, měl by vědět, na koho se obrátit, pokud polemizuje s určitou směrnicí nebo nařízením. Viděli jsme to u debaty o směrnici o střelných zbraních.

A ve chvíli, kdy to bude jedna nadnárodní volební listina, pak se ten vztah mezi evropským politikem a občanem spíše snižuje a je ohrožen. To znamená, ty nadnárodní obvody podle mě jdou reálně proti myšlence evropské integrace.

Csaba Sógor (PPE). – Madam President, most supporters of the transnational list argue that with its introduction, elections would be more European. Also, many hope that it would favour more integration as opposed to the system we have in place now. I would argue to the contrary. Being European is the sum of our national and subnational regional identities. Our European-ness is what unites us in our differences; imposing from the top a transnational list instead of making our citizens more European might, on the contrary, drive a wedge between electorates and the people supposed to represent them in the EU.

All politics are local, and there is a good reason why. People need to feel that their particular problems are well understood and conveyed. Also, there is no contradiction between favouring national lists and favouring more integration. Integration is stronger if it is rooted in the local, and if it is a natural, bottom-up construction.

Lastly, I strongly believe that most anti-EU populists feed from local dissatisfactions rather than discontent with the EU as such. This is why the best place to fight is there where it occurs, by those representatives who know their electorate best.

Νότης Μαριάς (ECR). – Κυρία Πρόεδρε, ψήφισα κατά της έκθεσης για τη νέα σύνθεση του Ευρωπαϊκού Κοινοβουλίου. Πρώτα απ' όλα διότι ο τρόπος με τον οποίον διανέμει ή κατανέμει τις έδρες είναι άδικος. Είναι βέβαιο ότι ευνοεί συγκεκριμένα κράτη. Αδικεί άλλα κράτη, όπως την Ελλάδα, η οποία προγενέστερα είχε 22 έδρες και στη συνέχεια οι έδρες της στην Ευρωβουλή μειώθηκαν στις 21. Θεωρώ ότι η Ελλάδα έπρεπε να έχει λάβει τουλάχιστον άλλη μία έδρα. Δεύτερον, ο τρόπος κατανομής δεν λαμβάνει υπόψη τους πληθυσμούς συγκεκριμένων κρατών που έχουν αναγκαστεί να μεταναστεύσουν, όπως τους χιλιάδες Έλληνες που έχουν μεταναστεύσει λόγω των μνημονίων και της κρίσης. Θα έπρεπε, κατά την άποψή μας, να ληφθούν υπόψη και οι Έλληνες πολίτες οι οποίοι κατοικούν εκτός Ελλάδας και είναι, ωστόσο, εγγεγραμμένοι στους εκλογικούς καταλόγους. Έτσι έπρεπε να έχει διαμορφωθεί, εν προκειμένω, ο τρόπος κατανομής των εδρών. Σε σχέση με το διεθνικό ψηφοδέλτιο τοποθετήθηκα αναλυτικά στην ομιλία μου, εδώ στο Ευρωπαϊκό Κοινοβούλιο, πριν λίγο.

Stanislav Polčák (PPE). – Paní předsedající, v tomto usnesení jde skutečně o to, jak budou distribuována křesla, která zabírají kolegové z Velké Británie, po brexitu.

Já jsem zvažoval, jak se v dané věci postavit a do jisté míry akceptuji to, že došlo v minulosti k určitým újmám na straně některých členských států, takže byt by asi bylo jednoduché škrtnout ta poslanecká křesla, tak já jsem se přiklonil k tomu, že je dobré nechat zde zaprvé rezervu pro nově přistoupivší členské státy, které, jak pevně doufám, budou přistupovat do Evropské unie. A zadruhé řešit tyto újmy z minulosti.

Nakonec jsem tedy hlasoval pro tuto zprávu i z toho důvodu, že byla pro rok 2019 zatím odmítnuta ta jednotná celoevropská kandidátka. Podle mého názoru ten systém by byl v tuto chvíli velmi složitý. Vyžaduje ještě větší znalosti a obeznámení voličů a myslím si, že je důležité nejprve o této možnosti velmi důkladně informovat voliče a vést debatu s nimi. Takže toto jsem velmi přivítal, že bylo odmítnuto. Proto jsem tu zprávu podpořil.

Janusz Korwin-Mikke (NI). – Ja głosowałem przeciwko. Po pierwsze dlatego, że uważam, iż należało po prostu zmniejszyć Parlament o tych 73 posłów. Ale po drugie chciałem przypomnieć ludziom, że w dawnych krajach komunistycznych istniały Fronty Jedności Narodu. Nie głosowało się na partię, tylko na Front Jedności Narodu, w którym połączone były partie reżimowe, i dokładnie to chce zrobić Parlament, idąc w ślady komunistów. Cień Altiero Spinelliego jest widoczny codziennie w Brukseli i nie dziwię się, że pani Danuta Hübner – dziecko komunistyczne w końcu – chciała taką metodę wprowadzić w Parlamencie Europejskim. A poza tym sądzę, że Unia Europejska musi być zniszczona.

Die Präsidentin. – Na ja. Wir haben die freie Rede, da darf jeder sich äußern.

Daniel Hannan (ECR). – Madam President, in 1946 Winston Churchill made a speech at the University of Zurich, one bit of which is always quoted in this House. The section where he says that he wants something – ‘a kind of United States of Europe’ is how he puts it. Very few people quote what he goes on to say, which is that he hopes that Britain and America, and maybe one day even the Soviet Union, will look on as friends and sponsors. I suspect he would rather approve of the proposal we have just voted on. The change, which means that Britain is leaving, but that there is a more federal view of how European democracy happens after that. The two things indeed being linked, because the withdrawal of the British veto facilitates a number of these federalist measures.

A year ago, this would have really bothered me. I would have railed against the idea and I would have talked about the national Parliament being the focus of people’s loyalty. Now, I wish our friends and neighbours every possible success. More than 70 years on, we are belatedly realising that great vision of a united Europe with Britain as a friend and sponsor.

8.2. Przegląd porozumienia ramowego w sprawie stosunków między Parlamentem Europejskim i Komisją Europejską (A8-0006/2018 - Esteban González Pons)

Mündliche Erklärungen zur Abstimmung

Jonathan Arnott (EFDD). – Madam President, for precisely the same reasons as on the previous report, I believe it would be wrong for me to cast any affirmative vote on this issue. I abstained on this throughout because this is none of my business as it will affect only the EU 27 and only post-Brexit. I believe it is, of course, perfectly reasonable to hold an opinion on it, just not for my opinion to be foisted upon others.

So, in that spirit of an opinion, I just have one brief word of caution regarding *Spitzenkandidaten*. That is that this never worked well in the UK, not least because it could not be an issue because the UK has no meaningful voice from the largest political group in this place. There is a danger, therefore, that it ends up marginalising certain Member States and I would urge Parliament to consider carefully in future whether the current direction could end up having unintended consequences. Again, I say this in that same spirit of cooperation and friendliness.

Νότης Μαρτιάς (ECR). – Κυρία Πρόεδρε, ψήφισα κατά της έκθεσης και, σε συνέχεια των όσων είπα κατά τη διάρκεια της συζήτησης, θέλω να επισημάνω ορισμένα ζητήματα για τον επικεφαλής υποψήφιο, που πολλοί παρουσίασαν ως μεγάλη δημοκρατική κατάκτηση. Ποιος είναι αυτός που θα ορίζει τον επικεφαλής υποψήφιο; Τα κόμματα σε ευρωπαϊκό επίπεδο, όπως είναι το Ευρωπαϊκό Λαϊκό Κόμμα ή το Σοσιαλιστικό Κόμμα. Και ρωτάω: είναι κόμματα αυτά ή σύνολο γραφειοκρατίας; Διότι τα μέλη τους δεν είναι οι ίδιοι οι πολίτες της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης· τα μέλη τους είναι άλλα κόμματα. Πρόκειται για κόμματα κομμάτων. Στην ουσία τα διοικεί η κομματική γραφειοκρατία και, κυρίως, τον σημαντικότερο λόγο τον έχουν οι αρχηγοί κρατών και κυβερνήσεων, διότι οι ίδιοι συμμετέχουν στα κορυφαία όργανα των ευρωπαϊκών αυτών πολιτικών κομμάτων. Άρα, οι αρχηγοί και η κομματική γραφειοκρατία θα επιλέγουν τον επικεφαλής υποψήφιο. Είναι αυτό δημοκρατία; Θα ήταν δημοκρατία εάν τα κόμματα αυτά είχαν μέλη τους ίδιους τους πολίτες.

Stanislav Polčák (PPE). – Paní předsedající, já jsem tuto zprávu podpořil, pokládám ten směr větší informovanosti o evropských volbách u voličů za správný a do tohoto směru samozřejmě patří i zvýraznění toho tématu díky špičkovým kandidátům. Je nepochybně důležité, aby voliči viděli, kdo kandiduje, aby mohli podpořit, aby mohla být samozřejmě velmi ostrá, ale férová volební soutěž. Tomu rozumím a v tomto smyslu i rád podporuji.

Na druhou stranu bych byl trochu opatrný, aby se zcela oslabovalo právo Evropské rady navrhnout toho kandidáta. Já si myslím, že to nemusí být naprosto dané, že vítěz evropských voleb z pohledu těch špičkových kandidátů musí být automaticky nominován Evropskou radou. Proto bych byl proto, abychom tu opatrnost jaks zachovávali. A ten důvod druhý je rovněž jasný. Může docházet k marginalizaci některých členských států. Je proto důležité, aby všichni naši svoje uplatnění a své slovo právě v rámci rozhodování Evropské rady.

Jasenko Selimovic (ALDE). – Madam President, the problem with the democratic deficit in Europe is a simple one. I vote in the European elections and, before 2014, the party I was voting for, even if it held the majority here, was not assured that it would get the position of European Commission President. The position was attributed through backroom deals among the EU leaders, in secrecy, and in this regard for European democracy the link between my vote and the outcome of the election was blurred.

I am a strong supporter of the *Spitzenkandidaten* process because it diminished the democratic deficit. It gives citizens the right to directly influence how the Commission will lead. I voted for this report since it repeats the simple truth that the *Spitzenkandidat* is necessary for our European democracy.

8.3. Zero tolerancji dla okaleczania narządów płciowych kobiet (B8-0068/2018)

Mündliche Erklärungen zur Abstimmung

Urszula Krupa (ECR). – Pani Przewodnicząca! Mimo niektórych kontrowersyjnych zapisów głosowałam za rezolucją, gdyż skala niszczącego procederu rytualnego okaleczania kobiet, pochodzących głównie – ale nie tylko – z krajów afrykańskich, jest zbyt wielka i wymaga zapobiegania wszystkimi możliwymi sposobami. W krajach Unii tego rodzaju praktyki są zwykle penalizowane. Podobnie w Polsce – zgodnie z prawem spowodowanie ciężkiego uszczerbku na zdrowiu jest przestępstwem, a tym jest proceder FGM. Proceder ten ma także charakter umyślny, dlatego ma znamiona wskazane w prawie czynów zabronionych i przestępczych. Wykonuje się go ponadto w niesterylnych warunkach, bez znieczulenia, powodując, poza bólem i cierpieniem kobiet, liczne powikłania, głównie zakażenia bakteryjne, zakażenia dróg moczowych, objawy dyzuryczne, komplikacje i zakażenia okołoporodowe, zagrażając nie tylko zdrowiu, ale nawet życiu dzieci i kobiet.

Andrejs Mamikins (S&D). – Madam President, I sincerely welcome the resolution drafted by our colleague Vilija Blinkevičiūtė. According to estimations, every year 180 000 girls and women are at risk of female genital mutilation (FGM) in the EU. I underline, colleagues: in the EU. Unfortunately, from the legal point of view, FGM still remains in a grey zone. The crime is under-reported, under-investigated and under-prosecuted in Europe.

FGM is a serious human rights violation. We are used to reporting and condemning similar human rights abuses in foreign countries, but now we are faced with it in our home in Europe, and our national legislation must accept this challenge and finally adopt efficient legal ways of combating this crime. Parliament has already adopted several resolutions and I sincerely hope that this new report will make a change and bring new impetus to combating all forms of this violence. For this reason, I voted in favour of the motion.

Stanislav Polčák (PPE). – Paní předsedající, já jsem tento návrh usnesení podpořil, protože pokládám tuto praxi za skutečně nepřijatelnou, naprosto nedůstojnou postavení žen v naší společnosti. Proto by měla být maximálně odsouzena, samozřejmě že se jedná o zásah do lidských práv, o tom není žádných pochyb. Žádný souhlas není dáván jaksi plně svobodně a plně informovaně. Pokud některá z žen podstoupí takovýto zákrok ryze opravdu dobrovolně a svobodně, tak je to asi její věc, ale ty nesvobodné souhlasy, to je, myslím, naprosto nepřijatelná praxe.

To, co bych chtěl ovšem zdůraznit: v té zprávě je uvedeno, tuším v bodu 13, že podstoupení této praxe má mít za následek případně automaticky přiznání práva na azyl. To si myslím, že je příliš radikální a zjednodušující přístup. Tento pozměňovací návrh jsem nepodpořil.

Jonathan Arnott (EFDD). – Madam President, I believe that female genital mutilation is an abhorrent evil in our society, and indeed it is an evil wherever in the world it is practised. There are some words in this report which are not phrased in the way that I personally would have liked, but surely we can all agree that this evil must be stopped. Wherever it happens in the United Kingdom it must be prosecuted. Those who are responsible for allowing something so appalling to happen must face justice. Where parents fail to protect their children or if children are sent overseas for this to happen to them, there must be prosecutions. The law is the law, and the law must be enforced. Too often, we have seen police forces turn effectively a blind eye to this, and that must be stopped.

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Danuta Jazłowiecka (PPE). – Pani Przewodnicząca! Zabrakło rozliczenia nas z głosowań w sprawie ochrony i przeciwdziałania dyskryminowaniu obywateli Unii Europejskiej należących do mniejszości w państwach członkowskich UE. Takie zgłoszenia również Pani otrzymała i wydaje mi się, że powinniśmy przeprowadzić procedurę wyjaśnień dotyczących stanowiska zajętego w głosowaniu także w tej sprawie.

Die Präsidentin. – Es gab keine offiziellen Wortmeldungen zu dem Thema, deshalb habe ich das nicht aufgerufen. Sie wissen ja, dass nach den Vorschriften vorab angegeben werden muss, wenn beabsichtigt wird, eine Stimmerkklärung abzugeben.

Danuta Jazłowiecka (PPE). – Zgłoszenie zostało przyjęte i nie bardzo rozumiem, dlaczego Pani Przewodnicząca go nie dostała. W związku z tym chciałabym się dowiedzieć, gdzie mogę zgłosić moją uwagę na ten temat.

Die Präsidentin. – Es tut mir leid, es ist bei uns nicht angekommen. Sie haben aber jetzt noch die Möglichkeit, Ihre Stimmerkklärung schriftlich abzugeben, so wie es die Vorschriften besagen. Es ist tatsächlich bei uns keine Anmeldung angekommen. Es tut mir leid, ich kann jetzt nicht weiter mit Ihnen diskutieren. Ich muss die Vorschriften befolgen, wie sie geschrieben sind.

Ich gebe gerne Herrn Arnott noch das Wort. Sie haben ja heute schon mehrfach geredet.

Jonathan Arnott (EFDD). – Madam President, I rise to place on record my objection to what happened today under Rule 21 of the Rules of Procedure, which states that early termination of the office of a Vice-President may ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Die Präsidentin. – Nein, dazu ist keine Stimmerkklärung möglich. Stimmerkklärungen sind nach der Geschäftsordnung nur zu den Texten, über die abgestimmt wird, möglich.

9. Korekty do głosowania i zamiar głosowania: patrz protokół

(Die Sitzung wird um 13.27 Uhr unterbrochen.)

PRÉSIDENTE DE MME Sylvie GUILLAUME

Vice-présidente

10. Wznowienie posiedzenia

(La séance est reprise à 15 heures)

11. Przyjęcie protokołu poprzedniego posiedzenia: patrz protokół

12. Skład komisji: patrz protokół

13. Konsekwencje dla obywateli europejskich pogłębiania się nierówności społeczno-gospodarczych (debata na aktualny temat)

La Présidente. – L'ordre du jour appelle le débat d'actualité (article 153 bis du règlement intérieur) sur les conséquences du creusement des inégalités socioéconomiques pour les citoyens européens (2018/2558(RSP)).

Mes chers collègues, je tiens à vous informer qu'il n'y aura pas d'interventions à la demande ni de questions «carton bleu» au cours de ce débat.

Udo Bullmann (S&D), *author.* – Madam President, inequality has reached shocking new levels and is threatening to tear our societies apart, not only globally, but also in Europe. In the European Union, some 120 million people are poor; 28 million children live in households that cannot provide for their basic needs – food, health care, education or housing. It is absolutely shameful that the richest continent of the world does not take proper care of its own children.

Even though the European economy is on the mend again and unemployment is going down, income and wealth inequality is on the rise, and an alarming 40% of wealth is in the hands of only 1% of the richest Europeans. Clearly the neo-liberal myth of the invisible hand and trickle-down economics is not going to sort out the situation, nor are today's insufficient policy efforts. The election of Trump, and Brexit, which also stemmed from a growing disappointment with the status quo, must be the wake-up call for the last sleep-walkers. The growing gap between the rich and the poor is undermining the social and democratic fabric of our societies. It is high time to act now.

Big challenges require strong political answers. We Socialists and Democrats fight side by side with an alliance of NGOs and social partners for strong policy responses that will work. We will campaign for an equitable and sustainable society of shared prosperity, opportunity and dignity. We call on the Commission to rapidly act and introduce an inequality reduction strategy within the European Semester to achieve income growth, especially for the bottom 40%. We are working for a poverty eradication road map to halve the number of people living in poverty by 2030, and for a directive on decent working conditions. We wish to create a living wage index to help define appropriate minimum wages in each Member State.

If we know how devastating the consequences of inequalities are, why do we not use the remaining time in this mandate to improve the lives of the most needy Europeans? Let us introduce a child guarantee that ensures that each and every child in every country is able to access proper health care, good schooling and a healthy diet. Let us introduce a framework directive for decent working conditions that ensures that workers are no longer at risk of exploitation. Let us have protection against poor pay and have proper social rights, regardless of whether people work in industry or in digital platforms. And let us end the rhetoric of free trade that tries to convince people that trade only needs to be free to work for the people, because this neglects the hardship of those without jobs in deprived regions. We know that only with proper environment and sustainability provisions can trade be really progressive.

A lot can be done to take this fight to the next level. The social pillar must be properly implemented, we need strong improvements on maternity and paternity leave – parenthood must not mean poverty. We must continue to fight against tax fraud and tax evasion. Digital giants have to pay proper taxes too.

I would like to appeal to the whole House. My Group, the Socialists and Democrats, are willing to fight for that today, tomorrow and each and any other day of this mandate. We very much hope that you will join us.

Monika Panayotova, *President-in-Office of the Council.* – Madam President, first of all, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak here on a topic so essential for the European Union in the current political context. Today, more than ever, the European Union needs to guarantee the prosperity and well-being of all its citizens, as well as to overcome the socio-economic inequalities in a fast-changing world.

According to opinion polls, more and more citizens across Europe feel that they cannot fully profit from the benefits of globalisation. We need to make sure they see that the European Union is the solution to their concerns and that it delivers on their expectations. As a result of the effective policy response to the economic crisis by the European institutions and the Member States, the EU economy is now firmly recovering. Economic growth has returned and unemployment is at its lowest since 2008.

Nevertheless, social and economic challenges persist across Europe. In 2017, 23% of our citizens remained at risk of falling into poverty and social exclusion. Young people are still especially vulnerable and we really need to focus our efforts on them as they are the future of Europe, of our economies and our societies. The consequences of leaving a whole generation without prospects would not only be morally irresponsible, but would have long-standing negative economic and political effects in the decades to come. We need to make sure that young people have better opportunities for education and training, mobility and personal development, and improved access to employment.

Socio-economic stability and fairness is a pre-condition for social progress and trust in the European Union project. As Parliament rightly stated in its resolution of November 2017 on combating inequalities, the reduction of inequalities must be one of the main priorities at European level, not only in order to tackle poverty or promote convergence but also as a precondition for economic recovery, decent job creation, social cohesion and shared prosperity.

The root causes of socio-economic inequalities are related to a wide range of factors. The scission between rich and poor is widening. Labour markets and societies are evolving quickly with new opportunities and new challenges arising from globalisation, the digital revolution, changing work patterns and societal and demographic developments. The industrial revolutions for zero waste and digitalisation are presenting enormous opportunities, but they are also placing extraordinary pressure on skills. In order to overcome existing inequalities based on skills, we need a comprehensive approach. We must fill the digital skills gap and prepare both our citizens and our labour market for change.

For this reason, one of our Presidency's four priorities is the digital economy and skills for the future. Discrimination and gender inequality are two further factors that contribute to inequalities. The average gender pay gap remains above 16%, and in some Member States it is above 20%. Our citizens expect us to take action: they rank unemployment and social inequality as the most important challenges the European Union has to face. This is also a commitment that we have made at national, European and international level.

The leaders of 27 Member States recognised in the Rome Declaration that economic and social inequalities were unprecedented challenges for the European Union. They pledged to work towards a social Europe which promotes economic and social progress as well as cohesion and convergence. So the key tools to overcome inequalities are the new provisions for training and for the protection of our workers – vocational training helping the redistributive potential of social protection systems.

As the current Presidency, we look forward to the Commission proposal on the new social fairness package expected on 7 March. I would like to express our readiness and willingness to start negotiations on it properly within the Council. We also plan to adopt the recommendation on the Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships at the March Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO). The signature of the proclamation of the European pillar of social rights is an important step towards reinforcing the social dimension of Europe. It provides a compass for action towards better working and living conditions in the European Union, hence renewing the process of increasing social convergence.

The Council has already started to work on the implementation of the pillar. The legislative elements of the package, namely the proposals on work-life balance and on transparent and predictable working conditions, are currently being discussed in the preparatory bodies of the Council. As of this year, progress in Member States is monitored in the context of the European Semester through use of the Social Scoreboard, in line with one of the recommendations expressed by Parliament in its resolution on combating inequalities. Furthermore, Employment and Social Affairs Ministers will hold a policy debate on closing the gender pay gap, at the March Council where the future of Social Europe post-2020 will also be discussed.

I would also like to focus your attention on the fact that some of the roots of socio-economic inequalities lie in natural demographic or regional disadvantages, in relation to which investment in cohesion has a very positive impact.

I will listen to your debate, which is also an opportunity to reflect on the consequences of the challenges in front of us. Thank you once again for inviting me and for your attention.

Marianne Thyssen, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, the topic of this debate is the consequences of rising inequalities – a topic much-talked about in international fora such as the G20 or the United Nations, and of course also in this very House. Over the years, we have gained important insights. We know that rising inequalities act as a brake on growth. Even competitiveness is reinforced by a more equal society.

We also know that rising inequalities come with social by-effects – increased crime rates, decreased health, and lower participation in our democracies. And we see every day how the discontent of citizens that feel left behind, or fear being left behind, is fuelling a populist movement. These are the consequences of rising inequalities. And also for these reasons, reducing inequalities is a priority of the Commission.

The drivers behind the rise in inequalities are numerous. Therefore, our policy response must be multi-dimensional. At European level our message is clear: we have to redouble efforts along the virtuous triangle of investment, structural reforms and responsible fiscal policies, with a focus firmly on social fairness and more inclusive growth.

Inequalities can only be fought through a combination of good jobs, fair tax systems, and adequate social policies. Firstly, it must aim to reduce inequalities in market income, especially by focusing on work. Raising skill levels and preparing our people for the jobs of tomorrow is the first way to address inequality in earnings. Last year we adopted the New Skills Agenda. With the right skills, people are better equipped for good-quality jobs with reliable and adequate incomes.

Moreover, we must create jobs. Wherever possible, the Commission takes steps to boost job creation. For example, via the Capital Markets Union and the Digital Single Market, not to forget the European Investment Plan and Fund. We also strongly push for reforms that support growth in Member States through the European Semester.

Secondly, we need to look at the tax and benefit systems. Having a job is not enough to be included, we also have to look at the tax and benefit systems. The re-launch of the Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base and the initiatives on tax transparency should contribute to ensuring a fair distribution of the products of growth, income and wealth in our Member States. I also want to add the decisions on state aid – I refer to certain tax rulings in certain Member States.

Lastly, we must respond to the rise in inequalities by boosting our social policies. That is why we proclaimed the European Pillar of Social Rights. The Pillar's principles range from wages to social protection systems, from minimum income to gender equality, from childcare to old-age income, and from health care to access to housing.

The European Semester will play a key role in implementing the Pillar on a national level. Already in the past, as you know, country-specific recommendations have addressed inequality-related issues. Think of the need to improve the adequacy and coverage of safety nets; or think of recommendations on childcare, on education, and on the provision of supporting services. In the current semester cycle, we build on this approach. To give you a glimpse: the Country Reports will pay special attention to investing in skills and building adequate safety nets and supporting sustainable and inclusive growth. Moreover, they will include the Social Scoreboard that accompanies the European Pillar of Social Rights. The Scoreboard contains an indicator on income inequality, but also on skills, childcare, and the impact of social transfers. This is our method of keeping track of Member States' performance on the implementation of the principles of the Pillar, making clear that effective social policies are a priority for Europe.

But we also have something to do, and for its part the Commission is also implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights. To increase the rights for the most vulnerable workers, we recently presented a proposal for a Directive on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions. To tackle women's under-representation in employment, and to create a more balanced distribution of caring responsibilities between women and men, we put forward the Work-Life Balance for Parents and Carers initiative. And we are now working on a Social Fairness Package. The package includes an initiative on improving access to social protection for people employed on non-standard contracts and in various forms of self-employment. This, I believe, is an extremely important step in fighting inequalities.

The Package also includes a proposal for a European Labour Authority and a proposal for a European Social Security Number. More details will follow on 7 March. And of course we will continue to use the European Structural and Investment Funds to support the objectives of the Pillar.

Tackling inequality is an imperative for the European Union, for economic, social and political reasons. Reducing inequalities is the only way to sustain growth and ensure continued competitiveness. It is the only way to ensure that our welfare systems remain sustainable. At the social level, we cannot leave anyone behind, everyone should participate in labour markets and in our societies. At the political level, rising inequalities drive disillusionment in politics and society. People no longer feel in control. The result is the rise of nationalism, protectionism and populism.

We need to put the fight against inequalities at the top of our agenda, you are totally right. With the Pillar we have done that, but now of course it is time and we have to prove that we are able to implement it.

David Casa, *fisem il-grupp PPE*. – Ilkoll naqblu illi l-ekonomija tal-Unjoni Ewropea qiegħda tirkupra u tikber b'rata pożittiva, iżda minkejja dan, fuq in-naha l-oħra tal-ispettru, teżisti realtà oħra; dik tal-inugwaljanza soċjoekonomika taċ-ċittadini Ewropej. Kif qal il-kollega Bulmen, id-distakk bejn is-sinjur u l-fqir fil-pajjiżi Membri qiegħed jikber u din hija sfida li ahna l-politici Ewropej għandna dmir li naqhtu kas għax it-tkabbir ekonomiku li qed isehh mhux qed igawdi minnu kulhadd. L-effetti pożittivi ta' dan it-tkabbir mhuwiex qiegħed jasal għand kulhadd. Huwa essenzjali li nidentifikaw l-għodda li għandna b'zonn biex nimmitigaw din il-problema.

Bhalissa ninsabu f'perjodu fejn l-ekonomiji nazzjonali tal-Istati Membri qiegħdin jikbru u s-suq tax-xogħol jitjeb, iżda minkejja dan, il-pagi taċ-ċittadini għadhom baxxi u mhumiex jiżiedu b'mod proporzjonali. Dan ifisser illi ma rridux nassiguraw biss iżjed xogħol, iżda iżjed xogħol b'kundizzjonijiet aħjar; xogħol ta' kwalità, u dan flimkien ma' edukazzjoni bi standards għoljin u aċċess għal kura medika diċenti, u dawn flimkien jghinu biex neliminaw il-problema tal-inugwaljanza. Diversi studji juru li soċjetà inkluziva u ġusta bejn l-irġiel u n-nisa twassal għal tkabbir ekonomiku iżjed b'saħħtu u robust.

Jiena ninsab kuntent hafna bix-xogħol li qiegħed isir fuq il-proposta tal-Kummissjoni, fuq il-work-life balance fl-Ewropa, li tagħha jiena responsabbli, però [rridu] naħdmu aktar biex nassiguraw li l-b'zonnijiet taċ-ċittadini tagħna jġu indirizzati għall-ġid ta' kulhadd.

Jekk nilhqu dan l-għan kulhadd igawdi mir-riżultati pożittivi ta' inkluzjoni u ugwaljanza.

Maria João Rodrigues, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – Madam President, one percent of the European population now holds one third of the total wealth, while one third of the European population holds just one percent of the total wealth. So here we have something fundamentally wrong and something unacceptable, because this means having a lot of people in poor working conditions. The most shocking thing concerns young people because we have around one third of young people in Europe living in poverty. This is just unacceptable and this is something which is spreading social tension, hindering growth and undermining democracy and trust in the European Union.

This is the outcome of the accumulated effects of a wrong economic policy, bringing austerity and social unfairness. We must reverse this. It is possible – just look at the Portuguese case – and now we have a powerful solution, which is to implement the European social pillar. With this pillar we want first of all to address the situation of children in Europe, to end child poverty and to address the situation of young people, paving the way for better jobs and access to skills, making sure that everybody can have a proper, decent labour contract and access to social protection.

But how can we deliver all this? We need to have serious work to update social and labour law. We need to promote an economic policy focusing on investment and jobs for the future. We need to have a fiscal policy providing good public services. We need to have a tax policy addressing added value where it is, but most of all we need to make sure that the upcoming European budget will be used to promote this social pillar. I really hope that with the Commission and the Presidency we will move in this direction.

I really regret also that the first row of the EPP and ALDE Groups are not present and participating in this debate. They are absent on this.

Syed Kamall, *on behalf of the ECR group*. – Madam President, when we talk about socio-economic inequality, there are often two simple solutions that are offered, You either make the richer poorer, or you make the poorer richer, and I believe that actually what we should do is focus on pathways out of poverty.

One of the most inspiring parts of my job in London, is meeting or helping the many local community projects tackling poverty in their local neighbourhoods. They are often inspired by local people who want to make a difference, so it is disappointing that when politicians or commentators talk about poverty, they tend to focus on what the state can or cannot do, or whether large NGOs are effective or not, too often neglecting the inspirational local community projects in the hearts of our communities.

Though, in some ways, both the Left and the Right have failed the poor. While the Left believe in top-down government, taxing people more to distribute more money to the poor via more public servants, more trade unions, etc., we all know of areas where lots of money has been spent over the years and we still see deprivation in those areas. But many on the Right argue that poverty is best tackled by cutting taxes, creating more jobs with additional wealth trickling down to the poor, but they forget that the welfare state was created since private provision did not reach everyone.

So while state welfare and large NGOs do have a role to play, last month the ECR Group held a global poverty summit which brought together local community projects from across the world to tell their inspiring stories of how they tackled poverty at a grass-roots level.

So, whether the Left call it cooperative socialism, or the Right call it community conservatism or localist libertarianism, I hope that we can all pay more attention and champion the role of grass-roots anti-poverty projects in all our local communities, rather than top-down state or top-down wealth, and I see the Left laughing and insulting these very many community projects.

Allow me on a personal note to end on that equality. I realise I am the first non-white leader of any political group in this Parliament, but I'm still shocked by the lack of racial diversity not only in this House, but across all EU institutions, and if the EU is going to have any credibility on the issues of diversity and equality, it needs to get its own house in order. Let us, across the political spectrum, reach out to young people in all our countries and tell them that whatever your colour, your gender, your religion, your orientation or your background, you should not be afraid to put yourself forward for public office.

The EU is often accused of being a rich white man's club. It is time to take action if the EU really wishes to live up to its motto of 'United in Diversity'.

Enrique Calvet Chambon, *au nom du groupe ALDE*. – Madame la Présidente, je souhaite la bienvenue à Madame la Commissaire, c'est toujours un plaisir. Je poursuis dans la langue de Cervantès.

Ya es motivo de satisfacción, en un día tan triste para Europa, el que nos planteemos por fin —y por ello he luchado desde el principio en este Parlamento— el problema de las desigualdades y sus gravísimas consecuencias, que son evidentes, y por lo tanto al título de este debate le damos una respuesta enseguida: las consecuencias sobre los ciudadanos es que la economía crece menos, hay más paro por culpa de la descohesión de las sociedades, y las políticas son evidentes —lo ha dicho todo el mundo—: nacimiento del desapego hacia los sistemas políticos, del desapego hacia la democracia, del desapego hacia las instituciones europeas, usándolas como cabezas de turco.

Entonces lo que yo le quiero decir a la comisaria es que hay tres vías esenciales para combatir esto. La primera vía es ir a las estructuras y cambiar la dinámica desigualitaria a medio plazo, y para eso son fundamentales las políticas económicas, pero mucho más que solo, por supuesto, los impuestos, son importantes las inversiones: se pueden realizar inversiones que favorezcan el capital humano, que favorezcan infraestructuras para una mejora de la sociedad, o no. También el comercio lo es. También la política energética, para combatir la pobreza energética. Las grandes políticas macroeconómicas, que ahora hemos conseguido que se vayan a ocupar del índice de Gini, son importantes.

El segundo pilar es el que lleva la señora Thyssen: son las políticas sociales, pero, sobre todo, no las que palian las desigualdades, la pobreza, etc., —esas ya están ahí, esas son parches indispensables—, sino las que estructuran un mercado de trabajo flexible pero más igualitario.

Y en tercer y último lugar —lo olvidamos a menudo—, hay que combatir las desigualdades con más y mejor Europa porque, sin una visión solidaria omnicomprendible de Europa, incluso financieramente, no combatiremos bien las desigualdades en Europa y en el modelo que hemos elegido.

Rina Ronja Kari, for GUE/NGL-Gruppen. – Fru formand! Først og fremmest vil jeg gerne sige tak til Socialdemokraterne for at sætte dette meget vigtige emne på dagsordenen. Der er ikke nogen tvivl om, at meget af det, der er blevet sagt her i dag, er vi selvfølgelig også enige i. Der er store, alvorlige problemer. Der er stor social usikkerhed. Der er stor arbejdsløshed. Dertil kommer, at alt for mange borgere i dag er bekymrede for dem selv og for deres børns fremtid.

Men ville det ikke være skønt, hvis vi fra Europa-Parlamentet kunne sende et positivt signal om, at det går fremad? Eller i det mindste om, at vi faktisk tager borgernes bekymringer alvorligt? At de bliver hørt?

Kære kolleger! Hvis vi skal se borgerne i øjnene, er vi nødt til at være ærlige. Problemerne er blevet stærkere og er blevet større på grund af EU's indre marked og på grund af den økonomiske nedskæringspolitik, som er blevet gennemtvunget med finanspagten.

Hvis vi faktisk gør op med den stigende ulighed, kræver det også et brud med det EU, vi ser i dag. Det kræver et brud med den økonomiske politik i finanspagten. Hvis I socialdemokrater vi være med til at lave det brud, så hilser vi det rigtigt meget velkomment. Det er meget tiltrængt.

Philippe Lamberts, au nom du groupe Verts/ALE. – Madame la Présidente, Madame la Commissaire, chers collègues, de Piketty à l'OCDE, en passant par le FMI et Oxfam, les rapports se multiplient et ils convergent tous: les inégalités de revenus et de patrimoine sont reparties à la hausse.

Imaginez-vous, l'an dernier, les plus riches, qui représentent 1 % de la population, ont siphonné 82 % de la richesse créée. 82 %! Et ceci n'est pas un produit du hasard ni de je ne sais quelle loi de la nature, c'est le produit de choix politiques.

Au motif d'assainir les finances publiques et d'atteindre une plus grande efficacité économique – «efficacité», c'est à la mode –, il faut flexibiliser les marchés du travail, mettre les services publics et la protection sociale sous pression, assouplir toute législation qui affaiblirait ou handicaperait nos entreprises, même lorsqu'il s'agit de protéger la santé ou l'environnement. Il faut partir plus tard à la pension, alors que des jeunes peinent à trouver un emploi. Il faut réduire les allocations de chômage, alors qu'à certains endroits de l'Union européenne, pour une offre d'emploi, vous avez des dizaines et des dizaines de candidats.

Rassurez-vous, bonnes gens, la croissance est de retour et l'emploi avec. Mais le problème est que cet emploi se précarise. Il est de moins en moins bien payé, tandis que les détenteurs de capitaux captent une partie toujours plus importante du gâteau. On voudrait nous faire croire que rendre les riches plus riches et les multinationales plus puissantes profiterait à tous. Eh bien, Mesdames et Messieurs, l'économie du ruissellement existe, et elle défie les lois de la gravité, car l'argent va des pauvres aux riches.

Tout cela a des conséquences très concrètes évidemment car, dans notre riche Union européenne, un quart de nos concitoyens, y compris des millions qui ont un travail, sont en risque de pauvreté et d'exclusion sociale, au point pour certains de devoir choisir entre manger ou se soigner, au point de mourir dans les rues de nos villes.

Madame Thyssen, chers collègues, je me réjouis que le pilier européen des droits sociaux ait vu le jour. Cependant, si nous voulons inverser la courbe des inégalités et que ce pilier soit autre chose qu'un alibi moral, il faudra non seulement le rendre aussi contraignant que les règles budgétaires européennes, mais définitivement changer de cap dans nos politiques économiques pour les remettre au service du plus grand nombre de nos concitoyens.

Laura Agea, a nome del gruppo EFDD. – Signora Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, otto persone nel mondo detengono la ricchezza di quasi tre miliardi di persone. Questi sono i dati Oxfam, che ovviamente ci possono solo fare rabbrivire. Se portiamo questi dati nella nostra Europa, ci accorgiamo che poco cambia se pensiamo che quasi 130 milioni di cittadini europei vivono al di sotto della soglia di povertà. È necessario fare un cambio di strategia, un cambio di rotta e permettere a questo Titanic di raggiungere un porto sicuro.

Le politiche economiche portate avanti dall'Unione europea negli ultimi anni hanno desertificato i diritti sociali e occupazionali, la salute e il benessere dei cittadini, venduti e sacrificati sull'altare della stabilità di riforme strutturali che non hanno minimamente tenuto conto di quelle che erano le conseguenze che gravavano solo e soltanto sui cittadini indifesi. Oggi prenderne atto non solo è doveroso, ma deve imporre a noi legislatori, alla Commissione, al Consiglio, a noi eurodeputati di invertire la marcia.

Le uniche riforme strutturali che servono a quest'Europa in balia di se stessa sono quelle che garantiscono il benessere dei cittadini: stipendi adeguati, la salute garantita e pubblica, condizioni di lavoro accettabili, salari adeguati, una garanzia per i bambini che vivono al di sotto della soglia di povertà. Fin quando non ci occuperemo dei nostri figli, non potremmo essere noi ad andare a dare lezioni di democrazia ad altri paesi. Ci vogliono impegno, coraggio e azioni immediate.

Auke Zijlstra, *namens de ENF-Fractie*. – Voorzitter, ongelijkheden in de maatschappij zijn van alle tijden. Tot op zekere hoogte zijn ongelijkheden ook goed. Want als er geen succesvolle mensen zijn, wie is dan nog het rolmodel voor jongeren? En waar moet ambitie zich dan op richten?

Maar in Nederland is al tientallen jaren geen koopkrachtgroei meer voor gezinnen, zo laat onderzoek van Rabobank zien. De belastingen zijn gestegen voor een almaar groeiende overheid, onder andere om massa-immigratie te betalen en ontwikkelingshulp en subsidies voor iedereen met een linkse mening, maar ook voor de voortdurend stijgende uitgaven van de Europese Unie. Want politieke ambities worden uiteindelijk door burgers als loonslaven betaald.

Zo'n kostbare politieke ambitie is de euro. Het ontbreken van wisselkoersen tussen de landen heeft geleid tot massawerkloosheid en ontsprende staatsfinanciën. Dankzij de euro zijn er nu ook landen waar, in plaats van stagnatie, de inkomens daadwerkelijk gedaald zijn, namelijk in Zuid-Europa. Miljoenen mensen uit deze landen zijn vertrokken naar Noord-Europa op zoek naar werk, op zoek naar perspectief dat daar echter ook niet meer te vinden is.

Voorzitter, dit kan zo niet langer. Wat we nodig hebben, is: lagere belastingen en een hogere arbeidsinkomensquote. De migratie moet worden gestopt en de euro ontmanteld. Zo eenvoudig is het.

Zoltán Balczó (NI). – Elnök Asszony! Ebben az üléssteremben sok szó esik a migrációról, a külső migrációról, az Európába irányuló bevándorlásról, de nagyon kevés szó a belső migrációról, az Unió keleti feléből a nyugati felébe irányuló munkaerő-áramlásról. Az árak ugyanis kiegyenlítődték az Unió két fele között, a bérek között azonban szakadék van. És ezt ismerte föl a Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom, amikor elindított egy európai polgári kezdeményezést, amit a Bizottság befogadott, hogy ezt a bérszakadékot kezdjük megszüntetni, mert ha ez nem történik meg, ez az egész Unió szétszakadásához vezethet. Természetesen egyik napról a másikra nem lehet eredményt elérni. De amikor a jövő hét év költségvetésén gondolkodunk, akkor fontos lenne, hogy a forrásokot, a kohéziós alapokat úgy irányítsuk ezekbe az országokba, hogy a valódi hozzáadott értéket teremtő vállalkozásokat támogassák, akik minőségi munkahelyet tudnak teremteni, és hozzájárulnak a bérszakadék csökkentéséhez.

Sofia Ribeiro (PPE). – Senhor Presidente, queria começar por me dirigir à colega Maria João Rodrigues e dizer que foi profundamente lamentável a sua referência à presidência do PPE. Em primeiro lugar, porque não está cá também o presidente do seu grupo político; em segundo lugar, porque foi um profundo desrespeito para com todos os elementos desta Casa.

Se no grupo socialista há a consideração de que só há representatividade na primeira linha deste plenário por parte do PPE, nós estamos aqui todos os deputados da Comissão do Emprego e dos Assuntos Sociais a fazer este debate. E é também profundamente lamentável, Cara Colega, o seu discurso miserabilista. Nós temos que ter políticas europeias que se traduzam numa verdadeira alavanca social. Nós temos que ter políticas europeias para que se possa garantir o crescimento económico e o combate às desigualdades, para que se possa alavancar toda uma sociedade com políticas proporcionadas e diferenciadas.

Isto implica uma maior atenção à classe média e a classe média no nosso país tem ordenados baixos, muito próximos do ordenado mínimo, mas paga impostos, paga contribuições, não tem os mesmos apoios no acesso à educação dos seus filhos, não tem os mesmos apoios na Segurança Social, não tem os mesmos apoios no acesso à saúde. É uma classe que, em termos líquidos, está a ganhar muito abaixo dos mínimos e nós não podemos ter um discurso miserabilista que esqueça a classe média porque a Europa que eu defendo é uma Europa de igualdade de oportunidades, não é exclusiva de uma outra classe, tem que ter políticas diferenciadas aplicáveis a todos, para que possamos prosseguir o sonho europeu.

Jeppe Kofod (S&D). – Madam President, I would like to thank the Council and the Commissioner for their response. I think this debate on rising inequality and the consequences of it is core to what we should do, as politicians, to fight these consequences, to ensure that we have policies that will change this behaviour and ensure that, instead of inequality, we have quality spread out through our societies. It has been said many times that eight men now own the same as half of the world's population. It is a disgrace and, also, if you look at the years 2008 to 2016, we spent EUR 653 billion to save the banks in Europe, but how much effort do we spend to save young people and the people who are suffering the inequalities that are on the rise. It is economic inequality and inequality in health. It is in education and all aspects of society.

I have to say to my good colleague, Mr Kamall, that fighting inequality is more than charity. Actually where we have well-functioning welfare states in Europe, that is the biggest equality machine we can create on this planet. It is proven. Come to the Nordic countries and you see that it works – and listen. What the EU can do is important. The Commissioner alluded to it. We need a strong social pillar. We need to ensure that we support our Member States so they can fight inequality and create opportunity for all of us. We need a strong social contract because our social contract is jeopardised in our societies today, with severe consequences for democracy and for extremism.

So we need to rebuild our social contract and I think we also need a social contract that will ensure that the big multinational corporations and the rich individuals pay their fair tax. It is too easy for them to avoid paying their fair tax and it is undermining our welfare state and undermining the fight against inequality.

So, friends, we believe in a European dream and a European dream is that all people, regardless of their background, have the chance to have a good life, good education and good work.

(Applause)

Joachim Starbatty (ECR). – Frau Präsidentin! Herr Bullmann, Frau Rodrigues, ich bin Ihnen dankbar, dass Sie dieses Thema auf die Tagesordnung gesetzt haben. Es ist wirklich ein brisantes Thema. Aber ich muss sagen, ich habe hier nur normative Sätze gehört: Wir müssen tun, wir müssen Rechte einführen.

Ein Arzt, wenn er Therapien macht, macht zunächst eine Diagnose. Ich habe hier keine Diagnose gehört. Die Euro-Zone wird als eine Einheit betrachtet. Man sagt, die Arbeitslosigkeit ist im Jahre 2017 zurückgegangen. Nein, wenn Sie Deutschland herausrechnen, ist die Arbeitslosigkeit immer noch höher als im Jahre 2009. Und wenn wir sehen, dass jetzt die Arbeitslosigkeit zurückgeht und die Beschäftigung zunimmt – ja, wo nimmt sie denn zu? Bei den prekären Arbeitsverhältnissen, beim Niedriglohn. Das ist Konsequenz einer internen Abwertung. Das ist einfach so.

Wenn Sie eine Währungsunion sind, sind von den drei Aktionsparametern, die für die Wettbewerbsfähigkeit einer Volkswirtschaft zentral sind, zwei weg: die Zinsen und die Wechselkurse. Da bleibt nur der Arbeitsmarkt. Da bleiben nur die Löhne. Die Arbeitslosigkeit steigt, die Löhne gehen herunter, und dann wird man wieder wettbewerbsfähig. Das ist die Konsequenz der Währungsunion. Da kann man noch soviel drüber schimpfen über das, was an Ungleichheit da ist. Hier muss man ansetzen.

Wenn der Arbeitsmarkt als Anpassungsmechanismus reagiert, haben wir genau die Situation, die Sie jetzt beklagen, und wir werden das in fünf Jahren noch einmal beklagen, weil es sich nicht geändert hat. Was wir wirklich machen müssen, ist, darauf zu achten, dass die Länder wettbewerbsfähig werden. Ohne Wettbewerbsfähigkeit gibt es keine gut bezahlten Arbeitsplätze. Wenn der *Economist* vor zehn Jahren über Griechenland gesagt hat: *Greece's economy is hopelessly uncompetitive*. Das ist der Grund für die Schwierigkeiten, die Griechenland hat. Wenn Sie das beklagen, das ist von Ihnen politisch so akzeptiert. Wenn Sie die Währungsunion haben, geht es immer nur über den Arbeitsmarkt. Und dann höre ich hier: Wir müssen die Währungsunion sicherer machen. Nein, wir müssen die Arbeitsplätze für die Menschen und die Einkommen sicherer machen, nicht die Währungsunion!

Yana Toom (ALDE). – Madam President, thank you for this debate which I hope will be fruitful. Regional policy is an important aspect of the fight against poverty. In Europe there are regions where many more people than the EU average live at or below the poverty line. However, in a particularly bad situation are those regions that suffer from poor quality of EU relations with the European neighbourhood. In my native country, Estonia, Ida-Virumaa county is an example of a territory with such problems. It is a very poor, de-industrialised region, geographically isolated on the EU-Russian border and populated by a Russian linguistic minority. In such conditions the fight against poverty is also an important security issue. In regions like Ida-Virumaa the fight against poverty must be comprehensive. For this, both economic restructuring and normalisation of relations with neighbouring Russia are needed.

I support the expansion of all opportunities to support out of the European Structural Funds any national policies aimed at the reduction of poverty, and, of course, the implementation of the social pillar. For I strongly believe that poverty causes indifference, and indifference is bad support for protecting European borders.

Marisa Matias (GUE/NGL). – Senhora Presidente, Senhora Comissária, fala-se aqui hoje de desigualdades socioeconómicas como se elas fossem resultado da vontade divina ou de alguma catástrofe natural, mas não são, são resultado de políticas concretas, muitas delas impostas por esta União Europeia. São resultados dessas políticas a liberalização do mercado laboral, a precariedade, os salários baixos, o desemprego elevado, os níveis de pobreza insustentáveis.

A Senhora Comissária apresentou, entre outras propostas, o aumento dos salários e também a criação de novos empregos. O que eu lhe pergunto, Senhora Comissária, é como é que isso é compatível com a recomendação que ainda esta semana a Comissão Europeia fez a Portugal e a Espanha, para dizer que é preciso ir mais longe em reformas que reduzam a proteção laboral excessiva nos contratos permanentes.

Senhora Comissária, são os contratos precários que aprofundam a desigualdade, são os salários baixos que aprofundam a desigualdade. Nós precisamos, sim, de criar empregos, mas empregos com direitos. Em Portugal aumentou-se o salário mínimo contra Bruxelas, repôs-se os cortes contra Bruxelas e eu espero que também se reforce a legislação laboral contra Bruxelas.

Terry Reintke (Verts/ALE). – Madam President, yes, colleagues are right. Social inequality should be fought by any means, and as a matter of itself, but even more so – as any history book will tell you – when there are rising inequalities in society. There are certain politicians, and we have them here in this Chamber too, who will use this – who will instrumentalise the fear and the social problems arising from it – to play the weaker against the weakest.

We see this today. We see refugees being played against pensioners, we see Greek nurses being played against single mothers in Germany. And, I tell you, instead of following this divisive rhetoric and these divisive so-called proposals, we need to present something from European level to show that we are fighting for greater social equality.

I agree, yes, we have a currency union so we are tied together: so we also have to work together on social matters and introduce social standards at European level, because otherwise I believe the whole European project is in danger, and we do not want that. We need to act now.

Rolandas Paksas (EFDD). – Kalbant apie augančias socialinės ir ekonominės nelygybės pasekmes Europos piliečiams pirmiausia reikėtų atsakyti į klausimą, kas gi daroma ne taip, kad ta nelygybė nuolat auga? Gal ta socialinė atskirtis vis labiau didėja nuolat gąsdinantis, gąsdinant karinėmis grėsmėmis ir finansuojant naujų karinių dalinių steigimą ir karo pramonę toje pačioje Europoje? Kol karo dievai turtėja, visuomenė vis labiau skursta. Manau, kad su socialine atskirtimi kovojant tik žodžiais ateis laikas, kai jaunimo nedarbas, politikų tarnystę oligarchų kapitalui, globalizmo propaganda ir visuomenės skurdas taps katalizatoriumi, kuris išžiebs pilietinio pasipriešinimo ugnies židinius atskirose Europos valstybėse.

Deirdre Clune (PPE). – Madam President, two days ago in this Parliament, Mr Draghi told us that the European economy had grown by 2.5% last year – his predictions were for 1.5%. We know that many of our domestic economies are growing and about the challenges to harness and to channel that growth where it can be effective, but have evidence that jobs as we know them are changing, the labour market is changing and the typical permanent pensionable job is no longer there for many. There is evidence of temporary, part-time working on a contract basis, flexible labour market and, of course, with automation, robots and globalisation, employment as we know it is changing. So we need to ensure that we have strong and effective protection measures in place for workers. Minimum income is important and tackling zero-hours contracts is very, very important to give some certainty to workers.

But it is not all about inequality in terms of income. It is also about inequality in terms of opportunity, and inequality in terms of outcomes as well. We continually need to focus on skills and education and ensure that our young people, in particular, have the necessary training, the necessary education opportunities, if we are to provide them with the skills that employers are articulating today that they do not have and cannot find on the labour market.

Some European countries have better outcomes than others, and we must work together to ensure that those differences are addressed. The forthcoming European Social Pillar is one way that we can tackle those inequalities in a European way.

Agnes Jongerius (S&D). – Madam President, we, the Socialists and Democrats, have found new, unexpected allies and I don't mean here in the Chamber. I mean that, if the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank are pleading for a pay rise for employees in Europe, what more need we say? Yet can we stay silent on the consequences of rising social and economic inequalities in Europe?

Let us start on a positive note. The European economy is growing, unemployment rates are falling and most economic theorists are telling us the fairytale that people will benefit from growth. But unfortunately not everybody is getting a fair share of the pie. On the one hand, we see companies still focusing on the well-being of their shareholders while the pay gap between the top chiefs and the average worker remains startling, and most multinationals are also still dodging taxes. On the other hand, we see the working-class families in Europe falling behind.

Being in work reduces the risk of poverty. That is, at least, the normal theory. How is it possible then in Europe that the number of working poor is still growing and growing? I will repeat what our unexpected allies are saying, namely that a pay rise would be good for business, for jobs, for workers and therefore for the European economy: a pay rise which, in my view, cannot be achieved without strong trade unions and strong collective bargaining.

That does not, of course, help to reduce child poverty. We should address that issue separately. But a pay rise is really necessary.

Zbigniew Kuźmiuk (ECR). – Pani Przewodnicząca! Pani Komisarz! Zabierając głos w tej debacie, chcę bardzo mocno podkreślić, że polska delegacja w grupie ECR jest zdecydowanie przeciwna harmonizacji polityk socjalnych państw członkowskich, tworzeniu jednolitego systemu ubezpieczeń społecznych, czy też jednolitego systemu emerytalnego. Kraje przyjęte do Unii po 2004 r. wprawdzie skracają dystans do najbardziej rozwiniętych państw Europy Zachodniej, ale ciągle jeszcze nie stać ich na taki sam poziom wydatków na cele socjalne. Dla przyspieszenia rozwoju całej Unii Europejskiej zdecydowanie lepszy skutek niż decyzja o nierównościach społecznych miałaby dyskusja o usuwaniu nierówności międzygranicznych, takim jak likwidacja nierówności w traktowaniu przedsiębiorstw z krajów nowej Unii na rynkach krajów starej Unii, likwidacja ograniczeń w dostępie do rynku usług w krajach starej Unii Europejskiej, czy też likwidacja podwójnych standardów jakości produktów w zależności od państwa, w którym są sprzedawane.

Marian Harkin (ALDE). – Madam President, today we have heard the headline figures on the wealth divide, but I want to look at some of the underlying figures.

Two points: employment is increasing, but the number of people working full-time in 2017 is lower than in 2008 and the number of people working part-time in 2017 is 11.9 % higher than in 2008. We also have a rise in bogus self-employment with many workers having no security whatsoever. Therefore, Commissioner, I anticipate your proposal on social fairness and hope it will deliver, regardless of the sector.

Secondly, intergenerational fairness. Youth employment levels are almost twice the average unemployment levels, but even more worrying is the fact that since 2007 younger workers are significantly losing income share as opposed to older workers, and this is increasing year on year. That is an unexploded bomb in our midst.

João Pimenta Lopes (GUE/NGL). – Senhora Presidente, os dados existentes traduzem a realidade inequívoca de crescentes e tremendas desigualdades na UE, desigualdades agravadas pelas políticas de austeridade da União Europeia que, em países como Portugal, tiveram gravíssimas consequências.

As políticas da UE e dos partidos que a seguem cegamente em Portugal trouxeram a precariedade, o brutal aumento da exploração, desregulação laboral, o desemprego, a pobreza, o êxodo de centenas de milhares de cidadãos.

A luta dos trabalhadores e do povo, a ação firme dos comunistas portugueses impôs a reversão de muitas medidas gravosas, permitiu o aumento de rendimentos, a recuperação de direitos sociais, com um impacto significativo para a população, ainda que de alcance limitado.

É o espartilho da governação económica e das políticas da União Europeia que impõe essas limitações aos necessários avanços laborais e sociais, às políticas de desenvolvimento e investimento do país. Assim o demonstram as recomendações específicas por país ou o último relatório trimestral para a zona euro que afirma que Portugal tem uma excessiva proteção laboral dos contratos sem termo, desmascarando, pondo a nu o logro que é o pilar social.

Bill Etheridge (EFDD). – Madam President, the society that puts equality before freedom ends up with neither. We're here again, talking about the European social pillar, one of my favourite subjects. It is a do-gooders charter. It is more intervention by the state into the lives of individual people and into businesses. It is the dead hand of the state pressing down upon all of our economies, seeking to alter and change things to suit the view of the elite in rooms like this.

What about giving people equality of opportunity rather than equality of outcome? The poor do not want to be treated like clients of the state; the poor want to work their way to more prosperity. The reality is that when you hear the lover of the big state talking about equality, what they want to do is take all of our levels of income and bring them closer together and level it down. The lover of freedom doesn't mind if we're going up, as long as we're going up. Everyone's level of wealth and income goes up according to their ability and their talents and their skills and their economic ability within their country.

Let's make our people wealthier. Let's make the whole peoples of Europe wealthier – and here's the way we do it. We free them. We free them to have free market enterprise. We free them to express their talents and skills. We free them to make money, and we free the nation states so that each and every nation state can compete according to its ability, can make the right environment for its people to trade and make money in, and can each and every one of them unleash a real entrepreneurial spirit and allow the poor to get better conditions and more wealth for their families through hard work. Free our people. Free our nations, and wealth will come with free enterprise.

Anne Sander (PPE). – Madame la Présidente, Madame la Commissaire, si l'Europe va mieux et si les indicateurs repassent au vert, il reste de nombreuses inégalités. 87 millions d'Européens vivent sous le seuil de pauvreté, soit près d'un Européen sur six. Pour lutter contre ces inégalités, il faut une multitude d'actions et l'initiative sur le socle social va évidemment dans le bon sens.

Pour ma part, je voudrais insister sur la nécessité de garantir l'accès de chacun aux compétences, quel que soit son territoire ou son genre, pour s'insérer facilement et durablement sur le marché de l'emploi. Pour acquérir ce bagage de compétences et pour qu'il soit en adéquation avec les besoins des entreprises, c'est sur l'apprentissage, en formation initiale ou continue, que nous devons aujourd'hui miser. Car l'apprentissage est la voie de l'excellence pour se former à un métier et donc pour s'intégrer plus facilement dans les entreprises et se protéger plus durablement de la pauvreté.

Pour convaincre les jeunes d'en faire un premier choix, les États doivent aujourd'hui en changer l'image avec les professions et mieux l'encadrer. Il faut aussi changer la logique qui prévaut au moment de l'orientation. L'apprentissage doit devenir une voie choisie et non subie. Ensuite, il faut mieux accompagner les apprentis tout au long de leur parcours d'apprentissage, en privilégiant une approche personnalisée. Enfin, il faut ouvrir la mobilité aux apprentis.

Javi López (S&D). – Señora presidenta, de la gran recesión está emergiendo un nuevo consenso que nos dice que los actuales e insoportables niveles de desigualdad y las obscenas concentraciones de riqueza que van aparejadas no solo nos interpelan en términos éticos o sociales sino que hoy están socavando nuestras democracias, poniendo en riesgo el propio orden liberal internacional o la integración europea y dañando nuestras economías y nuestro potencial crecimiento económico.

¿Qué hacer frente a esta insoportable realidad? Actuar, primero, en el ámbito del mercado laboral: la precariedad, los bajos salarios, o la negociación colectiva, que está en la raíz de la desigualdad por ingresos. Actuar en nuestros estados del bienestar para poder actualizarlos y que desempeñen el papel de redistribución que siempre les había tocado desempeñar. Actuar para combatir la desigualdad de género, atacando especialmente la brecha salarial. Actuar para coordinar nuestras políticas de impuestos, impositivas, y dar margen de maniobra a los presupuestos de los Estados miembros. Actuar para regular y afrontar la digitalización, el comercio internacional o la globalización, que sabemos que generan beneficios pero que luego los reparten muy mal. Actuar para rehacer la solidaridad entre generaciones y responder así a la falta de oportunidades de los jóvenes, o a la peor cara de la pobreza: la pobreza infantil. Y actuar a todos los niveles. También a nivel europeo, como dijo un reciente informe del Parlamento Europeo aprobado este otoño.

Porque lo que había hecho único a este continente, a Europa, era su economía social de mercado, es decir, reconciliar progreso, democracia y crecimiento. Y el pilar europeo de derechos sociales es nuestra herramienta para dar cuerpo al alma de Europa.

Pirkko Ruohonen-Lerner (ECR). – Arvoisa puhemies, eriarvoistumiskehitys alkaa pahimmillaan jo lapsuudessa. Vähäosaisten vanhempien lapset ovat yhä useammin itse vähäosaisia elämässään, ilman mahdollisuutta sosiaaliseen nousuun.

Tämän vuoksi on ensiarvoisen tärkeää, että tasokas julkinen päivähoito ja koulu tarjoavat samanlaiset lähtökohdat kaikille lapsille perheen taustasta huolimatta. Itseohjautuvuuden vaatimukset jo peruskouluikäisille ja työelämän kovat vaatimukset myöhemmin syrjäyttävät monia.

Meidän täällä Euroopan parlamentissa, komissiossa ja jäsenmaissa tulisi jatkuvasti miettiä, miten voimme vähentää kasvavaa eriarvoisuutta. Mahdollisimman tasa-arvoisten lähtökohtien takaaminen kaikille lapsille neuvolasta päivähoitoon ja oppimiseröjen kaventaminen ovat parhaita keinoja. Tähän me voimme kaikki vaikuttaa kehittämällä kotimaissamme lapsiperheiden palveluja sekä koulutukseen liittyviä rakenteita ja toimintatapoja.

Paloma López Bermejo (GUE/NGL). – Señora presidenta, desempleo, empleos de baja calidad, pobreza, desigualdad, desafección: esto, señora comisaria, no es una plaga bíblica. Es la consecuencia de las políticas neoliberales, depredadoras social y medioambientalmente, que han aplicado para aprovechar la crisis en beneficio de unos pocos. Ahora se escandalizan porque esto genera desafección y crecen la extrema derecha y los fascismos. Pues corregirlo es fácil y está en su mano.

Cambien de políticas. Y no de forma nominal, como están haciendo con el pilar social. Pidan que se reviertan las reformas laborales; que se recupere la negociación colectiva; que se genere empleo de calidad; que se incrementen los salarios y se refuerce también el papel de la representación de los trabajadores; que se establezcan y potencien mecanismos públicos de lucha contra la pobreza, como son las rentas mínimas y como son las pensiones; que se recuperen los servicios públicos, la inversión pública, la investigación, las tecnologías y, sobre todo, la cultura.

Ya sé que a sus socios de las finanzas y las multinacionales estas recetas no les gustan, pero se sorprenderían, si salieran a la calle, de lo bien recibidas que serían por los trabajadores y la ciudadanía.

David Coburn (EFDD). – Madam President, the real reason for the rising social and economic inequalities among European citizens is the EU's open-door, uncontrolled mass migration from Asia and Africa of low-skilled and unskilled workers. This depresses wages and stresses social and health services to breaking point. Many of them are at that point now.

This is one of the main reasons why Great Britain is leaving the EU. Our workers are angry. They are losing their jobs, and they are losing their health service. Thanks to Angela Merkel's open invitation to migrants, we have been importing real poverty at a time when labour is being replaced by robotics and computers throughout Europe. This has led to violence, social disruption and racism. Look at what is happening in Sweden.

The euro, which is essentially a soft deutschmark, has impoverished the people of southern Europe and created mass unemployment in Spain – as you, Ms Rodrigues, know – and in Portugal, with financial collapse and EU direct rule in Greece and the removal of their freely elected government.

The European Union fears Brexit, really fears it. Britain is a free-market alternative to the EU's economic model which is, on the other hand, an East-European-style socialist command economy that has failed miserably over the last 50 years. Why would you want to return to this? Why must so many people in this place – many of you who worked for East European totalitarian regimes – want to return to that human misery? Why? Why won't you learn?

Britain will sit on the EU's doorstep, and show your system up for the sham that it is. We will attract other countries, such as Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic, to come and join us and see what a real free arrangement of sovereign nations is all about.

Csaba Sógor (PPE). – Madam President, the worrying long-term increase in inequality, both in times of growth as well as during recession, should indeed worry us. It is the least well-off who suffer most of the consequences of inequality. However, the phenomenon has already started to bite into the fortunes and social mobility of the middle class, too. More and more working families are struggling to make ends meet. Besides its impact on the individual and on social cohesion in general, income inequality raises other concerns as well: it undermines the good functioning of the economy, slows productivity and growth, and hampers innovation. The whole society suffers if we do not have a healthy, well-skilled and well-educated workforce.

In my country, the richest 20% of the population have an income over eight times higher than that of the poorest 20%. This is the result not just of unequal access to education, services and the labour market, but also of the toleration of undeclared work and an ineffective tax and social transfer system, as the Commission has underlined in its Country Specific Recommendations.

This is why it is so urgent that we search for effective means to reduce inequality. The solution can only lie in a coordinated and wide enough use of policy instruments, such as development of fair and effective taxation systems, creation of good jobs, and investment in quality early education that is accessible to all, as well as in continuous skill-development enabling upward mobility.

Kathleen Van Brempt (S&D). – Mevrouw de voorzitter, mevrouw de commissaris, ik zou willen beginnen met het werk van Richard Wilkinson te citeren, een Britse onderzoeker die baanbrekend werk heeft geleverd over ongelijkheid. Eigenlijk valt het kort samen te vatten als volgt: samenlevingen waar diepe ongelijkheid heerst, zijn samenlevingen waar het erg moeilijk gaat. Omgekeerd is een samenleving met weinig ongelijkheid en veel gelijkheid, een samenleving waar iedereen gelukkig is. Iedereen is heel belangrijk. Het gaat niet alleen over de armen. Iedereen in de samenleving is beter af wanneer er minder ongelijkheid is.

Wat misschien nog belangrijk is om te onderstrepen: grote en toenemende ongelijkheid is ook een gevaar voor onze democratie. Dat is eigenlijk logisch. Mensen die allemaal samen aan een samenleving bouwen en daar allemaal op hun manier aan bijdragen maar daar heel oneerlijk voor worden beloond, voelen dat aan als zeer onrechtvaardig. Een democratie – dat weten we allemaal – is veel meer dan dit Parlement of de rechtsstaat. Dat is een middel om tot een doel te geraken. Met andere woorden, ervoor te zorgen dat iedereen vrij en gelukkig kan samenleven en dat kan in een samenleving met minder ongelijkheid. Dat is essentieel.

De Commissie is de laatste tijd – met onze volle steun – enorm actief op het vlak van de rechtsstaat. Denk aan wat we doen in Polen. Denk aan wat we doen in Hongarije. Dat is belangrijk. Dat deel van de democratie wordt verdedigd. De vraag is: willen we dat andere deel van de democratie alstublieft met evenveel vuur verdedigen? Mijn collega's hebben al gesproken over de sociale pijler en eerlijke belastingen. Maar laten we heel duidelijk zijn. Het gaat over een uitdaging die veel breder is dan de aanpak van armoede, hoe belangrijk die ook is. Het gaat over een aanpak die ervoor zorgt dat onze Europese democratie een toekomst heeft.

Ulrike Trebesius (ECR). – Frau Präsidentin! Die Studien, die hier seit Jahren durch das Europäische Parlament verwendet werden, sind methodisch teils fragwürdig. Sie werfen postkommunistische Länder, die noch eine niedrige Ungleichheit und ein hohes Wachstum haben, mit westlichen Staaten in einen Topf. Ungleichheit ist aber der Anreiz in einer Marktwirtschaft, um produktiv tätig zu werden. Denn ja, es gibt Ungleichheit.

In meinem Land geraten in vielen Städten die Immobilienpreise außer Kontrolle, weil die EU-Binnenmigration sehr hoch ist und Mario Draghi mit seiner Geldpolitik Blasen an den Immobilienmärkten erzeugt. So geraten Millionen von Haushalten unter Druck – das ist unfair.

Es gibt weitere Blasen: z. B. an den Aktienmärkten. Aktienbesitzer sind reicher geworden, weil Mario Draghi die Kurse hochtreibt. Wenn die Zinsen nicht mehr manipuliert werden, werden sie diesen Reichtum verlieren. Soll man Aktienbesitzer für Draghis Geldpolitik bestrafen? Das wäre nicht fair, weil diese Ungleichheit politisch verursacht ist. Die Politik dieses Hauses trägt oft dazu bei, wenn vielleicht auch ungewollt, die Ungleichheit zu verschärfen.

Dennis de Jong (GUE/NGL). – Voorzitter, al tientallen jaren gelooft de Europese Unie in een ongebreidelde marktwerking. We weten allemaal dat de markt oog heeft voor de aandeelhouders. We weten ook allemaal dat de markt de lonen zo laag mogelijk wil houden. Dit leidt tot flexbanen en armoede. Want met een baan waar je niet van rond kunt komen, gaat je kind hongerig naar school. In Nederland kunnen de voedselbanken de vraag van 135 000 mensen niet meer aan. In Rotterdam op de markt zie ik 's avonds na sluitingstijd mensen zoeken naar de laatste etensresten. Dat is Europa. Dat is Nederland op dit moment.

Als we doorgaan met het geloof in een markt die we niet reguleren, dan gaat de uitbuiting door, hebben de aandeelhouders een goeie tijd en hebben de meeste mensen – de 90 % die niet beschikken over pakweg tweederde van het vermogen van de overige 10 % – het nakijken. Ik wil een sociaal protocol dat de markt onderwerpt aan sociale rechten en niet een niet-verbindende sociale pijler.

Krzysztof Hetman (PPE). – Pani Przewodnicząca! Szanowni Państwo! Od pewnego czasu obserwujemy w Unii ożywienie gospodarcze i poprawę koniunktury. Bezrobocie systematycznie spada. Zwiększeniu ulegają inwestycje. Niestety korzyści z tej sytuacji nie rozkładają się równomiernie pomiędzy obywateli Unii Europejskiej. Jesteśmy świadkami utrzymujących się, czy wręcz pogłębiających nierówności. Uważam, że aby wzrost gospodarczy był inkluzywny i obejmował całe społeczeństwo, musimy przede wszystkim zadbać o dobrze funkcjonujący rynek pracy. Samo zmniejszenie bezrobocia to za mało. Praca musi być dobrej jakości. Zapewnić pracownikom stabilizację i bezpieczeństwo oraz odpowiednie wynagrodzenie. Należy też z całą stanowczością walczyć z nadużyciami, czyli przede wszystkim pracą niedeklarowaną, ale też z przymusową pracą na niepełny etat. Pracownicy muszą też mieć stworzone dogodne warunki do łączenia życia rodzinnego i zawodowego, aby móc pozostać aktywnymi także w sytuacji opieki nad dziećmi czy osobą zależną. Nie możemy zapominać też o najsłabszych członkach naszego społeczeństwa: osobach niepełnosprawnych, przewlekle chorych i starszych. Chętnym do pracy musimy zapewnić odpowiednie wsparcie i możliwości, natomiast pozostałym – godne warunki do aktywnego starzenia się i udziału w społeczeństwie. Oczywiście, aby zachować konkurencyjność gospodarki i dobrą koniunkturę, musimy utrzymywać odpowiednią równowagę i wspierać także przedsiębiorców, zapewniając im dostęp do finansowania i nowych technologii.

Georgi Pirinski (S&D). – Madam President, the topic of this discussion – the consequences of rising socio-economic inequalities for European citizens – is central to overall European Union policies. The drastic statistics on inequalities, surpassing any imaginable degree of sustainability, are by now more than well known. But what are the driving forces and, above all, the policy responses?

As for the reasons, the aim of maximising short-term profits has led to a corporate model based on price competition and avoidance of obligations, be they social or environmental. In addition, it has led to downward pressures on workers' and producers' pay and on labour and environmental standards, and to companies paying as little tax as possible; with ever greater political power in favour of policies preserving and safeguarding the present system.

The European Union's main tool for reducing inequalities between and within Member States is cohesion policy, which we must endow with political power, human resources and financial needs, ensuring it becomes the lead priority in the post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). This means that European funding for cohesion policy must increase. The new cohesion policy framework needs to support, in particular but not only, the poorest European regions. Priority emphasis must be put on social investment. National co-financing should not be taken into account in deficit calculations as part of the Stability and Growth Pact, and grants ought to remain the standard form of financing.

Furthermore it is crucial that citizens become actively engaged in shaping the policies that influence their daily lives. This means gaining citizens' support for transforming the EU into a fully fledged Social Union – a Union of the people, by the people and for the people.

Eleonora Forenza (GUE/NGL). – Signora Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, in quest'Aula durante questo dibattito ho sentito più volte citare i dati Oxfam, che ovviamente preoccupano moltissimo anche me. Però ho sentito parlare dell'aumento della povertà e dell'aumento della disuguaglianza come se si trattasse di catastrofi naturali, come se non ci fossero delle responsabilità politiche nell'aver determinato questo quadro e questo aumento delle disuguaglianze.

Io penso che le responsabilità politiche vadano nominate, perché sono anche in quest'Aula, sono della grande coalizione tra popolari e socialisti che hanno la maggioranza in questo Parlamento, che governano la Commissione, che governano in moltissimi Stati membri. Credo che ci siano delle soluzioni assolutamente praticabili: la riduzione d'orario a parità di salario, la piena parità salariale tra donne e uomini, il reddito minimo garantito, così come già previsto da una risoluzione di questo Parlamento europeo, e un salario minimo europeo. Se non anteponevamo il *Fiscal Compact* e la difesa dei profitti alla difesa del lavoro, potremmo farli anche in Europa.

Geoffroy Didier (PPE). – Madame la Présidente, chers collègues, Nelson Mandela affirmait que, tant que l'injustice perdurerait, nul ne pourrait prendre de repos. Manifestement, du repos, nous ne sommes pas prêts d'en prendre.

Oui, les inégalités s'aggravent avec un taux de risque de pauvreté qui touche désormais le quart de la population européenne. Les premières victimes de ce phénomène sont évidemment les peuples eux-mêmes, mais ne nous leurrions pas, c'est aussi l'image de l'Europe qui est désormais en jeu, parce que les inégalités sont la première cause de défiance à l'égard de la construction européenne.

Et c'est dans cette Assemblée plus qu'ailleurs qu'il nous faut non seulement être conscients des fractures, mais aussi trouver de moyens de les résorber. J'en propose aujourd'hui un très concret: approfondissons l'Europe là où elle est la plus utile. Vous savez que l'initiative pour l'emploi des jeunes, qui aide tous ceux de la nouvelle génération qui ne suivent ni études ni formation, s'applique d'ores et déjà aux régions où le taux de chômage des jeunes est supérieur à 25 %.

Je propose concrètement que cette politique européenne puisse à l'avenir être élargie aux régions où le taux de chômage des jeunes est supérieur, non plus à 25 %, mais à 20 %. Cela signifierait, par exemple, que dans mon pays, en France, où, malheureusement, chacun subit le creusement des inégalités du fait d'une politique gouvernementale particulièrement injuste, le programme d'aide européen s'appliquerait non plus à sept mais à douze régions.

Mes chers collègues, pour conclure, nous croyons fondamentalement dans l'Europe, parce que c'est l'union qui fait la force, mais si nous voulons la légitimer dans le cœur des peuples, donnons-lui très vite une vocation bien plus sociale et une ...

(La Présidente retire la parole à l'orateur)

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D). – Šiandien kalbėdama iš šios tribūnos apie didėjančią ekonominę ir socialinę nelygybę, pirmiausia, visų dėmesį – ir ponios Komisarės, ir pirmininkaujantios valstybės, ir savo kolegų – noriu atkreipti į mūsų mažuosius piliečius, į mūsų vaikus.

Atsakykime į klausimą – ar sugebame mes jiems užtikrinti normalias gyvenimo sąlygas, ar jie gauna tinkamą mitybą, kokybišką išsilavinimą, sveikatos priežiūrą, ar mes pakankamai investuojame į mūsų vaikus, kad panaikintumėme jų skurdą ir nelygybę? Atsakymas vienareikšmis – žinoma, kad ne.

Todėl dar kartą kreipiuosi, ponija Komisarė, į Jus ir valstybes nares ragindama nedelsiant parengti ir patvirtinti Vaiko garantiją, pagal kurią mes galėtumėme taikyti konkrečias finansiškai pagrįstas priemones kovos su vaikų skurdu. Įsiklausykite, virš 20 mln. vaikų skursta Europos Sąjungoje. Todėl delsti nebegalima. Ir ypač dabar, kai mes svarstome ir rengiame Daugiametę finansinę perspektyvą, numatykime finansines investicijas į Europos Sąjungos vaikus. Ir tai bus pats didžiausias mūsų pasiekimas.

Ir antra, į ką noriu atkreipti dėmesį, tai didžiulė nelygybė tarp vyrų ir moterų. Iki šiol vyrų ir moterų atlyginimai už tą patį darbą skiriasi 16 procentų, o tuo pačiu skiriasi pensijos. Mes jas gauname net 40 proc. mažesnes. Ir čia reikia darbo ir pastangų.

La Présidente. – Merci Madame. On y reviendra probablement.

Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz (PPE). – Pani Przewodnicząca! Szanowni Państwo! Pani Komisarz! Nierówności w Europie rosną, ale nie między państwami. Nierówności między państwami maleją, a tylko wewnątrz państw stale rosną. Górne 10 % gospodarstw domowych w Europie zarabia 30 % wszystkich dochodów rodzin i posiada 50 % wszystkich dóbr posiadanych przez rodzinę. I te nierówności narastają, a wraz z nimi problemy zdrowotne, społeczne i ekonomiczne, ponieważ nierówności nie sprzyjają rozwojowi ekonomicznemu. I z tych danych można jasno wyprowadzić taką tezę, że jeżeli chcemy ograniczyć biedę, powinniśmy ograniczyć nierówności. Badania pokazują też, że najsilniejszym instrumentem zmniejszania nierówności jest edukacja oraz zwiększanie zatrudnienia kobiet. Cieszę się, że jest tu z nami pani komisarz Thyssen, ponieważ wierzę, że ten pakiet godzenia ról, szczególnie część nielegislacyjna dotycząca przedszkoli, będzie wpływał pozytywnie na włączenie kobiet do rynku pracy. Ważne są też w kontekście zmniejszania nierówności stabilne formy zatrudnienia, ale przede wszystkim zwiększenie partycypacji pracowników w gospodarce, na przykład przez posiadanie akcji firm, przez obecność przedstawicieli pracowników w zarządach, ale też przez spółdzielczość socjalną czy działanie kooperatyw. Najważniejsze jednak – i to już ostatnie zdanie – to żebyśmy uniknęli takiej pułapki pójścia w kierunku rozwijania państwa opiekuńczego. Wierzę, że należy iść w kierunku podmiotowości, zwiększenia podmiotowości obywateli i zwiększania partycypacji społecznej, bo tylko stawianie na podmiotowość spowoduje, że będziemy stale kreatywni i konkurencyjni na globalnym rynku.

Iratxe García Pérez (S&D). – Señora presidenta, crecimiento económico no es sinónimo ni garantía de igualdad. Quien saca pecho por los datos macroeconómicos y a la vez se pone una venda en los ojos y no es capaz de ver cómo eso está repercutiendo en la vida de las personas le hace un flaco favor al modelo social europeo. Porque el crecimiento debería convertirse y traducirse en salarios dignos, en derechos de los trabajadores, en pensiones justas. Y a día de hoy eso no está ocurriendo.

Y, además, están aquí los representantes del Consejo y de la Comisión y quiero recordar una cosa. Hace poco más de un mes se establecían las prioridades para el próximo año y no se tenía en cuenta una cuestión: hoy, en Europa, la desigualdad tiene rostro de mujer. Somos la mitad de la población europea y en las prioridades que establecen las instituciones europeas no se habla de conciliación de la vida familiar y laboral, no se habla de la brecha salarial que tanto estamos sufriendo, no se habla de la violencia de género.

Si ustedes no lo recuerdan, dentro de un mes, el 8 de marzo, cientos de miles de hombres y mujeres saldrán, saldremos a las calles a recordárselo.

Michaela Šojdrová (PPE). – Paní předsedající, nerovnost není ničím novým. Ale nás musí zneklidňovat to, že v době ekonomického růstu se nerovnost nesnižuje. Například digitalizace sice vytváří nové příležitosti, ale jejich využití se neobejde bez investic a nových dovedností. Pak se také prohlubuje propast mezi těmi, kteří nových možností se chopí, využijí je, a těmi, kteří to prostě bez pomoci nezvládnou. Proto musíme hovořit o inkluzi, o kvalitním vzdělání pro všechny.

Pro mladé lidi je složitější najít uplatnění na trhu práce, pokud nemají praxi. Nové, nestandardní formy práce jako *crowdworking* díky flexibilitě sice umožňují práci těm, kteří by jinak pracovat nemohli, ale zároveň vytváří kategorii druhořadých pracovníků bez sociální ochrany. Řešením nerovností není zavedení tak zvaného zaručeného příjmu. Ten totiž mimo jiné postrádá prvek motivace.

Na úrovni Evropské unie pomáhají programy, které řeší právě dostupnost vzdělání. Snížení nerovnosti znamená především zvýšení příležitostí. A my máme možnost posílení programu Erasmus+, ten stále je exkluzivní, stále málo mladých lidí dosáhne na zapojení v tomto programu. Pokud tedy chceme snížit nerovnost, pak musíme také zvýšit rozpočet na program Erasmus+, který umožňuje financovat projekty k modernizaci vzdělávání, klade důraz na učňovské obory a na praxi a podnikatelské dovednosti.

Marianne Thyssen, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, our economies, the world of work and our societies are changing. Some changes, such as automation and digitalisation, may increase the skills premium for high-skilled workers and inequalities may increase, but the answer to these challenges is not to reject the benefits that technology can bring. Instead we must strengthen the European workforce and step forward with more effective employment and social policy, with education, with skilling, with upskilling and with training systems. We must shape the future, and let us indeed continue to foster equal opportunities for under-represented groups, including in our own institutions.

I have said it before and I'll say it again: there is no trade-off between having more equality on one hand and having more growth on the other. Well-designed reforms can – and should – achieve both. We too have said in our Annual Growth Survey, in the euro area Council recommendation and in some country-specific recommendations that promoting wage growth under certain conditions would be a good thing. As the economic recovery continues in Europe, it is essential to make sure no one is left behind.

Combating inequalities is – and will remain – a priority for the Commission, and we address it through a mix of policy levers: good jobs, fair taxation and adequate social protection. The Commission cannot – and will not – do this alone. This requires a collective effort, first of all at European level, but also at national level and at local level. Indeed, let us cherish and support grassroots social projects as we do with the European Social Fund. We have also to work together with social partners and other stakeholders.

Let us not forget that reducing inequality does not happen just like that. But I am confident that we can move further in the right direction. What we have to do everywhere – all of us – is to roll up our sleeves and get to work. Thank you for this debate.

Monika Panayotova, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Madam President, inequality is a cross-cutting issue so the Council has already taken steps on the various aspects of this issue. This year, the Council will continue to work on the implementation of the Social Pillar and together with the Commission we will monitor the social situation in individual Member States. As Commissioner Thyssen just said, the Council, Parliament and the Commission all have a role to play.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to discuss this far-reaching topic. It has shown the wide-ranging nature of the challenges ahead of us. It also outlined possible ways towards building a Union which is based on sustainable growth and which promotes economic prosperity, social development and equal opportunities for all.

La Présidente. – Le débat est clos.

Déclarations écrites (article 162)

Clara Eugenia Aguilera García (S&D), *por escrito*. – En el Grupo S&D tenemos una larga y sólida trayectoria en la lucha contra las desigualdades, el ejemplo más reciente lo tenemos con el informe aprobado por el Parlamento Europeo sobre «Combatir las desigualdades para impulsar la creación de empleo y el crecimiento», del cual fue ponente Javi López. Las desigualdades no solo nos interpelan en términos éticos o sociales, sino que hoy también socavan nuestras democracias y la propia integración europea, dañando nuestro potencial crecimiento. Tenemos claro que los recortes de salarios, de pensiones y servicios públicos contribuyen al aumento de la desigualdad y de la brecha salarial y al deterioro del bienestar ciudadano. Por eso reclamamos a la UE medidas legislativas y financieras para asegurar la calidad del empleo y del Estado del bienestar, y la redistribución de los beneficios generados por el comercio internacional, y la coordinación de políticas fiscales. Lo que hizo único a este continente en el siglo pasado fue su economía social de mercado, es decir, reconciliar progreso, democracia y crecimiento sostenible. En este sentido, estamos convencidos que el pilar europeo de derechos sociales debe ser nuestra herramienta para volver a dar cuerpo al alma de Europa.

Dominique Bilde (ENF), *par écrit*. – Merci Monsieur le Président, Selon l'ONG Oxfam (22/01/2018), 82 % des richesses générées en 2017 ont bénéficié au 1 % plus riche de la population. 3,7 milliards de personnes n'en ont, quant à elles, retiré aucune amélioration. Ce constat doit tempérer tout triomphalisme quant au retour de la croissance en Europe, puisque ce creusement des inégalités porte les ferments d'une crise économique future. Pire, celles-ci hypothèquent nos perspectives de long terme en frappant au premier chef les jeunes actifs, dont le risque d'exclusion sociale s'est accru entre 2008 et 2016, comme le Fonds monétaire international l'a souligné le 24 janvier 2018.

Cette situation, fruit d'un modèle économique prônant une mobilité du capital et du travail ne profitant qu'à une minorité, est causée notamment par renchérissement du logement, dont la part dans les budgets des ménages est passée de 20,3 % à 24,4 % entre 2000 et 2016 (OCDE), qui, conjugué à la stagnation des revenus du travail, n'est pas sans lien avec l'immigration de masse subie par l'Europe. Les déclarations de bonnes intentions de la Commission seront sans effet sans remise en cause des fondements de son modèle économique dont la conséquence ultime sera la disparition définitive des classes moyennes.

Caterina Chinnici (S&D), *per iscritto*. – Come emerge anche dai dati più recenti, povertà ed esclusione sociale colpiscono ancora oggi quasi un quarto della popolazione europea, seppure in misura diversa nelle diverse aree dei paesi membri, e determinano crescenti disegualtanze che penalizzano soprattutto i giovani che provengono da famiglie prive di una educazione avanzata e le donne che continuano ad essere svantaggiate nell'educazione, nel lavoro e nelle attività imprenditoriali.

Numerose sono le cause che determinano le troppe situazioni di disparità socioeconomiche fra i cittadini europei ed è pertanto necessario adottare misure idonee a rimuoverle. Penso, per esempio, ad interventi mirati a migliorare il sistema educativo, che deve essere rivolto a tutti i cittadini e soprattutto ai bambini e ai giovani che appartengono a famiglie a rischio di marginalizzazione, e ancora a iniziative mirate a migliorare il sistema formativo, che deve essere maggiormente incentrato sulle reali esigenze del mercato del lavoro e finalizzato all'inserimento lavorativo delle diverse professionalità nelle specifiche aree produttive. Al tempo stesso, però, occorre adottare misure adeguate a sostenere e incentivare gli investimenti da parte delle aziende, soprattutto nelle aree più depresse, anche al fine di limitarne la delocalizzazione delle attività verso paesi terzi.

Sergio Gutiérrez Prieto (S&D), *por escrito*. – Los socialistas europeos tenemos una larga y sólida trayectoria en la lucha contra las desigualdades, el ejemplo más reciente lo tenemos con el informe aprobado por el Parlamento Europeo sobre «Combatir las desigualdades para impulsar la creación de empleo y el crecimiento», del cual fue ponente Javi López. Las desigualdades no solo nos interpelan en términos éticos o sociales, sino que hoy también socavan nuestras democracias y la propia integración europea, dañando nuestro potencial crecimiento. Tenemos claro que los recortes de salarios, de pensiones y servicios públicos contribuyen al aumento de la desigualdad y la brecha salarial y al deterioro del bienestar ciudadano. Por eso reclamamos a la UE medidas legislativas y financieras para asegurar la calidad del empleo y del estado del bienestar, y la redistribución de los beneficios generados por el comercio internacional, y la coordinación de políticas fiscales. Lo que hizo único a este continente en el siglo pasado fue su economía social de mercado, es decir, reconciliar progreso, democracia y crecimiento sostenible. En este sentido, estamos convencidos que el Pilar Europeo de derechos sociales debe ser nuestra herramienta para volver a dar cuerpo al alma de Europa.

Danuta Jazłowiecka (PPE), *na piśmie*. – Chyba nikt z nas nie ma wątpliwości, że należy walczyć z narastającymi nierównościami ekonomiczno-społecznymi w Unii Europejskiej. Oczywiście różnice w dochodach czy poziomie zamożności poszczególnych grup społecznych zawsze będą występowały. Jest to naturalna konsekwencja gospodarki rynkowej. Są jednak zjawiska, które taki stan rzeczy pogłębiają, i ten proces należy zatrzymać.

W debacie publicznej funkcjonują oczywiście zróżnicowane opinie na temat tego, jak walczyć z nadmiernym rozwarstwieniem ekonomiczno-społecznym. Z mojego punktu widzenia szczególnie niebezpieczne są 2 zjawiska i to im należy poświęcić szczególną uwagę. Pierwszą konsekwencją nierówności jest „przenoszenie” ubóstwa i wykluczenia z pokolenia na pokolenie. Istnieje grupa młodych ludzi, która nie wierzy w lepsze jutro dla siebie i swoich dzieci. Tworzy się zamknięte koło, które trudno przerwać. Kolejną niezmiernie ważną konsekwencją jest wzrost poparcia dla ruchów populistycznych oraz narastający strach przed „obcymi”.

Jak walczyć z tymi zjawiskami? Oczywiście potrzebna jest strategia oparta na wielu działaniach. Jednak w mojej opinii podstawowa odpowiedź to edukacja. Jeśli chcemy zatrzymać niekorzystny trend, musimy zapewnić równy dostęp do wysokiej jakości edukacji wszystkim obywatelom UE. To jest podstawowy warunek.

Ádám Kósa (PPE), írásban. – A megszorítások és a GDP-alapú növekedés hajszolása helyett ideje egy új megközelítést alkalmazni. Ezért a svájci alapítású, független Világgazdasági Fórum legújabb kutatásában azt vizsgálták, hogy mennyire inkluzív (bevonó) egy adott ország gazdasági növekedése, és egy egészen újfajta rangsor került nyilvánosságra, az ún. bevonó gazdasági fejlődés index (Inclusive Development Index, IDI) alkalmazásával.

Ez lényegében azt mutatja meg, hogy a társadalom túlnyomó többsége tudott-e egy lépést tenni előre, vagy csak egy szűk elit járt-e jól a gazdasági növekedéssel. Ez alapján a felemelkedő országok között Magyarország a második helyen áll, így az egy főre jutó GDP, a munkatermelékenység és a várható egészségben eltöltött élettartam szempontjából is 74 ország között a legfelső húsz százalékba tartozik. Sőt, a nettó jövedelmek egyenlőtlenségében, a szegénységi rátában, a vagyoni egyenlőtlenségekben és a mediánjövedelemben is a legjobb ötödbe tartozik a 74 ország között.

Ha pedig a szegénységgel kapcsolatos értékeket nézzük, akkor a magyar Gini-együttható 2016-ban 28,2 százalék volt. Ez európai szinten Magyarországot az egyenlőbb társadalmak közé helyezi, messze kiemelkedve a térség országai közül. A súlyos anyagi nélkülözésben élők aránya tekintetében több mint 40 százalékos javulást láthatunk 2012 és 2016 között, a 2010 előtti válság szintje alá süllyedve. A 2018-tól érvénybe lépő magasabb minimálbér tovább javíthatja ezt a tendenciát.

Νότης Μαρίας (ECR), γραπτώς. – Οι κοινωνικές ανισότητες εντεινόνται στη Γηραιά Ήπειρο. Αυτό οφείλεται τόσο στην ίδια τη δομή της Ευρωζώνης όσο και στην ασκούμενη πολιτική, η οποία στηρίζεται στη μερκελική λιτότητα και στη βίαιη δημοσιονομική προσαρμογή, που είχαν ως αποτέλεσμα να δημιουργηθούν στρατιές ανέργων και εκατομμύρια φτωχών. Οι κοινωνικές, λοιπόν, ανισότητες στην Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση αφθρόνονται τόσο εντός κάθε κράτους μέλους όσο και μεταξύ των κρατών μελών του σκληρού πυρήνα και της περιφέρειας της ΕΕ, με ιδιαίτερη έμφαση στον ευρωπαϊκό Νότο. Η συνεχιζόμενη απόκλιση μεταξύ σκληρού πυρήνα και περιφέρειας της ΕΕ γίνεται αντιληπτή εάν παρακολουθήσει κανείς τα ποσοστά ανεργίας και ιδίως τα ποσοστά ανεργίας των νέων. Έτσι, η Ελλάδα, η Ισπανία και η Ιταλία είναι πρωταθλήτριες στην ανεργία των νέων, ενώ τα αντίστοιχα ποσοστά είναι ιδιαίτερα χαμηλά στη Γερμανία, στην Αυστρία, στο Λουξεμβούργο, κλπ. Για τον λόγο αυτόν πρέπει να αλλάξει ριζικά η δομή της Ευρωζώνης, να εγκαταλειφθεί η πολιτική της λιτότητας και να οικοδομηθεί μια Ευρώπη με τριπλό κοινωνικό Α. Στο πλαίσιο αυτό, πρέπει να ληφθούν μέτρα για τη θεσμοθέτηση -σε πρώτη φάση- ευρωπαϊκού ελάχιστου κοινωνικού εισοδήματος, ευρωπαϊκού ελάχιστου μισθού και ευρωπαϊκού επιδόματος ανεργίας.

Péter Niedermüller (S&D), írásban. – Az utóbbi évtizedekben az Európai Unió tagállamaiban is drámai módon nőtt a társadalmi egyenlőtlenség. Ma Európában közel 120 millióan, közöttük több millió gyermek, élnek szegénységben, a szegénység által veszélyeztetve. Egyre nő a dolgozó szegények, azaz azoknak a polgároknak a száma is, akik ugyan dolgoznak, de keresetükből nem tudnak megélni. A társadalmi egyenlőtlenség, a szegénység azonban nem egyszerűen anyagi kérdés, hanem egyet jelent a szabadság, a lehetőségek hiányával, a kirekesztettséggel, az emberi méltóság elvesztésével, a jövőtől való félelemmel. Egyet jelent a társadalom végtelen és végzetes kettészakadásával.

Azt is tudjuk, a mai világ egyenlőtlenségeit nem lehet egyszerűen béremelésekkel, vagy szociális juttatásokkal orvosolni. Az egyenlőtlenség legfőbb oka ugyanis a tudáshoz való hozzáférés, a tudás megszerzésének lehetőségeiben rejlő különbség. Aki nem tudja megszerezni azokat a kompetenciákat és készségeket, amelyeket a mai tudás alapú társadalom, a munka megváltozott világa megkövetel, az szükségszerűen a társadalom periferiájára kerül. Ha pedig a társadalmi egyenlőtlenségek egyre inkább újratermelődnék, az súlyosan veszélyezteti a demokráciát is. Éppen ezért nem lehet továbbra is a megszokott kategóriákban gondolkodni. Mindenekelőtt befogadó gazdaságra és társadalomra, digitális oktatásra, erős és hatékony szociális hálóra van szükség. Nem csupán szociális segílyt kell osztogatni, hanem olyan utakat kell építeni, amelyek megteremtik a szegénységben élő emberek számára a kitörés lehetőségét.

Claudia Țapardel (S&D), in writing. – The consequences of socio-economic inequalities for European citizens are serious as they are diverse. They generate significant economic and social costs in terms of low demand, which in turn diminish growth, but they also stoke the fire of populist discourse. Figures show that almost one person in four experiences poverty or social exclusion, with an even more worrying percentage for young people, and inequalities are only getting bigger, even if we have theoretically put the economic crisis behind us. This situation is unacceptable for the 21st century Europe and requires immediate action, reasons for which I welcome the debate initiated by the S&D Group. We need a new approach for equitable and sustainable well-being – in all Member States – and the European Pillar for Social Rights or the Youth Guarantee are great examples of how we can bring real change. My view is that we

need to put extra effort into helping young generations, particularly as regard training and acquiring skills. As lack of education is responsible for the passing of poverty between generations, I support creating more programmes focused on education and professional qualifications, including for the tourism sector, one of the engines of EU economic growth.

Elena Valenciano (S&D), *por escrito*. – En el Grupo S&D tenemos una larga y sólida trayectoria en la lucha contra las desigualdades, el ejemplo más reciente lo tenemos con el informe aprobado por el Parlamento Europeo sobre «Combatir las desigualdades para impulsar la creación de empleo y el crecimiento», del cual fue ponente Javi López. Las desigualdades no solo nos interpelan en términos éticos o sociales, sino que hoy también socavan nuestras democracias y la propia integración europea, dañando nuestro potencial crecimiento. Tenemos claro que los recortes de salarios, de pensiones y servicios públicos contribuyen al aumento de la desigualdad y de la brecha salarial y al deterioro del bienestar ciudadano. Por eso reclamamos a la UE medidas legislativas y financieras para asegurar la calidad del empleo y del Estado del bienestar, y la redistribución de los beneficios generados por el comercio internacional, y la coordinación de políticas fiscales. Lo que hizo único a este continente en el siglo pasado fue su economía social de mercado, es decir, reconciliar progreso, democracia y crecimiento sostenible. En este sentido, estamos convencidos que el pilar europeo de derechos sociales debe ser nuestra herramienta para volver a dar cuerpo al alma de Europa.

Gabriela Zoană (S&D), *în scris*. – Trăim într-o Uniune Europeană în care inegalitățile socio-economice între cetățeni se observă ușor. Nu trebuie să fii expert nici în economie, cultură sau politică pentru a percepe gradul de bunăstare al cetățenilor unei țări.

Știm că cetățenii danezi sunt cei mai fericiți sau că în Finlanda vom găsi cel mai performant sistem de educație. Gradul de fericire, educația, cultura și bunăstarea economică a cetățenilor unei țări constituie repere după care ne putem oricând ghida pentru a identifica condițiile socio-economice pe care le oferă o țară locuitorilor ei.

Trăim într-o Uniune Europeană și ar trebui să avem un țel comun: să fim cu toții la fel de fericiți, copiii noștri să aibă acces la sisteme educaționale performante și să cunoaștem cu toții nivelul de trai de care se bucura cetățenii celor mai dezvoltate țări europene. Atunci când vorbim despre consecințele inegalității socio-economice între cetățenii europeni, nu vorbim doar de existența în UE a unor categorii distincte, șomaj, migrația masivă a forței de muncă, nu vorbim doar despre depopularea sau îmbătrânirea populației anumitor zone și de aglomerarea altora, ci și de lipsa accesului la un sistem educativ performant și nesiguranta zilei de mâine pentru mulți cetățeni europeni.

14. Reforma prawa wyborczego Unii Europejskiej (debata)

La Présidente. – L'ordre du jour appelle le débat sur la question avec demande de réponse orale au Conseil sur la réforme de la loi électorale de l'Union européenne posée par Danuta Maria Hübner, au nom de la commission des affaires constitutionnelles (O-000099/2017 — B8-0002/2018) (2017/3019(RSP)).

Danuta Maria Hübner, author. – Madam President, since this morning, a lot has been said in this House on elections as the main instrument of democratic participation. Democratic participation is the *raison d'être* for any parliament. This European Parliament was for the first time elected based on direct universal suffrage in 1979. The legal basis was provided by the Electoral Act of 1976. It was a European Parliament of 410 directly-elected representatives. It was a European Parliament for a European Union of 9 Member States.

Today we live in a completely different world. The European Union comprises 28 Member States. The Parliament is composed of 751 Members, its role as co-legislator has skyrocketed, and still the rules governing the conduct of European elections are those established 42 years ago. It is our fundamental duty as the European Parliament to enable participatory democracy to facilitate the building of a bottom-up Europe and connect citizens with Europe. Connecting Europe with citizens starts with the European elections, and we need to update the Electoral Act of 1976. This is what we did in November 2015, by adopting and transmitting to the Council a proposal for amendment of the '76 Electoral Act.

According to the Treaty – Article 223 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union – it is not only the duty but also the right of the European Parliament to draw up a proposal to lay down the provisions on its electoral law. Our utmost goal is to enhance the democratic dimension of the European elections, to reinforce Union citizenship, to improve the functioning of the Parliament and the governance of the European Union, to make the work of the Parliament more legitimate and efficient, to enhance effectiveness of the election's conduct, and to provide for more electoral equality of Union citizens. More than two years have passed, six Council Presidencies have worked, the next European elections of 2019 are around the corner. So here is our question:

Dear Council, dear Commission, we would like to know what is the intention of the two other institutions, especially of the Council, regarding the reform of the EU electoral law?

PRESIDENZA DELL'ON. DAVID-MARIA SASSOLI

Vicepresidente

Jo Leinen, *Verfasser*. – Herr Präsident! Die bulgarische Präsidentschaft ist jetzt die sechste Präsidentschaft, die sich mit dem Antrag des Europäischen Parlaments vom November 2015 beschäftigt – sechs Präsidentschaften ohne Ergebnis. Wir haben zwar informelle Kontakte gehabt, aber es gibt ja keinen offiziellen Standpunkt des Rates, und wir gehen mit Riesenschritten auf die nächsten Europawahlen im Mai 2019 zu. Also, wenn Sie es nicht schaffen, in der bulgarischen Präsidentschaft, dann ist das ein verlorenes Dossier.

Wie Kollegin Hübner schon gesagt hat, brauchen die Europawahlen Verbesserungen. Sie stecken fest in dem Wahlakt von 1976 mit einigen Erneuerungen von 2002. Aber sie entsprechen gar nicht mehr der Bedeutung, die diese Wahlen heute in der EU haben. Wir haben 16 Vorschläge gemacht, und ich habe den Eindruck, im Rat wird jeder einzelne Vorschlag kleingeredet und mit irgendwelchen Argumenten zur Seite geschoben. Wir haben z. B. Beispiel den Vorschlag gemacht, dass wir die Europawahlen seriöser vorbereiten – demokratischer und transparenter. Es kann doch nicht sein, dass in einigen Ländern Kandidaten erst zwei Wochen vor der Wahl wissen, dass sie Kandidaten sind. Man braucht doch wirklich mehr Zeit, um einen Wahlkampf zu führen.

Wir haben auch vorgeschlagen, dass die Bürgerinnen und Bürger feststellen, welche ihrer nationalen Parteien zu europäischen Parteien gehören, um auch eine klarere Sicht zu haben, was sie da wählen und in welche Richtung sich Europa bewegt. Wir wollten die Gleichstellung der Geschlechter auf den Wahllisten. Wir haben mutige Vorschläge für die Senkung des Wahlalters auf 16 Jahre gemacht und die Prüfung, ob man auch elektronisch bei der Europawahl wählen kann, ob auch die Millionen Bürger, die nicht in ihrem Land wohnen, bei der Europawahl ein Wahlrecht bekommen, das ist in vielen Mitgliedstaaten zurzeit ausgeschlossen; auf der anderen Seite, dass Bürger nicht doppelt wählen.

Also eine Vielzahl von Innovationen und Verbesserungen, und das Dossier steckt einfach im Rat fest. Ich habe den Eindruck, der Rat verletzt seine Pflicht, dieser direkt gewählten Bürgerkammer auch entsprechend Auskunft zu geben und so ein wichtiges Dossier voranzutreiben. Wir fragen Sie: Wo ist es, und wann können wir mit einer Antwort rechnen?

Monika Panayotova, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Mr President, honourable Members, Ms Hübner, I would like to thank the rapporteur, Ms Hübner, for her oral question. I welcome this opportunity to update Parliament on the state of play on this important issue.

Let me recall that on 19 November 2015, the two rapporteurs, Ms Hübner and Mr Leinen, presented Parliament's proposal to the Council at an informal Committee of Permanent Representatives (Coreper) meeting. Since then, discussions took place in the relevant working party and five successive Presidencies conducted intensive technical work on this file.

In November 2016 and December 2017, Coreper was involved and held an in-depth discussion on these very sensitive issues. After these two meetings the Presidencies met with the two co-rapporteurs in order to give them a comprehensive overview and a clear state of play of the discussions. The first meeting took place in January 2017 and the last one in December 2017.

Minister Maasikas for the Estonian Presidency came before the Committee on Constitutional Affairs (AFCO) where he presented orally to the rapporteurs the general state of play on the discussions, as of November 2017, after a detailed mapping exercise. So contacts have been ongoing. Today I am really happy to have the opportunity to give you some feedback.

Let me first stress that the Member States are very much supportive of the general aim of the proposal to enhance public interest and voter turnout in the European Parliament elections. They also share the view that there is a need for increased transparency and awareness-raising regarding the European character of the European Parliament elections.

But the Member States also stressed the importance of respecting their constitutional and electoral traditions, as well as the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. The proposal has indeed raised some concerns in this regard. Member States have also been pointing to the autonomy of the political parties and the divergences in national systems in this respect. In their view, harmonisation should only be pursued in case of strict necessity and after a rigorous examination of the added value it will bring.

On a more positive note, let me underline that after several months of discussions in the Working Party we were able to identify, in a preliminary way, a package of provisions on which an agreement in the Council would seem currently the most likely. We need to pursue our work on this to explore the possibility of a compromise that might be acceptable for all. I can assure you that our Presidency has put this file high on the agenda. Let me also recall that this file will require unanimity in the Council.

Finally, you should also know that we share the concerns about the deadlines for the approval of the amendments to the electoral law, in accordance with the Member States' constitutional requirements, and about adopting the necessary domestic measures in time for the 2019 elections.

To sum up: despite these difficulties, we are determined to continue the hard work on this important file in the Council. We are also happy to continue working closely with the European Parliament in a very constructive spirit to try to overcome the difficulties and seek solutions that are acceptable to all.

Paulo Rangel, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – Mr President, first I'd like to acknowledge and to underline that both Danuta Hübner and Jo Leinen have really been fighters for the improvement of the electoral law of the European Union and the European elections, and so we follow this effort and this clear aim.

I understand that our concern is that we have to modernise electoral law, we have to carry out a lot of improvements. Today we have taken a major step by giving electoral law the final kick-off for its reform, because the issue of those national lists was very divisive, and a lot of states had them as a red line. With the vote here, that was quite clear. Now I think that we have a way forward for carrying out other reforms because, in one way, we were captured and imprisoned by the issue of transnational lists.

I'm not here pleading against or in favour: I'm saying that it was an obstacle to changing other electoral-law issues. Now we are in a position to carry out the improvements that we really need, and so the Council will probably be in a better position to consider the different proposals and to see if they can reach a consensus on improving our electoral rules.

Mercedes Bresso, *a nome del gruppo S&D*. – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, signora Presidente del Consiglio in carica, io credo che sia giusto richiamare i principi di proporzionalità e sussidiarietà, ma qui parliamo della legge elettorale europea. Essa deve essere sufficientemente omogenea per rendere chiaro ai cittadini di tutti i paesi europei che votano per un unico Parlamento e non per elezioni nazionali.

Quindi io credo che in particolare alcune delle norme che noi chiediamo vengano aggiornate, una serie di norme di semplificazione di chiarimento, ma anche quelle relative all'appartenenza a delle famiglie politiche europee, siano indispensabili perché ciò rende chiaro la battaglia politica che a livello europeo si deve fare, altrimenti nessuno sa di cosa si sta parlando.

Non concordo con il collega Rangel. Purtroppo il voto di oggi ha ancora aumentato le divisioni e le aumenterà anche all'interno del Consiglio, perché noi sappiamo che ci sono molti paesi che sulle liste transnazionali fanno un punto importante della loro azione politica. Quindi chiedo anche a lei di sapere tener conto del fatto che non solo questo Parlamento si è diviso più o meno a metà – tenuto conto che coloro che se ne vanno in realtà non avevano titolo a parlare – e altrettanto succederà nel Consiglio. Una composizione ragionevole si deve quindi trovare.

Kazimierz Michał Ujazdowski, *w imieniu grupy ECR*. – Panie Przewodniczący! Radykalizm jest wrogiem dobrego. Ja, podobnie jak pan poseł Rangel, cieszę się z tego, iż uniknęliśmy radykalizmu i przyjęcia okręgu transnarodowego – gdyż z punktu widzenia legitymacji Parlamentu Europejskiego znacznie lepszy jest wybór posłów w krajach członkowskich – i tego też należy uniknąć w trakcie prac nad prawem wyborczym. W zaleceniach pani poseł Hübner i pana posła Leinena jest sporo dobrych propozycji, między innymi te, które dotyczą przejrzystości procesu wyborczego, terminów. Ale są i propozycje, z którymi grupa ECR nie może się zgodzić. Chodzi tu przede wszystkim o centralizację wyborów, o obowiązek umieszczania logo przynależności na poziomie europejskim w wyborach do Parlamentu Europejskiego. To tłumi nowe inicjatywy polityczne. Naszym zdaniem powinno być to prawo, a nie obowiązek.

Cieszę się z wystąpienia pani minister, bo to pozwala określić możliwe pole uzgodnień. Tak, jest szansa na uchwalenie nowego prawa, ale takiego, które będzie zgodne z tradycjami konstytucyjnymi państw członkowskich i będzie zapewniać polityczną wolność.

António Marinho e Pinto, *em nome do Grupo ALDE*. – Senhor Presidente, Senhora Ministra, é necessário, é urgente uma reforma eleitoral na União Europeia que aproxime os deputados eleitos dos cidadãos eleitores, que inverta o sentido crescente da abstenção eleitoral, que, em suma, credibilize esta instituição parlamentar junto daqueles que representamos.

A União Europeia começou a construir-se ainda sobre os escombros fumegantes da Segunda Guerra Mundial e, desde então, essa construção tem-se processado passo a passo, umas vezes mais rapidamente, outras mais devagar.

Infelizmente, este Parlamento perdeu hoje uma rara oportunidade de dar um passo decisivo no sentido de uma maior integração europeia. Ao recusar a possibilidade de um círculo eleitoral europeu, este Parlamento adiou, sabe-se lá por quanto tempo, uma reforma que traria sangue novo a esta instituição parlamentar e lhe daria uma legitimidade reforçada.

A construção europeia vai continuar a processar-se, pois, ao ritmo dos compromissos possíveis entre os interesses egoístas dos vários Estados-Membros, em vez de se abrir também aos compromissos políticos diretamente assumidos com os cidadãos europeus.

Infelizmente, vamos continuar a ter eleições para este Parlamento cujas campanhas eleitorais se farão em torno das questões internas dos Estados-Membros e não dos verdadeiros problemas da Europa.

Hoje, a Europa atrasou-se no seu processo histórico. Por momentos, parece que os eurocéticos que se têm escondido atrás de um discurso, de uma retórica europeísta, se aliaram aos setores mais radicalmente antieuropeus deste Parlamento.

Helmut Scholz, *im Namen der GUE/NGL-Fraktion*. – Herr Präsident! Ich danke dem Rat für den Versuch einer politischen Erklärung in der Sache. Lassen Sie mich aber eine Vorbemerkung machen: Aus dem Blickwinkel der demokratischen Verfasstheit der Europäischen Union ist es geradezu ein düsteres Zeichen, dass man zwischen den halbjährlichen Erklärungen des Rates – kommender und gehender Ratspräsidentenschaften – den Rat explizit hier vor dieses Haus zitieren muss, um zu verstehen, was er in der Sache gerade irgendwo hinter verschlossenen Türen treibt. Dabei geht es nicht schlichtweg um Informationen, sondern es geht um die institutionelle Zusammenarbeit von Europäischem Parlament und Rat, zu der laut Artikel 13 des Vertrages auch der Rat verpflichtet ist, auch bei der Wahlrechtsreform, die seit zwei Jahren dort schmort, genauso wie bei unserem Untersuchungsrecht.

Politisch kann ich ja nachvollziehen, dass es dort viele Widersprüche gibt, nationale Sichtweisen, dass man, wenn der eine in die eine Richtung will, der andere in die andere Richtung will, irgendwie einen Kompromiss finden muss. Aber wohl ermüdet von dem Versuch und der Suche nach Ausgleich ändert man intern die Spielregeln, was die Zentrifuge anspringen lässt und nicht mehr nur Widerspruch provoziert, sondern neuerdings den Widerstand auch organisiert. Auch heute im Haus haben wir davon gehört.

Diesen Knoten bekommt der Rat offensichtlich nicht mehr aufgeknüpft, zu sehr hat er sich verheddert in den unterschiedlichsten politischen Interessenkonstellationen. Deshalb stellt sich für mich auch heute die Frage – ich zitiere aus meiner Rede vom 27. Oktober 2015 zum Wahlrecht: Hilft es, den öffentlichen Raum in Europa zu stärken, die seit Jahren anhaltende Sprachlosigkeit zwischen den Bürgerinnen und Bürgern und der Politik in Europa zu überwinden? Und liefert es ein Mehr an aktiver und passiver politischer Beteiligung bis heute Ausgeschlossener und auch an Parität der Geschlechter?

Dazu muss der Rat liefern und uns endlich Informationen geben, wo die Wahlrechtsreform steht.

Josep-Maria Terricabras, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – Mr President, time goes by and we have not had any news from the Council on the reform of the European electoral law. If nothing happens in the next 15 months, the European elections will have to take place under the rules of 1976. Europe has changed a lot during the past 42 years.

Minister, the members of the Council should not appeal to the principle of subsidiarity, since we are dealing with European elections, not with local, regional or national elections. We, the Greens/EFA, consider that the Parliament's electoral law resolution has been very shy, without showing a true ambition to update the electoral system according to the new social and political demands for greater participation, accountability and equality. It has been a disappointing text: indeed, not the new electoral law our group desired and expected.

We understand the urgency of producing a new law on the important subject of the European elections. However, it is not enough to produce a text. It is essential to produce the best possible text: one that is in line with the needs of the time and brings institutions a bit closer to citizens, to restore confidence and to reinforce the European project. In any case, what is now important is that Parliament be kept informed about the debate in the Council on this very important issue.

Fabio Massimo Castaldo, *a nome del gruppo EFDD*. – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, era l'11 novembre 2015 quando come Parlamento europeo votammo una proposta di modifica della legge elettorale europea, esercitando quel potere d'iniziativa che il trattato ci assegna in via eccezionale.

Da allora siamo in attesa della decisione del Consiglio alla guida del quale si sono succedute ben cinque Presidenze diverse. Pare proprio, insomma, che il Consiglio abbia dimenticato il secondo paragrafo dell'articolo 13 TUE e vorremmo quindi ricordare ai suoi componenti che esso sancisce il dovere di leale cooperazione tra le istituzioni, dovere ribadito peraltro anche dall'accordo interistituzionale dell'aprile 2016. Ci chiediamo quindi quali impedimenti maggiori stiano bloccando il colegislatore e quando potremo finalmente avanzare sul dossier.

Ricordo infatti che, affinché possa essere applicata alle elezioni del 2019, la riforma dovrebbe essere finalizzata molto in fretta. In alcuni Stati membri, le modifiche della legge elettorale devono infatti entrare in vigore dodici mesi prima delle elezioni stesse. Abbiamo proposto miglioramenti concreti e di assoluto buonsenso. Quanto dovremo e dovranno ancora aspettare i cittadini per vederli diventare finalmente realtà?

Γεώργιος Επιτήδειος (NI). – Κύριε Πρόεδρε, η προσπάθεια η οποία καταβάλλεται για να αντικατασταθεί ο ισχύων εκλογικός νόμος περί της εκλογής των μελών του Ευρωπαϊκού Κοινοβουλίου με έναν άλλο, ο οποίος θα προβλέπει την ενσωμάτωση εθνικών κομμάτων μέσα σε ευρωπαϊκά, είναι μία ακόμη προσπάθεια να αφαιρεθούν σημαντικές αρμοδιότητες από τα κράτη, να περιθωριοποιηθούν τα εθνικά κράτη και, στο τέλος, να καταλήξουμε συνομοσπονδία της Ευρωπαϊκής Ενώσεως. Παράλληλα, καταστρατηγείται και η βούληση των ψηφοφόρων οι οποίοι δεν θα έχουν πλέον το δικαίωμα να εκλέγουν τους ευρωβουλευτές της αρεσκείας τους αλλά όσους θα επιβάλει μια μικρή ηγετική ομάδα της Ευρωπαϊκής Ενώσεως.

Με τον νέο τρόπο, καταστρατηγούνται τα δικαιώματα των μικρών χωρών υπέρ των μεγάλων και των μικρών κομμάτων υπέρ των μεγάλων, διότι, τόσο οι χώρες όσο και τα κόμματα, θα χάσουν έδρες που θα δοθούν στις μεγάλες χώρες. Έτσι θα αποξενωθεί ο ψηφοφόρος από τον εκπρόσωπο του ευρωβουλευτή, δεν θα μπορεί να επηρεάσει τις καταστάσεις κι αυτό θα τον οδηγήσει στην αδιαφορία για τα ευρωπαϊκά θέματα και θα τον κάνει να μην μετέχει σε ευρωεκλογές και, σε τελευταία φάση, να ζητήσει η χώρα του να φύγει από την Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση. Για να αποφευχθούν όλα αυτά, πρέπει να καταψηφιστεί η πρόταση για την αλλαγή του ισχύοντος εκλογικού νόμου της Ευρωπαϊκής Ενώσεως.

(Ο ομιλητής δέχεται να απαντήσει σε ερώτηση με γαλάζια κάρτα, σύμφωνα με το άρθρο 162 παράγραφος 8 του Κανονισμού)

Jo Leinen (S&D). – *Frage nach dem Verfahren der „blauen Karte“.* – Herr Kollege, erlauben Sie eine Nachfrage? Ich höre Ihnen zu, ich weiß aber nicht, was Sie uns sagen wollen, denn das, was Sie sagen, hat überhaupt nichts mit dem Vorschlag des Parlaments für die Reform der Europawahlen zu tun. Wir reden dort überhaupt nicht über kleine Länder, große Länder; wir reden über mehr Transparenz und mehr Demokratie und mehr Gleichberechtigung. Das ist das Thema! Was Sie da reden, hat überhaupt nichts mit dem Gegenstand zu tun. Ich weiß nicht, wie Sie sich dazu äußern.

Γεώργιος Επιτήδειος (NI), απάντηση «γαλάζια κάρτα». – Κύριε Πρόεδρε, διαφάνεια είναι κάτι το οποίο όλοι επιθυμούν, πλην όμως, εκείνο το οποίο υποκρύπτεται πίσω από αυτό το οποίο αποκαλούμε διαφάνεια, είναι μια προσπάθεια να κατηλευθούμε και να επιηρεάσουμε την απόφαση των ψηφοφόρων. Ο ψηφοφόρος δεν θα έχει το δικαίωμα να επιλέγει αυτόν ο οποίος θα τον εκπροσωπήσει διότι αυτός, στην πραγματικότητα, θα καθορίζεται από τα μεγάλα ευρωπαϊκά κόμματα.

Jiří Pospíšil (PPE). – Pane předsedající, já jsem velmi pozorně poslouchal paní ministryni zastupující Radu i ostatní kolegy. Já osobně se domnívám, že změna volebního práva je určitě nutná, ale měli bychom si říci tu hlavní filozofii potřeby té změny.

Podívám-li se na to, jak probíhají volby do Evropského parlamentu třeba v České republice nebo jiných státech Visegrádu, pak hlavním problémem je velmi nízká volební účast. V České republice dosahovala 18 %, a pokud tedy nějaké změny budeme provádět, měli bychom se pokusit zvýšit zájem občanů o evropské volby, zvýšit legitimitu voleb v očích jednotlivých občanů těchto států.

A proto jsem osobně rád, že dnes třeba Parlament jasně řekl, že nadnárodní volební obvody v tuto chvíli nebudeme prosazovat. Ta myšlenka nadnárodních obvodů do budoucna, za mnoho let může být dobrá. Ale ve chvíli, kdy zkrátka zde je Evropská unie 28 států, tak občané chtějí, aby se mohli identifikovat se svým konkrétním politikem, konkrétním europoslancem, který je zastupuje a zastupuje jejich zájmy na půdě Evropského parlamentu. A to je důvod, proč je dobré, že v tuto chvíli takovéto ideové koncepty neřešíme. Za padesát let možná, ale v tuto chvíli určitě nikoliv.

Já se domnívám, že v tuto chvíli a vzhledem k blízkosti voleb je možné některé pozitivní body z materiálu, který zpracoval Evropský parlament, ještě prosadit, odstranit některé technické problémy jako třeba to, že někteří občané Evropské unie, kteří mají dvojí občanství, tak třeba volí dvakrát. To jsou určitě konkrétní věci, které bychom mohli stihnout ještě vyřešit. Ale asi zásadní změna volebního práva, zásadní volební reforma už se v tuto chvíli nestihne. Takže prosím při debatách v Radě vnímejme to, že bychom měli zvýšit zájem občanů o Evropský parlament, evropské volby, a nikoliv nějakými utopickými úvahami jej vzdalovat lidem.

Bogusław Liberadzki (S&D). – Panie Przewodniczący! Pani Minister! Wysłuchaliśmy tutaj interwencji pani poseł Hübner i pana posła Jo Leinena, która w zasadzie jest prośbą: słuchajcie, ponad dwa lata temu dostaliście jako Rada naszą propozycję, stanowisko. I co my usłyszeliśmy od pani minister? Że Radzie zależy na tym, żeby obywatele się interesowali wyborami, żeby wybory były transparentne, żeby możliwie dużo ludzi poszło do wyborów. Ale powiedzcie, jaka to jest metoda. Piąta prezydencja – a może szósta nawet – z państw różnych, nowych, mniej nowych, i zawsze jest ta sama odpowiedź. Trwają prace. Techniczne czynniki. Chcemy być w kontakcie. Będziemy w kontakcie. Będziemy informować. I co dalej? I nic. W tym momencie nawet ja nie chciałbym jakichkolwiek poszczególnych aspektów wnosić, tylko chciałbym skonstatować następująco: Rada nie jest zainteresowana, niezależnie od prezydencji, tym żeby w akcie wyborczym, tym najważniejszym, ludzie wiedzieli, kogo wybierają, dlaczego, po co, co on ma tu robić. Radzie po prostu na tym nie zależy. I ja przyznam się szczerze, Pani Panayotova. Ja nie wierzę Pani, że cokolwiek się zmieni.

Bernd Lucke (ECR). – Herr Präsident, meine Damen und Herren! Vor genau 100 Jahren hat in Deutschland das preußische Dreiklassenwahlrecht sein Ende gefunden: Es wurde abgeschafft. Das preußische Dreiklassenwahlrecht war ein Relikt aus einer vordemokratischen Zeit, ein Wahlrecht, wo die Bürger nicht das gleiche Stimmrecht hatten, wo sie nicht in gleicher Wahl wählen konnten.

Heute stehen wir 100 Jahre später diesem Parlament und sprechen über eine Wahlrechtsreform, ohne das Problem anzusprechen, dass wir in Europa noch dasselbe ungleiche Wahlrecht haben. In diesem Parlament sitzen sechs Abgeordnete aus Malta. Wenn wir gleiches Wahlrecht hätten, dann müssten in diesem Parlament 1 000 Abgeordnete aus Deutschland sitzen. Es sitzen nur 96 Abgeordnete aus Deutschland hier. Es fehlen 900 deutsche Abgeordnete. Es fehlen Hunderte französische Abgeordnete, es fehlen Hunderte britische Abgeordnete, es fehlen Hunderte Abgeordnete aus Spanien, aus Polen, aus Ungarn, aus praktisch allen größeren Mitgliedstaaten der EU.

Deshalb, lieber Herr Leinen, ist es sehr wohl eine Frage von kleinen Staaten und großen Staaten, über die wir hier reden müssen. Dieses Parlament hat nicht mehr demokratische Legitimität, solange wir das Wahlrecht an dieser Stelle nicht ändern, als jedes andere Parlament, das vor mehr als 100 Jahren nach dem preußischen Dreiklassenwahlrecht gewählt worden ist.

(Der Redner ist damit einverstanden, eine Frage nach dem Verfahren der „blauen Karte“ gemäß Artikel 162 Absatz 8 der Geschäftsordnung zu beantworten.)

Elmar Brok (PPE), *Frage nach dem Verfahren der „blauen Karte“*. – Herr Professor Lucke! Sie sollten sich die Geschichte von föderalen Zweikammersystemen anschauen. Das ist immer eine Mischung zwischen den Rechten der Kleinen und der Großen. In der Europäischen Union haben die großen Länder viel mehr Macht im Rat als die Bundesländer in Deutschland im Bundesrat haben. Deswegen ist die Ausgewogenheit wieder über das Europäische Parlament hergestellt. Im amerikanischen Senat hat jeder Bundesstaat, egal wie groß er ist, nur zwei Senatoren. Bitte machen Sie sich fachkundig über föderale Systeme und klamauken Sie nicht im preußischen Wahlrecht herum – wahrscheinlich, weil Sie dort auch besser hinpassen.

Bernd Lucke (ECR), *Antwort auf eine Frage nach dem Verfahren der „blauen Karte“*. – Herr Kollege Brok, Ihre Frage ist mir freilich entgangen. Aber wenn ich Sie darauf hinweisen darf: In einem Zweikammersystem, da gibt es immer eine Kammer, die die Regierung oder Ähnliches in einem Bundesstaat repräsentiert, und dann gibt es ein Parlament. Und in jeder modernen Gesellschaft wird dieses Parlament als Vertretung der Bürger nach gleicher Wahl gewählt. Nur in Europa ist das nicht der Fall, und das müssten Sie mir bitte erklären, warum das nicht der Fall ist.

Presidente. – Ricordo che le «blue card» possono essere utilizzate una ad oratore, non di più naturalmente.

Sven Giegold (Verts/ALE). – Herr Präsident, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen! Es wird wirklich Zeit, dass wir eine Antwort bekommen vom Rat. Ich muss sagen, ich bin aus Ihren Ausführungen nicht so ganz schlau geworden, weil Sie uns leider nicht verraten haben, an welchen Punkten Sie jetzt konkret hoffen, dass wir tatsächlich Veränderungen bekommen. Könnten Sie uns bitte genau sagen, welche Punkte es sind, an denen Sie jetzt hoffen, einen Konsens zu erzielen?

Ich will nur eines noch sagen: Was wir als Grüne eindeutig nicht teilen, ist, dass der Versuch, mehr Demokratie und Transparenz in die europäischen Wahlen zu bekommen, von den Mehrheitsfraktionen hier im Parlament damit verbunden worden ist, die Rechte kleiner Parteien zu beschneiden, bei den entsprechenden Wahlen in Spanien und Deutschland mit Erfolg hier anzutreten. Angesichts der vielen kleineren Parteien hier im Haus ist das keine legitime Beschneidung. Und gerade, Herr Leinen, eigentlich aus der Tradition der Sozialdemokratie, fand ich das nicht das größte Maß an Fairness, mit dem versucht wurde, die in Deutschland gescheiterte Fünf-Prozent-Hürde bei den Europawahlen hier über diesen Rechtsakt wieder einzuführen. Das war kein fairer *move* gegenüber den kleineren Parteien in Spanien und in Deutschland. Das hätten wir hier nicht gebraucht.

(Der Redner ist damit einverstanden, eine Frage nach dem Verfahren der „blauen Karte“ gemäß Artikel 162 Absatz 8 der Geschäftsordnung zu beantworten.)

Maria Grapini (S&D), *Întrebare adresată conform procedurii „cartonaşului albastru“*. – Stimate coleg, n-am înțeles din intervenția dumneavoastră dacă sunteți de acord cu liste transnaționale sau nu? Dacă este fezabil ca, la alegerile din 2019, să trecem la acest sistem electoral, dacă cetățenii sunt pregătiți și dacă credeți că e bine ca, în Parlament, să avem două etaje? Adică un etaj de eurodeputați aleși transnațional și alții aleși la nivel național: cum va funcționa acest lucru?

Sven Giegold (Verts/ALE), *blue-card answer*. – Thank you for the question. Actually I didn't say anything about this, because this was not the core of our proposal. We lost, unfortunately, an important vote. I am still quite sad at the negative outcome of the former vote which we lost, and it will mean for 20 years no transnational list, no big move forward for transnational democracy in Europe with elections. But here we have a lot of practical proposals on how to improve transparency and democracy, and for this we still deserve a proper and constructive answer from the Council.

Claudia Țapardel (S&D). – Domnule președinte, dragi colegi și onorabili membri ai Consiliului, alegerile europene din 2019 se apropie cu pași rapizi. Între timp, au trecut doi ani de când Parlamentul European a sesizat Consiliul cu privire la necesitatea modificării legii electorale. Astăzi, ridicăm din nou această întrebare, pentru că Parlamentul este cu adevărat preocupat de felul în care se desfășoară alegerile europene, această instituție reprezentând cea mai importantă expresie a democrației.

Cadrul actual legislativ are nevoie de modernizare și de îmbunătățire în concordanță cu realitățile existente la nivel european. Ne dorim să introducem posibilitatea de vot electronic și prin corespondență în toate statele membre. Un alt exemplu ar fi întocmirea listelor electorale ținând cont și de principiile egalității de gen, care ar asigura o mai bună reprezentare a electoratului feminin. Vrem să venim cu propuneri pentru un sistem electoral inclusiv și progresiv, care să permită tuturor cetățenilor europeni participarea la vot.

Referitor la listele transnaționale am o poziție rezervată. Întrebarea este: cum garantăm că introducerea unui astfel de instrument nu va reduce din reprezentarea corectă a tuturor cetățenilor, indiferent de naționalitate, iar statele mai mici nu rămân subreprezentate?

În concluzie, prioritatea noastră în acest moment este să dăm asigurări cetățenilor că ne pregătim în mod responsabil pentru următorul scrutin și nu lansăm artificii prin care să garantăm locul cuiva pe liste.

Ruža Tomašić (ECR). – Gospodine predsjedniče, rasprave o tome kako Uniju učiniti demokratičnijom i bližom građanima potrebne su i zato mi je drago da raspravljamo o reformi izbornog zakona.

No, jednu si stvar u startu moramo priznati, koju god formulu primijenili, u zadanim je okvirima nemoguće postići to da Europski parlament postane, u punom smislu riječi, zakonodavno tijelo Unije. Jedan je od razloga i to što svaki glas na europskim izborima ne vrijedi jednako. U protivnom bi Njemačka davala gotovo dvjesto puta više zastupnika od Malte.

Zato ovo tijelo svoj demokratski legitimitet ne može crpiti samo iz neposrednih izbora nego i iz izravne suradnje s Vijećem. Osobno bih voljela i kvalitetniju suradnju s nacionalnim parlamentima kroz koju bi se također mogao ojačati legitimitet Europskog parlamenta.

Transnacionalne liste, koje se u posljednje vrijeme često spominje, samo bi udaljile Uniju od građana jer bi izlaznost na te izbore, zbog velikog broja građanima nepoznatih kandidata, bila manja nego ikada prije.

Ramón Jáuregui Atondo (S&D). – Señor presidente, yo quería expresar el sentido de este trámite, señora ministra, para recordarle que de lo que estamos hablando es de un diálogo que el Parlamento viene pidiendo desde hace ya tres años al Consejo. Solo queremos dialogar para poder negociar la ley electoral europea.

Es verdad el argumento que usted exponía. Hay realidades nacionales, hay peculiaridades políticas que tenemos que respetar. Yo lo comparto. Es muy difícil armonizar un mismo sistema electoral para toda la Unión Europea. Pero le recuerdo, señoría, que la ley que aprobó el Parlamento Europeo es muy modesta. Solamente pretende unificar elementos mínimos: el día de las elecciones, la fecha, la edad común, la papeleta, el logotipo, los umbrales. Porque queremos que la ley de hace cuarenta años se actualice. Simplemente queremos eso.

Con este trámite, señorías, lo que se le pide al Consejo es una respuesta para dialogar sobre una negociación necesaria para una ley europea necesaria.

Procedura «catch-the-eye»

Max Andersson (Verts/ALE). – Herr talman! Som vallagsnörd är jag inte alldeles imponerad av parlamentets förslag. Jag förstår att rådet har haft problem med att behandla det. Det centraliserar lite för mycket som om centralisering i sig var ett egenvärde. Jag hoppas att rådet kommer att förkasta de saker som bör förkastas, och kommer ihåg att rådet faktiskt måste ta beslut med enhällighet.

En av de saker som behöver förkastas är förslaget om att införa trösklar som skulle stänga ute partier som har miljoner medborgares röster. Vi ska inte sätta upp artificiella trösklar för att hålla partier ute. Människor röstar även på små partier. Små partier bidrar till att göra Europaparlamentet bättre – bifall inte sådana dumheter.

Νότης Μαριάς (ECR). – Κύριε Πρόεδρε, συζητούμε τι δεν έχει κάνει το Συμβούλιο αλλά θα πρέπει να δούμε την πρόταση που διαμόρφωσε το Ευρωπαϊκό Κοινοβούλιο, μία πρόταση που υποτίθεται ότι διασφαλίζει μεγαλύτερη ισότητα των πολιτών της Ένωσης· ταυτόχρονα όμως αυτή η πρόταση διαμορφώνει όρια εισόδου όρια εισόδου, κάτι που σημαίνει ότι ένα κόμμα, στην Ελλάδα φερειπείν, για να μπορέσει να εκλεγεί στο Ευρωπαϊκό Κοινοβούλιο πρέπει να έχει 3%, σε άλλη χώρα 5%. Αυτό σημαίνει αντιδημοκρατική αντίληψη. Αυτό σημαίνει κλοπή ψήφων. Αυτό σημαίνει ουσιαστικά ότι θα υπάρξει μεγάλος αριθμός Ευρωπαίων πολιτών οι οποίοι μπορεί να ψηφίσουν αυτά τα μικρά κόμματα αλλά στην πράξη δεν θα εκπροσωπούνται. Θα πρόκειται για ένα καλπονοθευτικό νόμο. Αυτό είναι το σημείο που πρέπει να συζητήσουμε, διότι με αυτό τον τρόπο αποκλείονται

συγκεκριμένες πολιτικές δυνάμεις. Αποκλείεται η δυνατότητα του πλουραλισμού. Νομίζω ότι σε αυτό το σημείο πρέπει να σταθούμε και ότι πρέπει να ανατραπούν τα εκλογικά όρια του 3% ή του 5%. Αυτά υπάρχουν στα εθνικά κοινοβούλια για την κυβερνησιμότητα, για να μπορέσει να εκλεγεί κυβέρνηση σταθερή. Εδώ δεν εκφράζουμε και δεν εκλέγουμε κυβέρνηση, άρα δεν χρειάζονται αυτά τα όρια.

Doru-Claudian Frunzuliță (S&D). – Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, first I would like to underline my consent on the urgency given to the electoral law reform in order to make the future 2019 elections more transparent, democratic and truly European, especially considering that in some Member States, modifications to electoral law have to enter into force 12 months before the elections. I recognise that there are some shortcomings of the Electoral Act of 1976, and therefore I support the measures proposed in the reform, which are meant to strengthen the European dimension of the elections, providing also better electoral equality for our citizens and improve their voting turnout. I would like to draw your attention to one aspect, which is very important in my opinion: that the measures refer also to EU legitimacy and democratic quality and they come ahead of an increasing demand from our citizens for an adequate post-Brexit political, democratic representation.

(Fine della procedura «catch-the-eye»)

Monika Panayotova, President-in-Office of the Council. – Mr President, please let me respond to the remarks made by the honourable Members of the European Parliament. I would like to elaborate on several important topics and points.

First of all, let me assure you that we all share the sense of urgency in view of the forthcoming EP elections in 2019. Any changes to the electoral law would need to be ratified by the national parliaments. The Presidency has consulted with Member States regarding the deadlines for having the changes approved in accordance with their constitutional requirements and for adopting the necessary domestic measures in time for the 2019 European Parliament elections.

Secondly, at the same time we need to be aware that the issue at hand goes to the heart of the constitutional electoral traditions and the organisation of the political life in Member States, including the respective electoral laws and freedom of association.

Thirdly, as foreseen in the Leaders Agenda, the European Council will have an informal meeting on institutional issues on 23 February. The agenda foresees the EP composition, transnational lists and appointments, including *Spitzenkandidaten*. This is part of the new method proposed by President Tusk in October 2017, allowing a frank, open and constructive discussion.

For this reason, it is very important not to prejudge the forthcoming Leaders discussions.

Fourthly, as regards our concrete steps and timetable, the Presidency has considered all available options. The Council has dedicated in-depth attention to the Parliament's proposal and several successive Presidencies have been engaged, as you have already mentioned. These are not issues on which it is easy to find a compromise, and I recall that the Treaty requires unanimity. While Member States share the objective of increasing the interest of the voters and the European character of the elections, these realities also need to be taken into account.

Therefore, we need to consider that we have two options: either focus our efforts on the topic with respect to which agreement seems most likely, or face the risk of not having any result for the forthcoming EP elections.

Taking into consideration the willingness to achieve progress, the Presidency intends to continue with discussions focusing on the least controversial provisions. We will reflect on any further next steps as soon as we have a full view of the situation. The Presidency will continue to seek consensus wherever possible.

To conclude, let me reaffirm the Council's commitment to engage with the European Parliament. I totally agree that this is a question of cooperation. We remain available to exchange on our respective positions and to look for common solutions.

Presidente. – La discussione è chiusa.

Dichiarazioni scritte (articolo 162)

Soledad Cabezon Ruiz (S&D), *por escrito*. – El 11 de noviembre de 2015 el Parlamento Europeo (PE) adoptó su propuesta de modificación del Acta de 1976 relativa a la elección de los diputados al PE por sufragio universal directo, que introduce una serie de medidas destinadas a reforzar la dimensión europea de las elecciones y garantizar una mayor igualdad electoral a los ciudadanos de la Unión. Lamentablemente, desde entonces cinco Presidencias del Consejo (Luxemburgo, Países Bajos, Eslovaquia, Malta y, ahora, Estonia) han trabajado sobre la propuesta del Parlamento (ejercida de conformidad con el artículo 223, apartado 1, del TFUE), pero ninguna ha transmitido al PE resultados formales o informales de las deliberaciones del Consejo, poniendo en evidencia la falta de voluntad de los Estados miembros para armonizar la norma actual que data de 1976. Por eso, una vez más pedimos al Consejo que no siga bloqueando la mejora de las normas relativas a la elección de los diputados al PE y que, teniendo en cuenta que el expediente debe concluirse, a más tardar, en la próxima primavera, presente cuanto antes al PE una decisión.

Enrique Guerrero Salom (S&D), *por escrito*. – El 11 de noviembre de 2015 el Parlamento Europeo (PE) adoptó su propuesta de modificación del Acta de 1976 relativa a la elección de los diputados al PE por sufragio universal directo, que introduce una serie de medidas destinadas a reforzar la dimensión europea de las elecciones y garantizar una mayor igualdad electoral a los ciudadanos de la Unión. Lamentablemente, desde entonces cinco Presidencias del Consejo (Luxemburgo, Países Bajos, Eslovaquia, Malta y, ahora, Estonia) han trabajado sobre la propuesta del Parlamento (ejercida de conformidad con el artículo 223, apartado 1, del TFUE), pero ninguna ha transmitido al PE resultados formales o informales de las deliberaciones del Consejo, poniendo en evidencia la falta de voluntad de los Estados miembros para armonizar la norma actual que data de 1976. Por eso, una vez más pedimos al Consejo que no siga bloqueando la mejora de las normas relativas a la elección de los diputados al PE y que, teniendo en cuenta que el expediente debe concluirse, a más tardar, en la próxima primavera, presente cuanto antes al PE una decisión.

Michaela Šojdrová (PPE), *písemně*. – Krize eurozóny, brexit, uprchlická krize a další krize posledních let poukázaly na slabiny EU a snížily důvěru našich občanů v EU. Tuto důvěru je potřeba včas obnovit, než dojde k vážným nezvratným škodám. Jsem přesvědčena, že reforma volební legislativy by měla přispět k většímu zájmu o volbu, k větší účasti. Dílčí navržené změny směřují k větší transparentnosti, k možnosti větší identifikace s evropskými volebními stranami a jejich kandidáty. Pokud chceme snižovat demokratický deficit, pak musíme usilovat o větší volební účast a porozumění voličů pro evropské volby. Například v ČR byla ve volbách do Evropského parlamentu v roce 2014 volební účast pouhých 19,5 % voličů, což je o více než dvě třetiny méně než v posledních volbách do české poslanecké sněmovny (60,84 %). Jsem si jista, že podobný problém zaznamenávají i jiné státy. Souhlasím s těmi návrhy směřujícími ke zviditelnění evropských stran, např. návrh, aby na hlasovacích lístcích byla uvedena i loga evropských stran. Povědomí o evropských stranách je ve členských státech velmi omezené a je proto potřeba, aby evropské strany byly více vidět a pronikly do povědomí voličů.

15. Zagrożenie dla praworządności w związku z reformą rumuńskiego wymiaru sprawiedliwości (debata)

Presidente. – L'ordine del giorno reca la discussione sulle dichiarazioni del Consiglio e della Commissione sulle minacce per lo Stato di diritto poste dalla riforma del sistema giudiziario della Romania (2018/2512(RSP)).

Dan Nica (S&D). – Am o problemă de procedură pe care vreau să v-o supun atenției. Dezbateră de astăzi se realizează în conformitate cu articolul 123 alineatul (2) din Regulamentul de procedură al Parlamentului European. Conform acestui regulament, se stabilește foarte clar că, la lucrările dezbaterii pe care o avem noi astăzi, pot să participe, din partea Consiliului, cei care sunt membri ai Consiliului. A fost luată o decizie care a părut ciudată. Domnul președinte Tajani a fost indus în eroare, pentru că nu i s-a adus la cunoștință legea din România.

Conform legii române și Constituției României, cel care este prezent la lucrările Consiliului este președintele României, care, sigur, nu a putut să fie astăzi aici, iar, în absența acestuia, la lucrările Consiliului participă, cum este cazul problemei pe justiție, ministrul justiției. Ministrul justiției din România se află astăzi în sală și cred că, pentru o dezbateră în care să poată să fie aduse și argumentele necesare, ar trebui să i se dea posibilitatea domnului ministru al justiției, Tudorel Toader, membru al Comisiei de la Veneția, să poată să dea măcar răspunsuri la întrebări. Acest lucru ar da și o notă, pe care ne-o dorim cu toții, de seriozitate, de discutare a argumentelor care să aducă lumină în privința tuturor chestiunilor care se vor lămurite astăzi în plen și, în același timp, templul democrației pentru toți românii ar arăta că este Parlamentul European și că prezența ministrului justiției, care să poată să dea explicațiile necesare, reprezintă un lucru pe care cu toții îl respectăm și pe care toți românii, vă garantez, îl vor aprecia ca atare.

Deci, vă rog, domnule președinte, să vă uitați pe articolul 123 alineatul (2) și vă solicit respectuos să încercați să îi dați posibilitatea ministrului justiției din România să răspundă măcar întrebărilor care sunt puse sau să aducă clarificările necesare.

Sophia in 't Veld (ALDE). – Mr President, having listened to the proposal, I am of course very grateful that the Minister for Justice is here, and we are also very much looking forward to an exchange of views with the Minister for Justice in the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, but so far we have a procedure in this plenary that for this kind of debate we invite the Prime Minister. An invitation was sent to the Prime Minister; the Prime Minister, for reasons of her own, could not be here today; but I don't think that we should change the rules, or indeed the traditions, on the spot.

There will be a debate in the Committee on Civil Liberties as well. It was agreed in the Conference of Presidents to invite the Prime Minister for today's debate and to have the exchange of views with the Minister for Justice in the committee, and I suggest that we go ahead as was agreed in the Conference of Presidents.

Presidente. – Noi abbiamo chiesto la presenza del Consiglio in Aula e il Consiglio ha inviato il suo rappresentante, e questo per noi è sufficiente per poter svolgere il dibattito.

Monika Panayotova, President-in-Office of the Council. – Mr President, honourable Members, Madam Commissioner, you have invited the Presidency to intervene in this debate. First, let me say that common values such as democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights are the cornerstone of the European Union. Each Member State must therefore respect, protect and promote them. Let me assure you that the rule of law and the separation of powers have always been at the heart of the Council's attention. We believe that dialogue and cooperation are necessary to ensure the best standards and conditions for our citizens in all our Member States.

The Council addressed the situation in Romania in its conclusions on the cooperation and verification mechanism adopted on 12 December 2017. The Council welcomed the fact that Romania has taken a number of positive steps and encouraged the country to renew momentum on the reforms, in particular those related to the independence of the judiciary and to the fight against corruption at all levels. The Council reiterated the importance for Romania to focus on further consolidating progress and to fully address the concerns and all the recommendations set out by the Commission in its report on progress achieved under the cooperation and verification mechanism. We hope that the ongoing communication between the Romanian authorities and the Commission will continue to prove efficient in assisting Romania to remedy some shortcomings.

Věra Jourová, Member of the Commission. – Mr President, the discussion in Romania over the last year about its justice laws has led to concerns being expressed by a wide range of stakeholders, both inside and outside the country, across the EU and beyond.

Romanian citizens have taken to the streets to state their opposition to the proposed changes to Romanian law. They are concerned that this may undermine the long-standing efforts in the fight against corruption and the independence of the judiciary. The Commission has made no secret of the fact that it shares these concerns. So too does the Council of Europe's anti-corruption watchdog, the Group of States against Corruption, which for the first time has decided to launch its own inquiry – with a report due in March.

The independence of the Romanian judiciary and its capacity to fight corruption are directly relevant to the progress made under the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism, which, as you know, was set up in 2007 to assist Romania and Bulgaria in the fields of judicial reform and corruption and (for Bulgaria) the fight against organised crime. After ten years of continued efforts, Romania has one of the best judiciaries in the region.

Back in January 2017, the Commission proposed a limited set of remaining recommendations which, if implemented fully and provided that there is no backtracking, would bring Romania out of the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism. One of the recommendations called on the Romanian leadership to ensure a consensual legislative process, to finalise reforms of the justice laws and the criminal codes, and also to respect judicial independence and court decisions.

On 15 November 2017, in our latest Cooperation and Verification Mechanism report, the Commission voiced concerns on the process and the content of the draft justice laws. As the debate on justice laws was evolving in the course of 2017, the Superior Council of the Magistracy – the constitutional guarantor of the independence of the judiciary – continued to voice concerns and issued a negative opinion citing detrimental impacts on judicial independence and on the effective functioning of the judicial system.

These concerns need to be taken seriously in the legislative process. Therefore the question we put to the Romanian authorities in the November report remains valid, namely whether the process would take into account the legitimate interests of the judiciary and respect judicial independence. Unfortunately, we have continued to see open criticism of the judiciary and defiance of judicial decisions or integrity rules, which do not inspire a feeling of confidence in the process. Events since have done nothing to address these concerns.

On 21 December 2017, the parliament adopted amendments to the justice laws in a fast-track procedure and the laws were immediately challenged in the Constitutional Court through three referrals. The Constitutional Court proceedings are ongoing but, in its first hearings, it declared the unconstitutionality of some of the provisions. These are issues to be looked at carefully in relation to judicial independence and on which there are European standards.

The Council of Europe's principle is that you cannot reform the judicial system against the judiciary. This common sense advice underpins the Commission's recommendation to the Romanian authorities that they consult the Venice Commission before the justice laws are promulgated.

The Commission considers that it is still possible for the justice laws to be improved and become good laws which will strengthen the independence and professionalisation of the Romanian judicial system to serve all Romanian citizens. This is a crucial moment, given that the first two draft laws are back in the Romanian Parliament following the rulings of the Constitutional Court. The debate on how to address the concerns expressed by the Constitutional Court should be used as an opportunity to have a good, frank dialogue and build a better shared understanding and trust among all parties concerned.

Therefore, I reiterate the call made by President Juncker and First Vice-President Timmermans to the Romanian Parliament to rethink the course of actions proposed, to open up debate in line with the Commission's recommendations, to build consensus on the way forward, to safeguard the independence of the judicial system and further step up the fight against corruption. The President of Romania also has a key role in the process and, from his meeting with the College last week, I know he takes that very seriously.

The Commission stands ready to continue its ongoing dialogue with the Romanian authorities and will contribute as best it can to help ensure that this process is taken forward constructively and in a way that builds trust.

We will look thoroughly at the final amendments to the justice law, the criminal codes and laws on conflicts of interest and corruption. As always, when dealing with these and similar matters, the Commission will remain objective, facts-based and law-based, politically colour-blind and clinical in our approach.

Romania and Romanians have been running a marathon. The finish line is in sight. To step backwards now would be a major disappointment to Romania's many friends, but most of all to Romanian citizens. The speed with which Romania will reach the finish line is up to Romania, but the Commission stands by to help Romania get there.

Presidente. – Adesso apriamo il dibattito ascoltando innanzitutto i punti di vista dei diversi gruppi politici.

Avverto che in questa fase delle dichiarazioni dei gruppi politici non accetteremo «*blue card*».

Roberta Metsola, on behalf of the PPE Group. – Mr President, the situation in Romania remains of concern. We have seen attempts by the Government there to suppress the judiciary, to water down anticorruption legislation and to use its electoral majority as an excuse to do as it pleases. I know some people claim and will claim that the European Parliament and the Commission should not get involved, or try to spin the idea that this is somehow politically motivated. It is a justification that we are seeing used by unscrupulous politicians across the European Union who try to excuse the inexcusable. But they are wrong.

The EU cannot look away and, for sure, the European People's Party will not do so, because Romanians are not any less European than the rest of us. They deserve – as we all do – a country where the rule of law is respected, where corruption is fought, where the courts are protected and where laws are not changed on a whim to suit only those in power. Romanians have been on the street for more than a year: as temperatures plummeted and the snow fell, they stood up. They flew European Union flags because they believed in Europe – a Europe that is not only an economic bloc but also a guarantee of common values and shared promises. They believe still.

This is not only about Romania. This is about all of us. Every Member State must understand that what happens in Bucharest affects people in Paris, just as what happens in Valetta affects people in Stockholm. We are distinct as nations but we are intertwined all the same, and if the rule of law is at stake in any one state, then every single other state is endangered, and that is why the Commission is right to act, as it must do everywhere there is a threat.

I met with some of the people who are out on the streets in Romania: they are teachers and poets and students and pensioners. They are not politicians. They just want a country and a Union where justice is blind, where everyone is treated equally before the law, where corruption is eradicated and where winning an election does not mean you are entitled to divide up the country like your personal spoils of war.

I will finish by saying thank you for standing up. *Vă auzim pe stradă*. We hear you.

(Applause)

Josef Weidenholzer, *im Namen der S&D-Fraktion*. – Herr Präsident! Wir Sozialdemokraten begrüßen die heutige Debatte, und das hier ist der richtige Ort dafür, weil für uns Rechtsstaatlichkeit, Demokratie und Menschenrechte im Zentrum stehen und weil die Stabilität Osteuropas wichtig ist und der jetzt einsetzende wirtschaftliche Aufschwung mit einer Konsolidierung der Demokratie einhergehen muss.

Rumänien ist in diesem Zusammenhang ein bedeutendes Land, ein Land mit großem Potenzial. Es ist daher nicht egal, wenn fundamentale Kritik geäußert wird. Die Bereitschaft, sich einer Diskussion zu stellen, bedeutet aber auch den Willen, nach Lösungen zu suchen, alles offen und transparent zu erörtern. Wir begrüßen es, dass der rumänische Justizminister bereit war, hierherzukommen, und bedauern, dass er sich nicht an der Debatte beteiligen darf.

Wir wollen wissen, welche Fortschritte bei der Justizreform im letzten Jahr gemacht wurden. Wir haben klare Kriterien der Beurteilung, ob die Reformen mit der Verfassung konform sind, ob die Reformen im Einklang mit dem europäischen Rechtsbestand stehen und ob europäische Standards eingehalten werden, insbesondere jene der Venedig-Kommission. Nur wenn wir konkret werden, sind wir erfolgreich, und nur dann können wir die Probleme lösen.

Kosma Złotowski, *w imieniu grupy ECR*. – Szanowny Panie Przewodniczący! Instytucje europejskie w ostatnich latach mają szczególną łatwość ingerowania w wewnętrzne sprawy państw członkowskich, nawet jeśli taka ingerencja nie jest uzasadniona z punktu widzenia zapisów traktatowych. Po raz kolejny trzeba przypomnieć Komisji, że Unia Europejska jest złożona z suwerennych, demokratycznych państw, które mają prawo kształtować swój ustrój także w obszarze władzy sądowniczej zgodnie z oczekiwaniami obywateli. Jeśli jakieś zmiany nie zdobędą wystarczającego poparcia społecznego lub przyniosą negatywne skutki, wtedy społeczeństwo w demokratycznych wyborach będzie mogło odpowiednio ocenić ich autorów. I naprawdę żałuję, że pani komisarz Jourová jako profesor uczący demokratycznie wybrany rząd Rumunii. Komisja nie powinna uzurpować sobie prawa do takiej oceny, ponieważ jej mandat nie ma charakteru demokratycznego. Pan poseł Weidenholzer bardzo zażąda, że nie może tutaj brać udziału w tej debacie minister sprawiedliwości Rumuni. No, Szanowni Państwo, przed chwilą była mowa, że minister tu jest. Wystarczy go zaprosić. Prosiłbym o wstrzemięźliwość w ferowaniu radykalnych ocen przepisów, które wciąż jeszcze nie dostały ostatecznego kształtu. I to się tyczy nie tylko Rumunii, ale także mojego kraju.

Sophia in 't Veld, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Mr President, I am of the generation which has been marked by the events of the fall of the Berlin Wall and everything that happened afterwards. I can also remember the first time that we welcomed colleagues from Bulgaria and Romania in this Chamber, and I was very, very moved. I don't cry very often, I can tell you, but there were tears running down my cheeks. For me, this was reuniting the family.

But in a family we also talk about things that aren't going well. Next year, Romania will be holding the Presidency of the European Union, and we'll all be looking at the image that Romania presents. I know that Romania has a long and proud tradition of liberal democracy and civic engagement, and I hope that that is the past that Romania will choose because, unlike the previous speaker, I do think that values are a matter for the European Union. This is what we have laid down in the Treaties. Romania has made a great deal of effort, achieved a lot and made very good progress in recent years, but now it seems to be wavering. I would really encourage the Romanian Government to follow the recommendations of the European Commission and to invite the Venice Commission to judge the reform package – not just refer loosely to some recommendations but invite the Venice Commission.

I also think it would be a good idea for a delegation from the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) to travel to Romania and talk to people and actually find out and understand what's going on.

On the reform of the judiciary, concerns have been expressed all around, and I really hope that the Romanian Government is going to take heed.

Finally, I would like to refer briefly to the new legislation on civil society. I find it very worrying. This is happening not just in Romania or Hungary and Poland, but also in some other EU countries, and tonight we will be talking about the shrinking space for civil society. Civil society may be a pain in the neck, but it is essential for a robust and healthy democracy. A democracy organises its own critics. That's what democracy is all about. So please reconsider.

Finally – the last sentence – I would like to reiterate this: Parliament decided a year and a half ago not to focus on just one country and then another but to install a mechanism – and I'm counting on the Commission – that assesses all the Member States.

Ska Keller, on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group. – Mr President, corruption is an evil that unfortunately still we have not overcome, and I think every single Member State does have corruption. But the important thing is to recognise that and to work against it, tirelessly and relentlessly, because corruption actually undermines the very fabric of society. It makes people lose trust in state and a democracy; it also leads to big losses of public money – money that is urgently needed elsewhere. And in Romania, tens of thousands of people are on the streets, against a corrupt political elite – an elite which sees itself as running a state as a sort of self-service system and which misuses its power to protect itself from justice. And after significant progress that had been made by Romania leading up to EU accession and in the years afterwards, now what we actually see is steps backwards. The progress is being reversed, and this is bad for the Romanian Government, for the Romanian citizens, but also for the whole of the European Union – and Romanian citizens are EU citizens. With the new laws, prosecutors are deprived of indispensable instruments for investigation, courts are put under more political control, and corruption is even partly decriminalised. The new laws clearly have one objective: to weaken the legal system and to make it harder to prosecute high-level corruption. We expect the Romanian Government and the Romanian Parliament to follow the court ruling and to make the laws compatible with EU standards and EU rules.

Corruption has a direct effect on citizens in Romania. We see this in the bad condition in many schools. We see this in hospitals, where you risk actually getting more infections. We see coal power plants that run without a permit for years and with the full knowledge of the authorities. And as Greens, we also came to Romania to speak with the authorities; we came to speak with the citizens on the street; we wrote to the European Commission; and we also asked for this debate to happen. I want to stress what I said before: Romanian citizens are European citizens. They have the same rights as every other European citizen. That's why we as Greens cannot accept that Romanians are still being deprived of one of the most basic and fundamental freedoms of Europeans: that is, to be a member of the Schengen zone and to travel freely within the Union. We need to end the situation that Romanians are being stopped at borders that we thought we overcome. Romanians have the right to be free of corruption, to have a government that cares about public interest, and to enjoy their European freedoms.

Laurențiu Rebegea, în numele grupului ENF. – Domnule președinte, doamnă comisar, dragi colegi, un canal deschis de comunicare cu Guvernul român va fi tot timpul cea mai potrivită metodă de a clarifica pașii și procedurile ce stau în spatele unei inițiative legislative sensibile, respectând în totalitate drepturile și obligațiile statelor membre. De aceea dau citire primelor două articole din Constituția României.

Articolul 1: „România este stat național, suveran și independent, unitar și indivizibil. (...) România este stat de drept, democratic și social, în care demnitatea omului, drepturile și libertățile cetățenilor, libera dezvoltare a personalității umane, dreptatea și pluralismul politic reprezintă valori supreme, în spiritul tradițiilor democratice ale poporului român și idealurilor Revoluției din decembrie 1989 și sunt garantate.”

Articolul 2: „Suveranitatea națională aparține poporului român, care o exercită prin organele sale reprezentative, constituite prin alegeri libere, periodice și corecte, precum și prin referendum. Niciun grup și nicio persoană nu pot exercita suveranitatea în nume propriu.”

Astăzi suntem martorii politizării îngrijorătoare din partea unui grup politic a unei dezbateri care ar trebui să aibă scopul invers, acela de a elimina factorul politic și de a încuraja considerațiile bazate pe fapte. Dezbateră de azi are o valoare de exemplu. Statul de drept nu e o creație divină și inalterabilă, ci un construct uman care trebuie întreținut și renovat în permanență, nu numai în România, ci peste tot în Uniunea Europeană.

Dar există și un „dar”. Discuțiile de la Uniunea Europeană nu pot și nu trebuie să se substituie soluțiilor. Au spus-o și Președintele Juncker și Președintele Iohannis: soluțiile trebuie să le găsim noi, românii, în România.

România dorește conformarea cu standardele constituționale și europene, dar printr-un dialog instituțional viabil. Însă Uniunea Europeană trebuie să înțeleagă că România nu este o țară de mâna a doua, cu cetățeni de mâna a doua. Sunt încă probleme nerezolvate, dar, cu toate acestea, România a dat dovadă de responsabilitate politică și civică, abordând aceste probleme într-un mod deschis și cuprinzător.

Am fugit prea mult de Uniunea Sovietică, ca să mai acceptăm să mai avem pe cineva deasupra noastră. Marele examen pe care trebuie să îl dea clasa politică este măsura în care poate genera o bună guvernare, care să asigure stabilitate, echilibru și prosperitate societății. Iar examenul pe care trebuie să îl dăm nu este în fața Europei, ci este în fața copiilor și a urmașilor noștri.

Presidente. – Abbiamo ascoltato le opinioni dei gruppi politici.

Adesso possiamo usare le «*blue card*», naturalmente una ad oratore.

Traian Ungureanu (PPE). – Domnule președinte, Partidul Social Democrat susține că face reforma justiției, că aliniaza justiția la normele europene, dar cine poate avea încredere în Partidul Social Democrat? Poți, oare, lăsa un hoț să stabilească prețurile în magazinul din care fură? Nu, pentru că va declara totul gratuit.

Normele europene invocate de PSD nu spun că un guvern poate schimba legile pentru a fi scutit de ele.

Să recapitulăm: PSD a câștigat alegerile după ce a promis bani, prosperitate, plus marea cu sarea. Însă prima decizie a Guvernului a fost de a modifica legi pentru infracțiuni din dosarele liderilor PSD. Abuzul în serviciu a fost șters, iar pragul de la care începe delapidarea a fost mărit. Modificările aduse de PSD legilor justiției fac din procurori anchetatori la mâna șefilor și supun anchetele unui nou organism de control.

PSD a schimbat două guverne într-un an pentru că nu au putut să îi scutească de lege pe liderii PSD. Parlamentarii PSD au respins solicitările de anchetă trimise de procurori când acestea îi priveau pe liderii ai PSD. Acum, anchetați penal sunt membri ai Guvernului. Întrebat de ce PSD numește în guvern oameni cu dosar, un lider al partidului a răspuns: „Pentru că putem!”. Mai bine spunea: „Pentru că putem să îi scăpăm!”.

Parlamentul European trebuie să comunice PSD că poate numai ce e legal și că a câștigat alegerile, nu justiția.

Mesajul trebuie transmis numai și numai Guvernului României. Ideea potrivit căreia situația statului de drept trebuie legată de fondurile europene e greșită. Ea ar pedepsi alegătorii care și-au exercitat dreptul de vot și nu un guvern care își exercită capacitatea de a forța legea.

(Vorbitorul acceptă să răspundă la o întrebare adresată în conformitate cu procedura „cartonașului albastru” (articolul 162 alineatul (8) din Regulamentul de procedură))

Maria Grapini (S&D), *întrebare adresată în conformitate cu procedura „cartonașului albastru”*. – Mulțumesc foarte mult, domnule președinte, stimate coleg. Las limbajul la o parte, dar vreau să vă pun o întrebare foarte concretă: dumneavoastră recunoașteți Constituția României? Articolul 61 din Constituția României spune foarte clar că „Parlamentul este organul reprezentativ suprem al poporului român și unica autoritate legiuitoare a țării.”

Legile justiției din România acum au fost trecute prin Parlament după o dezbateră publică de luni de zile sau nu?

Traian Ungureanu (PPE), *Răspuns la o întrebare adresată în conformitate cu procedura „cartonașului albastru”*. – Da, evident că au fost trecute prin Parlament, dar asta nu rezolvă cu nimic chestiunile asupra cărora trebuie să răspundă acum Guvernul României și partidul de guvernământ. Întrebarea rămâne: De ce atâta grabă? De ce din prima zi? Și de ce cu adresă pentru situații critice, penale sau pre-penale în care se află membri ai Guvernului?

Tanja Fajon (S&D). – Mr President, the Socialists and Democrats Group has always been at the forefront when it comes to defending the rule of law and democracy, and we fully stand by those principles today. Romania is one of the youngest democracies in Europe and there are still pending issues there. However, Bucharest showed its responsibility in addressing these issues in an open and inclusive way, which we strongly welcome. We trust Romania to resolve those issues fully, alone through its own independent constitutional mechanisms and procedures, and also by engaging in viable institutional dialogue, including with international institutions and the EU. We should be critical when criticism is needed, but we firmly reject the politicisation of facts without objective consideration of reality. We want clearly to dissociate ourselves from any such attempts in these debates today and to give room for dialogue. For us, the recent protests in Romania are signs of a healthy and democratic civic attitude and engagement as regards the accountability of their politicians.

Helga Stevens (ECR). – Voorzitter, collega's, het is niet de eerste keer dat ik de problemen in Roemenië aankaart. Zo was er de poging van de socialistische regering om fraudeonderzoeken te dwarsbomen voor eigen politiek gewin. Ook verklaarde ik hier waarom Roemenië nog niet kan toetreden tot het Schengengebied.

Vandaag sta ik op de bres voor ondernemers en investeerders in Roemenië. De hervorming van de vennootschapswetgeving gaat helemaal de verkeerde kant uit, want staatsbedrijven mogen nu opnieuw politici in hun raad van bestuur opnemen. Tegelijk worden die bedrijven volledig vrijgesteld van de regels inzake transparantie. Zo wordt de deur wagenwijd opengezet voor corruptie en zelfbediening door bevriende politici, helemaal in lijn met eerdere onzinnige wetswijzigingen, zodat de elite zichzelf kan verrijken ten koste van die bedrijven en de Roemeense maatschappij. Hiermee worden buitenlandse investeerders afgeschrikt. Ik ben blij dat dit vandaag besproken kan worden.

Ik wacht echter nog steeds op een parlementair debat over de schending van de Europese waarden door Spanje en de agressie tegen het Catalaanse volk en zijn verkozen leiders.

Norica Nicolai (ALDE). – Domnule președinte, statul de drept presupune existența unor legi în vigoare doamnelor și domnilor. La București, avem intenția de a legifera, pentru că nici legile de organizare a justiției nu sunt legi în vigoare. Nici nu am avut vreo discuție despre modificarea Codului penal și a Codului de procedură penală.

Discuția de astăzi este departe de a fi despre statul de drept, este o discuție politicianistă și îngrijorarea dumneavoastră nu-și are rostul decât din prisma unui partizanat politic. Nu vreau să cred că, prin această dezbateră, doriți să împiedicați un parlament național să-și exercite principala lui prerogativă, aceea de a legifera, pentru că ar fi nedemocratic și incorrect.

Dar despre corectitudine și statul de drept vreau să vorbesc. Prezumția de nevinovăție, doamnă comisar, drepturile și libertățile în procesul penal nu sunt garanții procedurale pe care pe care Uniunea Europeană le ocrotește? Dumneavoastră sunteți garantul tratatelor. Ce ați făcut, doamnă comisar, când sute de oameni au fost abuziv trimiși în închisoare și achitați? Ce ați făcut, doamnă comisar, când foarte, foarte mulți cetățeni au fost interceptați în afara legii? Când serviciul de informații, care nu are atribuții în procesul penal, a fost implicat în realizarea acestuia? Ce s-a făcut, doamnă comisar, când state membre, care privilegiază dreptul companiilor lor de a da mită în România, au dat mită în România? S-au închis dosarele pentru că nu conveneau unor interese economice ale unor state membre.

Ne pare foarte rău, doamnă comisar, dar justiția se înfăptuiește cu bună credință, cu onestitate și cu corectitudine și numai de astfel de valori nu dați dovadă în dezbateră de astăzi.

Eva Joly (Verts/ALE). – Monsieur le Président, chers collègues, la corruption tue littéralement. Elle tue aussi plus insidieusement en creusant les inégalités, en sapant la confiance des citoyens et en ébranlant les démocraties, faisant ainsi le lit des extrêmes.

Malgré le courage de son parquet anticorruption, la Roumanie est en train de régresser dans la lutte contre ce fléau et de brader l'indépendance de sa justice. Il faut que le parlement roumain y renonce. Le pays est en proie à une poignée de gouvernants mus par le seul désir de sauver leur peau. Le chef du parti socialiste au pouvoir a déjà été condamné pour fraude électorale et fait actuellement l'objet d'une enquête pénale pour détournement de fonds européens.

L'Union européenne doit réagir et accompagner ce pays qui prendra la Présidence de l'Union en 2019. N'abandonnons pas ces milliers de Roumains et ces ONG qui crient leur ras-le-bol et expriment leur soif de justice et de l'Union européenne.

Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE). – Domnule președinte, doamnă comisar, România nu este vinovată pentru această dezbateră, nici românii. Este vorba de acțiunea unui grup de parlamentari – vremelnic majoritar – și a unui guvern în permanentă schimbare, care, fără responsabilitate și cu o doză mică de competență, încearcă să devieze România de la un parcurs normal de stat de drept și de stat responsabil în fața cetățeanului.

Înțeleg că l-ați întâlnit pe domnul ministru al Justiției și, după discursul dumneavoastră, văd că nu v-a convins. Este nemulțumit că nu vorbește în plenul Parlamentului European. Șefa lui, prim-ministrul României, a fost deputat aici, în Parlamentul European. Știe foarte bine regulile și a asistat la dezbateri similare, în care prim-ministrul statului respectiv a participat și a putut să își spună punctul de vedere. Prim-ministrul României trebuia să fie astăzi aici, nu exercițiul de imagine al ministrului Justiției.

Legile justiției trebuie să asigure echilibrul între independență și răspunderea magistraților, nu să le pună la dispoziția politicului, prin măsuri administrative. În România, acum, punctele de vedere ale organizațiilor profesionale ale magistraților, ale Consiliului Superior al Magistraturii, ONG-urilor, cetățenilor nu au nicio greutate. Cred că poziția Comisiei de la Veneția ar fi extrem de necesară.

Doamnă comisar, repet ce am spus: structuri vremelnice, parlament sau guvern, pot să devieze de la valorile și principiile europene. Tratatul Uniunii prevede măsuri în astfel de cazuri. Comisia trebuie să le aplice. Condiționarea implementării bugetului european de situația statului de drept, necuprinsă în tratat, este o măsură care ar afecta negativ cetățenii aceluia stat, fără efect asupra guvernului. Această propunere nu trebuie să facă parte din viitorul CFM.

Victor Boștinaru (S&D). – Domnule președinte, doamnă ministru Panayotova, doamnă comisar Jourova, recent Comisia declara: „Noi cunoaștem foarte bine situația din România”. Doamna comisar Jourova, cu regret trebuie să declar, inclusiv prin ce ați spus astăzi în sală, Comisia fie nu cunoaște situația din România, fie închide ochii la anumite aspecte.

Cât despre conținutul modificărilor, soluțiile sunt în acord cu recomandările Comisiei de la Veneția, ale Curții Constituționale și sunt inspirate din soluții existente în alte state membre ale Uniunii Europene. Refuz să cred că soluții care garantează independența justiției, drepturile și libertățile fundamentale în vestul Europei devin pur și simplu inacceptabile în România. Refuz să cred că țara mea este tratată ca o țară de mâna a doua.

În plus, Comisia amestecă, în mod greu de calificat, evaluarea celor trei legi care au fost deja adoptate cu ceea ce ar urma să se întâmple în viitor, nespunându-ne nici un singur element de referință – articol, paragraf sau parte din lege – care ar pune cea mai mică problemă de independență, neutralitate sau de afectare a luptei împotriva corupției.

(Președintele l-a întrerupt pe vorbitor)

Presidente. – Grazie Victor. Scusate, io non voglio togliere la parola, però adesso sono costretto, perché se uno ha un minuto e ne parla due vuol dire che si raddoppia il tempo di tutto il dibattito. Tutti hanno abusato del tempo, tutti, compreso anche il mio amico Marinescu. Il problema è la responsabilità di ciascuno di stare nel tempo che gli è stato assegnato, questa è la responsabilità. Non è la mia responsabilità di togliere la parola.

Monica Macovei (ECR). – Domnule președinte, românii au strigat în stradă „Vrem justiție, nu corupție”. Românii vor în Europa și asta vrem și noi: în Europa. PSD și ALDE vor să ne scoată din Europa. Au declanșat lupta pentru corupție și împotriva justiției și împotriva statului de drept.

Această coaliție și ministrul justiției, trimis ca reprezentant al guvernului României, aflat pe aici pe undeva, minte cu nerușinare, spunând și Comisiei și Parlamentului că aceste modificări vor transpune directive europene. Nu este adevărat. Directiva privind prezumția de nevinovăție din 2014 nu a fost transpusă până acum. Foarte rău. Dar vreau să vă spun că ea prevede standarde mult mai înalte în legile române decât prevede directiva. Deci la noi prezumția de nevinovăție este mult mai bine protejată decât prevede directiva. Ca atare, să uităm această minciună.

Ce vor să facă prin modificările codurilor penale? Este foarte important pentru statele membre, pentru că va fi afectată cooperarea judiciară transfrontalieră pentru crime transfrontaliere, va fi afectată o infracțiune comisă într-un alt stat sau comisă în România, care va deveni paradisul infracționalității. De exemplu, vor ca o investigație să înceapă numai după ce o persoană este informată că e investigată. Adică primești o plângere, îl suni pe X și îi spui: „Am primit o plângere pentru corupție.” Mai poți să faci flagrant? Mai poți să investighezi? Nu, s-a terminat.

O altă modificare: vor fi șterse și aruncate la coș orice dovezi din calculatoare privind alte infracțiuni. Dacă descoperi filme cu pornografie infantilă, va trebui să le arunci la coș și să le distrugi. Nu vei putea să le modifice.

De asemenea, camerele de luat vederi din locuri publice nu vor mai putea funcționa, nu vor mai putea fi mijloace de probă.

Nu, am avut două minute și vreau să am exact cât a avut domnul Boștinaru. Vorbesc pentru țara mea, nu pentru partid.

(Președintele a întrerupt vorbitorul.)

Renate Weber (ALDE). – Domnule președinte, am auzit la viața mea multe minciuni, dar chiar cred că doamna deputat Macovei acum a întrecut orice limită.

Când o societate reacționează la temele importante care se dezbat, aceasta este de salutat, pentru că e o implicare civică bună, firească. Când Comisia Europeană se interesează de ceea ce se întâmplă într-un stat membru, este ceva firesc, pentru că, în UE, suntem cu toții membrii unei mari familii. Dar la fel de firesc este să ne uităm cu toții la mecanismele instituționale pe care o țară le are pentru a adopta o legislație în acord cu exigențele statului de drept. În România, astfel de mecanisme există și funcționează. Avem o Curte Constituțională care emite decizii obligatorii pentru Parlament, obligându-l să pună orice lege în acord cu Constituția – o Curte Constituțională care, în ciuda unor critici exprimate de-a lungul timpului, este independentă și a dovedit asta prin deciziile luate sub diferite guvernări.

Îl avem pe Președintele României, care face un control de oportunitate înainte de a promulga o lege, având dreptul să o retrimită în Parlament, explicând punctual care prevederi ar putea aduce atingere independenței justiției.

Sunt mecanisme democratice și trebuie să avem încredere în ele, dar asta nu exclude evaluarea unei legislații de către Comisia de la Veneția, care poate face o analiză obiectivă, pentru că ceea ce este de dorit e o legislație și o justiție în folosul cetățenilor români.

Seán Kelly (PPE). – Mr President, I come from Ireland, which had great difficulty in adapting from being colonised and then becoming independent – in fact, we had a civil war. Romania is trying to come from a time when it was under the control of the USSR, so I can understand a certain amount of friction and ups and downs, etcetera, but nevertheless, it was deemed to be advanced enough to join the European Union, which has a very clear set of values. If we feel that those values have been breached in any way, it is only right, firstly, that we should discuss it here in the European Parliament, and secondly, that there should be some type of sanction if an independent analysis shows that that is the case.

Certainly, there have been grave doubts expressed here – and rightly so – about the transparency, the failure to deal with corruption in Romania and especially the independence of the judiciary. These are things we cannot ignore.

It's probably a bit simplistic to blame the Commission for not doing more. Maybe it should do more, but also I think we have to look at the tools in terms of: if there are certain breaches, what sanctions kick in? It is understandable to say that you shouldn't blame the people or penalise the people, but how do you actually penalise the Government without penalising the people? Nobody has answered that.

There is need for clarity on this. There is need for sanctions, as we go forward, and there is definitely a need to ensure that no country is allowed to have the lack of transparency, the corruption and the challenges to the independence of the judiciary that we are seeing in Romania.

Claude Moraes (S&D). – Mr President, we heard from a previous speaker about whether the EU institutions had been involved on Romania. My understanding is that Romania has been working to achieve the process of judicial reform since the accession treaty and that the institutions have been continually involved.

We have a debate today; the Justice Minister will come before the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs shortly; and I agree with those colleagues who say it would be better if he were in a position to answer many of the detailed criticisms today, but I understand the rules.

I broadly agree with what Ms Fajon and Ms in 't Veld were saying, which is that we should acknowledge what progress has been made. We should acknowledge that this is not a black and white debate and we should acknowledge, of course, that are now clear and pending issues and criticisms. But there should be room now for dialogue and I think most sensible people in this debate would understand that. There are still the pending issues but self-criticism has been made and, with an independent constitutional mechanism in place, Romania can display, and has displayed, a willingness to have viable institutional dialogue.

Mircea Diaconu (ALDE). – Domnule preşedinte, doamnă comisar, întâi am o observaţie: ministrul justiţiei, care se află aici prezent, este chiar membru al Comisiei de la Veneţia.

E adevărat că şi eu, vă mărturisesc, sunt îngrijorat de statul de drept din România. Cred că are probleme.

În urmă cu vreo zece ani, s-au modificat legile justiţiei, fără nicio dezbatere publică, prin asumare de răspundere, şi au dat atunci preşedintelui prerogativa respingerii discreţionare a numirii magistraţilor în funcţii de conducere, adică exact ce se reproşează Poloniei astăzi. România a devenit între timp statul cu cele mai multe condamnări la CEDO pentru abuzuri împotriva cetăţenilor săi şi nimeni nu răspunde. Deci, statul de drept are probleme în România.

În aceşti ani, s-au emis în România mandate de ascultare din ce în ce mai multe. Dau doar un exemplu: în 2015, s-au cerut de 16 ori mai multe mandate de ascultare şi urmărire decât de FBI. Au fost ascultaţi mii de cetăţeni în perioada alegerilor, ultimelor alegeri parlamentare, pe motiv de siguranţă naţională – ca să traduc mai simplu: terorism. Aceştia erau oameni de afaceri, funcţionari, politicieni, unii chiar candidaţi. E ca şi cum, exact la alegeri, în jur de o mie de terorişti au apărut în România şi au dispărut după aceea la fel de brusc, într-o ţară în care nu există niciun terorist şi niciun act de terorism, iar, după alegeri, cum vă spun, au dispărut. Deci, statul de drept are probleme în România.

Conform Constituției noastre, Parlamentul este cel care poate repara aceste probleme, după părerea mea de cetățean, și nu trebuie să ceară aprobarea nimănui și nu poate fi cenzurat decât de Curtea Constituțională, care funcționează. Cred că, în rest, nu mai e de discutat nimic.

Aș pune punct aici, dar, dacă mai am o secundă, vreau să vă spun că vreau independența justiției, dar, mai ales, a României.

Carlos Coelho (PPE). – Senhor Presidente, a União Europeia funda-se em valores, no Estado de Direito, para benefício de todos os europeus. Relembrar esta Europa dos cidadãos não é um lugar-comum mas o ponto de partida essencial quando discutimos decisões graves dos Governos dos Estados-Membros.

Hoje, debatemos e condenamos as ações do Governo da Roménia e não os cidadãos romenos. Pelo contrário, é importante que fique claro que não é senão em defesa desses cidadãos, e mais largamente de todos os cidadãos europeus, que apelamos ao Governo romeno que respeite os valores mais fundamentais do seu país e desta nossa União.

Em nenhum Estado-Membro podemos permitir que seja colocada em causa a independência do poder judicial, essencial ao bom funcionamento de uma sociedade democrática. Em nenhum Estado-Membro podemos permitir que a corrupção não seja combatida e sancionada de forma veemente. Em nenhum Estado-Membro podemos permitir que a legislação penal seja modificada para benefício próprio.

Sr. Presidente, a linha de ação do Governo romeno e dos seus líderes não é aceitável. Apelo, por isso, a que sejamos claros no apoio à Comissão Europeia e ao que tem feito para prestar apoio ao Governo romeno.

Mas concluo com a mesma clareza com que comecei: não podemos nunca transigir no que é fundamental e a União Europeia é um projeto de cidadania assente no Estado de Direito.

Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D). – Mr President, we, the members of the Socialist and Democratic family in this House, truly care about the rule of law, separation of powers and the independence of the judiciary, and of course we understand the legitimate concerns every time there is a risk of breach of the rule of law in relation to a judicial reform in a Member State.

Having said that, it is fair to point out that each and every act in this package of reforms has been in answer to previous rulings of the Romanian Constitutional Court; that there has been a preventive exercise of constitutional review of those acts; and that the Romanian Government has shown readiness to comply with the rulings of the Constitutional Court. This reform aims to enhance the accountability of judges in a country which ranks first in terms of violations of Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights; it enhances the presumption of innocence with regard to its due observance by members of the public prosecution service; and, lastly, it is important to break the misuse or political abuse of the links between the judiciary and intelligence services. That is why many of us do not believe that this reform package poses a serious threat or represents a systemic breach of the rule of law in that Member State which is Romania.

(Applause)

Michał Boni (PPE). – Mr President, democracy requires transparency, separation of powers, an independent judiciary system and justice, which should never be bent to serve short-term political tactics or the vested interests of individual politicians. This is the only way to build public trust and encourage citizens' participation: the fundament of democracy.

I see thousands of Romanian people protesting in the streets. I see Romanian citizens full of concern about their country and their justice system. I know that there is no possibility to create trust where corruption is all around. I see some efforts made by the government to strengthen the independence of the judiciary system. It is not sufficient. I continue to see the government watering down anti-corruption laws in Romania and playing an unfair game with society and with all of us – the European family, a family which is based on the rule of law, fundamental values and politics free of corruption.

Romanian citizens, please, be brave, be vigilant: don't give up. Romanian politicians: be open to your society, be honest. Only this attitude can bring real political profits – true profits, not money. European Commission: be strict and, at the same time, open to dialogue. A European Union without values will lose its moral, political and real power.

(The Speaker declined to answer a blue-card question from Claudia Tapardel)

Ioan Mircea Pașcu (S&D). – Mr President, since 2005 Romania has a law system based on vague, subjective, interpretable and discretionary laws supported through secret protocols by the intelligence services – why secret if they are constitutional? – and services which were ousted from the judiciary process immediately after the revolution. Consequently, the anti-corruption struggle was easily abused, being transformed into an instrument directed against political adversaries and economic competitors transferring power from those elected to those appointed.

As a result, in the last two years the media is full of the abuses committed in the anti-corruption struggle and the courts have declared inadmissible an increasing number of cases submitted by anti-corruption prosecutors. And now, when the Romanian parliament is obliged to correct a number of articles declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court – eliminating their subjectivity – the sovereignty of the Romanian people is being questioned.

In the end, I would like to ask our critics: why should the Romanians feel more under surveillance now in democracy than during Ceausescu's time?

ΠΡΟΕΔΡΙΑ: ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΟΣ ΠΑΠΑΔΗΜΟΥΛΗΣ

Αντιπρόεδρος

Daniel Buda (PPE). – Domnule președinte, mărturisesc că nu este cea mai fericită zi din viața mea, dar progresele făcute de România din anul 2007 încoace în procesul de consolidare a statului de drept, a independenței justiției, dar și a luptei împotriva corupției sunt incontestabile. Din păcate însă, guvernarea PSD-ALDE ne demonstrează că acest progres nu este ireversibil.

Procesul de legiferare al actualei majorități parlamentare prin care s-a încercat subordonarea justiției față de factorul politic, dar și o lipsă de transparență în dezbaterile unor astfel de modificări a scos în stradă sute de mii de oameni, iar acest lucru nu-l puteți contesta, stimați colegi.

În același timp, a generat o reacție dură a întregului corp al magistraților, care se opun acestor modificări, dar și îngrijorări serioase și legitime ale Comisiei Europene. Nimeni nu contestă dreptul Parlamentului de a legifera, dar actuala guvernare PSD-ALDE trebuie să înțeleagă un lucru, și anume că nu poate să se joace cu parcursul european al României.

Independența sistemului judiciar românesc, capacitatea sa de a combate în mod eficace corupția, predictibilitatea legislativă, precum și existența unor mecanisme funcționale care să garanteze drepturile și libertățile fundamentale ale cetățeanului trebuie să devină realități indestructibile și să se constituie în pietrele de temelie ale unei României puternice în cadrul Uniunii Europene.

Tocmai de aceea, consider că în acest moment se impune demararea unui amplu proces de consultare publică cu asociațiile magistraților, cu societatea civilă, fiind necesară în același timp identificarea unor modele funcționale la nivelul statelor membre ale Uniunii Europene, dar și consultarea Comisiei de la Veneția asupra unor aspecte de bază ale reformelor justiției.

Dan Nica (S&D). – Domnule președinte, doamnă comisar, din păcate astăzi au fost spuse atâtea neadevăruri, încât ar trebui să înființăm și o nouă inițiativă: Minciuna ucide. Ce să vă spun, ne-am întrebat cu toții de ce nu este lăsat să vorbească ministrul Justiției din România. De ce se invocă, în mod fals, că ar fi trebuit să vină prim-ministrul, care, *nota bene*, nu este membru al Consiliului și care nici măcar nu a primit o invitație.

Motivele sunt foarte simple: pentru că nu adevărul interesa astăzi, ci discursuri politicianiste și lipsa oricărui argument. Nu sunt în stare, cei care critică, să spună: „Domnule, articolul, alineatul cutare este în neregulă”, pentru că nu există așa ceva. Au colportat astăzi și, din păcate, vreau să vă spun, unii dintre colegi minciuni și v-au dezinformat, doamna comisar. Poate dacă ați fi acceptat întâlnirea cu domnul ministru, sunt convins că ați fi avut azi alt discurs.

Cum e posibil să spuneți despre independența sistemului judiciar, când legile respective au fost adoptate de Curtea Constituțională? Declarate constituționale. Cum e posibil să nu știți sau să nu vă fi spus nimeni că, din cele 350 de amendamente, 270 au fost propuse de Consiliul Superior al Magistraturii?

Sunt elemente pe care toată lumea trebuie să le știe, dar, din păcate, nu adevărul a interesat astăzi, ci o dezbatere politicianistă, de cea mai neplăcută speță.

László Tórkés (PPE). – Elnök Úr! Üdvözlöm a romániai jogállamiság kérdésének a napirendre tűzését. Ideje volt már, hogy az Európai Bizottság szakítson a kettős mérce alkalmazásával, és pártpolitikai elfogultsággal ne csupán Magyarország és Lengyelország ellenében folytasson eljárást a jogállamiság megsértése miatt, hanem végre Románia szocialista kormányát is számon kérje. Jean Claude Juncker elnökkel tartott brüsszeli sajtóértekezletén Klaus Iohannis államelnök határozottan kiállt a romániai igazságszolgáltatás függetlensége mellett. Megelőzőleg az új román kormányfő, Viorica Dăncilă beiktatásán az államfő szintén kijelentette, hogy „az igazságszolgáltatás függetlenségének megsértése elfogadhatatlan, és az utcákon egy éve a jogállamiság védelmében tüntető százvezrek üzenetét nem szabad figyelmen kívül hagyni”.

Az igazságügyet nem szabad alárendelni a politikumnak, nevezetesen a csontja velejéig korrupt, utódkommunista szocialista pártnak! A jogállamiság sarokköve az, hogy senki se állhasson a törvények felett. Liviu Dragnea büntetett előéletű és büntetőeljárás alatt álló oligarchikus pártvezér sem! A jogfosztott romániai magyar közösség az európai demokrácia követelményeivel összhangban, a román többségi társadalommal együtt kiáll a jogállamiság helyreállítása mellett.

Cristian Dan Preda (PPE). – Domnule președinte, domnul Boștinaru spunea mai devreme că avem o țară de mâna a doua. Nu, nu avem o țară de mâna a doua. Avem, în schimb, un guvern de mâna a șaptea, pentru că, dacă nu ar fi fost așa, l-am fi avut aici pe prim-ministrul acestui guvern, doamna Dăncilă, care, atunci când a fost investită, a fost prezentată ca fiind persoana-cheie în cadrul instituțiilor Uniunii Europene. Când avea ocazia să apere guvernul, stă acasă, de frică.

Nu înțeleg, în schimb, ce caută domnul Toader aici, pentru că dumnealui, așa cum a zis domnul Diaconu, e, într-adevăr, membru al Comisiei de la Veneția. Dar atunci când domnii Juncker și Timmermans au cerut Guvernului român să consulte Comisia de la Veneția, cine a fost primul care a spus: „Nu avem nevoie”? Chiar domnul Toader, membru al acestei comisii.

În general, atitudinea Guvernului român este de dispreț față de Comisie. Membrii majorității, pesediștii, membrii ALDE spun că nu există informații, că totul e minciună, în același timp apărând corupția, apărând plagiatul, promovând analfabeți. Așadar, e o situație în care nu pot decât să întreb următorul lucru: nu vă e rușine, pesediștilor?

(Vorbitorul acceptă să răspundă la o întrebare adresată în conformitate cu procedura „cartonașului albastru” (articolul 162 alineatul (8) din Regulamentul de procedură))

Victor Boștinaru (S&D), întrebare adresată în conformitate cu procedura „cartonașului albastru”. – Domnule președinte, nu știu dacă domnul coleg Preda merită sau nu „blue card”.

Vreau totuși să îl întreb, cu o vădită stare de jenă: domnule Preda, ați ascultat discursul fostului dumneavoastră patron politic, Traian Băsescu, referitor la legile justiției din România? Este cel care v-a inventat și apoi v-a abandonat. Ce a spus Traian Băsescu despre legile justiției din România?

Cristian Dan Preda (PPE), Răspuns la o întrebare adresată în conformitate cu procedura „cartonașului albastru”. – Sunt obișnuit cu atacurile la persoană. Nu sunt obișnuit însă cu faza în care PSD-iștii, care au făcut din Traian Băsescu răul absolut, îl mobilizează acum în lupta lor împotriva statului de drept. Asta este, într-adevăr, ceva nou.

Știu că limita lor nu există, însă rămân la convingerea că trebuie să fim onești și coerenți. Nu putem spune aici un lucru și acasă contrariul. Îi apărați pe corupți, apăreți public cu oameni care sunt condamnați, cu oameni care sunt trimiși în judecată. Ați pus în Guvern analfabeți și oameni care trebuie să răspundă pentru furturi de miliarde.

(Președintele l-a întrerupt pe vorbitor)

Διαδικασία «Catch-the-Eye»

Jiří Pospíšil (PPE). – Pane předsedající, já jsem byl v České republice pět let ministrem spravedlnosti a byl jsem odpovědný za reformu justice, a dovolte mi tedy několik poznámek člověka, který o tomto problému trochu něco ví, byť z úrovně jiné země.

Mně připadá ta reforma, která v tuto chvíli byla zavedena v Rumunsku, jako naprosto nepřijatelná. Je zcela zjevné, že to povede k tomu, že se korupce jen velmi obtížně bude vyšetřovat. Ty konkrétní věci tu můžeme zmiňovat, zkrácení lhůty pro nahlášení korupce, způsob výslechů u tohoto trestného činu, nutnost oznámit někomu, že je vyšetřován atd. To jsou konkrétní věci a já jsem velmi rád, že to tady dnes řešíme, a trochu mě mrzí, že naši socialističtí kolegové nejsou ochotni se na tu věc dívat objektivně a že to vnímají pouze stranicky a politicky. Ale jsou nějaká objektivní kritéria, jak se závažná trestná činnost vyšetřovat má, a ta kritéria současná rumunská vláda zkrátka popírá. A to je objektivní fakt, byť někdo může fandit té či oné straně. A pokud tedy Komise dneska řeší Polsko, měla by řešit také Rumunsko, kde ta situace je podobná.

Gabriela Zoaň (S&D). – Domnule președinte, așa cum președintele Juncker a declarat săptămâna trecută, nu este cazul să vorbim despre nerespectarea statului de drept în România. Pachetul legilor justiției vine ca o necesitate a corelării legislației interne cu deciziile Curții Constituționale, jurisprudenței CEDO, recomandărilor Comisiei Europene, dar și a propunerilor corporurilor profesionale și a instituțiilor ce deserveșc justiția în România. Niciodată nu s-a pus problema ca Parlamentul României să nu ia în considerare deciziile Curții Constituționale, iar, în ceea ce privește procesul de legiferare, potrivit Constituției, există dublu control: pe de o parte, controlul exercitat de Curtea Constituțională, iar, pe de altă parte, controlul exercitat de președinte. Ceea ce se întâmplă astăzi în România este dovada perfectă a exercițiului democrației, implicându-se deopotrivă atât societatea civilă, cât și reprezentanții poporului în forul legislativ al țării.

2018 este anul centenarului Marii Uniri. România este în sărbătoare. Se împlinesc o sută de ani de la Marea Unire. Îmi doresc să ne unim cu toții eforturile și energia pentru a sărbători România. Asistăm la dezbateri firești într-o democrație performantă, însă dezbaterile interne nu trebuie prezentate în Parlamentul European ca fiind subiecte false de dispute politice, existând riscul să se creeze emoție și dezbinare socială în anul centenarului, un an preelectoral.

Siegfried Mureșan (PPE). – Domnule președinte, doamnă comisar, stimați colegi, 600 000 de oameni în stradă împotriva guvernului: credeți că guvernul face lucruri bune pentru oameni sau lucruri rele pentru oameni? Realitatea în România este următoarea: există o discrepanță majoră între ceea ce vor oamenii și ceea ce vrea coaliția de guvernare. Oamenii vor dreptate, justiție, domnia legii, stat de drept. Oamenii vor valori europene, iar politicienii aflați la guvernare vor slăbirea instituțiilor statului, vor o justiție sub propriul lor control.

Cine sunt acești politicieni? În vârful lor este președintele Partidului Social Democrat, care este și președintele Parlamentului, condamnat pentru fraudă electorală. Doamnă comisar, credeți că un infractor dovedit, doctoricind legile justiției, întărește justiția sau o slăbește? Eu cred că o slăbește. Nu am încredere că o întărește și, de aceea, vreau să spun următorul lucru. În primul rând, românilor care protestează trebuie să le transmitem următorul mesaj: ceea ce faceți se vede, contează. Europa distinge între oamenii cinstiți și politicienii corupți. Dumneavoastră, doamnă comisar, vă cer să fiți alături de oamenii care vor dreptate.

Maria Grapini (S&D). – Domnule președinte, o să vreau să mulțumesc, în primul rând, reprezentantului Consiliului, care a avut o poziție corectă, echidistantă, obiectivă și rezervată. Doamna comisar, sunteți decepția zilei mele de astăzi, pentru că am să vă las această broșură, în care o să găsiți și graficele cum a fost dezbateră publică și câte amendamente s-au făcut din partea asociațiilor profesionale, fie că vorbim de judecători, de magistrați și poate înțelegeți că parcursul, acum, al modificării legilor justiției este o necesitate. Pentru că eu nu înțeleg de la titlu, cum adică să punem un titlu că reforma în justiție ar afecta statul de drept? Eu zic că lipsa de reformă ar afecta statul de drept.

Doamna Macovei, care aici aplaudă când nu trebuie, a făcut un pachet de legi, prin asumare, în care au rămas foarte multe articole neconstituționale. Ce se chinuie acum acest guvern și domnul ministru, tot respectul pentru profesionalismul dumnealui, este să corecteze aceste amendamente neconstituționale. Au fost sute de oameni, mii de oameni băgați în pușcărie pe legile doamnei Macovei și acum plătim la CEDO din bugetul cetățenilor români.

Csaba Sógor (PPE). – Elnök Úr! A Romániában zajló korrupcióellenes harc és a jogállamiság megerősítése folyamatos erőfeszítéseket igényel. Ám nem lehet figyelmen kívül hagyni a bírálatokat és jelzéseket sem: az intézmények irányítóinak politikai elköteleződésére vonatkozó vádak, titkosszolgálatokkal való indokolatlan és törvényellenes összefonódások, konkrét ügyekben súlyos túlkapások, alapvető jogok semmibevétele. Az igazságügyi törvények szükségességének módosításainak az állampolgárok érdekében kell megtörténniük és fontos, hogy a politika ne a korrupcióellenes harc intézményrendszerének eszköztárát gyengítse általa, de teljesen elzárkózni a módosításoktól és minden egyes cikkelyben egy politikai támadást látni az igazságszolgáltatási rendszer ellen óriási hiba. Az Uniónak nemcsak a korrupcióellenes harc szemszögéből kellene figyelemmel követnie a romániai igazságszolgáltatási rendszert, hanem az általános jogállami elvek érvényesülését is számon kellene kérnie, az állampolgárok nagy tömegei ugyanis itt érzik leginkább az igazságszolgáltatási rendszer hiányosságait.

Claudia Țapardel (S&D). – Domnule președinte, dragi colegi, regret că ne aflăm din nou în fața unei campanii murdare de dezinformare la adresa României și că ne aflăm într-o situație extrem de periculoasă, în care se contestă acțiuni legitime ale unui parlament național.

Ceea ce nu ați înțeles este că astăzi vorbim despre niște legi ale justiției în România care au ca obiectiv respectarea drepturilor și a libertăților civile ale cetățenilor români și respectarea principiului nevinovăției. Poate că ar trebui să discutăm aici, în forul democrației europene, despre sutele, dacă nu miile de vieți distruse în România prin nerespectarea acestui principiu consfințit de legislația europeană, și anume principiul nevinovăției. Să vorbim despre justiție televizată, despre cariere și imagine publică distruse în urma unor dosare bazate pe probe neconcludente și puțin solide, care, în final, au fost soluționate cu neînceperea urmăririi penale sau chiar au fost clasate.

Când vorbim despre legile justiției, vorbim despre un pachet de legi care a fost dezbătut luni întregi împreună cu asociațiile profesionale, precum și la nivelul Parlamentului național, iar amendamentele depuse sunt emanația acestui proces de consultare.

Doru-Claudian Frunzulică (S&D). – Mr President, I would like to ask Madam Commissioner, who today expressed so many concerns and objections about the three laws governing the justice system that were amended in January in the Romanian Parliament: why, Madam Commissioner, did you not express any concerns or any objections when, in 2016, the Cioloș Government – the so-called ‘expert’s government’ but in reality a right-wing government – issued an emergency ordinance to amend and supplement the penal code and the code of criminal procedures, amending 114 articles? In this way the codes were amended in a non-transparent manner and without debate or public consultation, without the competent authorities or any interested parties being able to propose amendments or formulate technical observations. Why, Madam Commissioner? Because the political correctness ...

(The President cut off the speaker)

Ana Gomes (S&D). – Mr President, I went to Romania last November to speak about the Portuguese prohibition of bearer shares. I met with Romanian NGOs and journalists and was impressed with their high quality and commitment, and it pains me to hear that a draft law that was endorsed by the Romanian Senate in the meantime is actually closing the space for civil society. These NGOs and journalists work to expose and stop corruption.

This debate should actually be about the fight against corruption in Romania because the justice system, despite the constraints, seems to be working, and so is the Romanian National Anti-Corruption Directorate, which, working together with OLAF, concluded that the leader of the ruling Social Democrat Party (PSD), Mr Liviu Dragnea, is responsible for serious fraud using EU funds, 'creating an organised criminal group' for that purpose, and 'misusing his position for personal gain'. I am reading this from OLAF's report: it is a press release of 13 November. So my question to Romanian colleagues and the Government – and I wish the Minister could speak – is how come this person has not been relieved of his position in the parliament and in the party?

(The President cut off the speaker)

Emilian Pavel (S&D). – Domnule președinte, stimată doamnă comisar, colegii dumneavoastră, președintele Juncker și comisarul Timmermans, s-au arătat îngrijorați și au solicitat imperativ Parlamentului României modificarea legilor justiției, adoptate anul trecut, fără a fi promulgate, și fără a cunoaște verdictul Curții Constituționale a României. Avem de-a face aici cu imixtiuni grave în afacerile constituționale și interne ale statului român.

Ați tras paiul scurt, doamnă comisar. Acele îngrijorări, nesuținute astăzi de dânșii, ci de dumneavoastră, par să nu fie împărtășite de Parlamentul European. Uitați-vă în jur: sunt douăzeci sau mai puțini colegi deputați din alte state membre care se îngrijorează și dânșii, ca și dumneavoastră.

Am ascultat cu atenție luările de cuvânt și nu pot să nu remarc decât o simplă înșiruire de lozinci, mai ales pe partea dreaptă. O astfel de dezbatere nu își are locul în acest plen, fără a avea participarea reprezentanților autorităților române, pentru a explica și pentru a fi transparenți în fața dumneavoastră.

Îi provoc pe toți colegii să se gândească ce decizii ar lua ei în țările lor, dacă ar avea parte de aceleași abuzuri în justiție pe care le-a avut România în ultimii ani și pe care încearcă cu greu să le înlăture. România și Bulgaria trebuie să fie primite în Schengen, iar MCV trebuie să dispară. Acestea sunt debateri care trebuie să aibă loc aici, în plen.

Πρόεδρος. – Θα ήθελα να σας ενημερώσω ότι αποφάσισα κατά τη διάρκεια της διαδικασίας Catch-the-Eye να μη δίνω επιπλέον γαλάζιες κάρτες, γιατί η κ. Macovei συχνά ζητά γαλάζιες κάρτες. Έχω αυτό το δικαίωμα. Όπως ενημερώθηκα, η κ. Macovei ήταν μεταξύ των ομιλητών. Έχουμε αργήσει όμως πάρα πολύ και παρακαλώ για την κατανόησή σας.

Andi Cristea (S&D). – Domnule președinte, faptul că astăzi vorbim despre situația din România, din țara noastră – mă refer la acei colegi din România – în asemenea termeni apocaliptici, stimați colegi, arată, după caz, limitele de înțelegere sau chiar agenda antiromânească a unora dintre dumneavoastră, mai ales fiindcă suntem în momente-cheie, când în interiorul Uniunii Europene se reconfigurează instrumentele financiare post-2020 și deja avem narativul incorect al condiționării banilor europeni de așa-zisul grad de respectare a statului de drept.

Trăim vremuri interesante. Vreau să spun un lucru foarte clar: românii sunt cetățeni europeni. Suntem buni europeni. Suntem solidari cu valorile democrației de tip european și vrem stat de drept adevărat, fără elemente de neconstituționalitate, fără abuz, cu sistem intern de *checks and balances*.

Ultimul cuvânt, domnule Preda: dumneavoastră sunteți interesat doar să vă protagonizați pe persoană fizică. Este rușinos ceea ce faceți.

(Λήξη της διαδικασίας «Catch-the-Eye»)

Věra Jourová, Member of the Commission. – Mr President, I would like to thank the European Parliament for having this debate. This debate is not about the Commission or the Parliament; it is about justice for Romanians who have legitimate expectations that there would be independent and efficient justice for them in Romania.

However, some of you mentioned or questioned the role of the Commission. Let me reiterate that the role of the Commission is to fulfil the obligation of the guardian of the Treaty. It is our duty to assess the situation of the rule of law in each Member State and to raise concerns when we see systemic problems.

The justice system is a sophisticated and complex structure, calibrated on the basis of legal traditions and fulfilling the principle of the balance of powers in the state. Such a system is built over decades and can be destroyed in a week or overnight. That is why we are so vigilant and that is why we have raised the concerns at this moment.

We are assessing objectively the Romanian system on the basis of evidence and facts. We are offering dialogue and support. This is what we do. What we do not do, because we must not do that, is interfere in individual cases – just to respond to the question of Ms Nicolai.

The independence of Romania's judicial system and its capacity to fight corruption effectively are essential cornerstones of a strong Romania in the European Union. After ten years of hard work, Romania has a professional judiciary and the population of Romania has been clear in its support for the fight against corruption. I am confident that all the Romanian authorities fully realise this and will do what is necessary to bring the draft laws into line with the constitution and send a strong signal that will help rebuild trust.

The Commission stands by to help Romania in this endeavour, however and whenever that is useful.

Monika Panayotova, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Mr President, honourable Members, let me assure you once again that the Bulgarian Presidency and the Council as a whole attach great importance to upholding the rule of law and fundamental values within the European Union. The Council will continue to follow this debate closely and the Presidency will pay particular attention to the views which were expressed here today.

Πρόεδρος. – Η συζήτηση έληξε.

Γραπτές δηλώσεις (άρθρο 162)

Cristian-Silviu Bușoi (PPE), *în scris*. – Recentele legi ce vizează schimbări în modul de funcționare al justiției în statul român au căpătat o amplă vizibilitate la nivel european. Sub atentele priviri ale instituțiilor europene și ale statelor membre, o parte a mediului politic românesc riscă să facă un semnificativ pas înapoi din calea spre definitivarea integrării europene, încercând să îndepărteze statul român de progresele notabile înregistrate în cadrul Mecanismului de Cooperare și Verificare.

Acest mecanism aparține Comisiei Europene, al cărei președinte, Jean-Claude Juncker, și-a exprimat aprecierea față de progresele din ultimii ani ale sistemului judiciar românesc, însă și temerea față de ireversibilitatea greșelii pe care membri ai Parlamentului României sunt pe cale să o facă.

În al doilea rând, aceste legi riscă să îndepărteze semnificativ statul de aderarea în cadrul Spațiului Schengen. Decizia aderării se ia prin acordul miniștrilor europeni de Justiție și Interne, care mă îndoiesc că ar fi de acord să expună vreunui pericol suplimentar securitatea persoanelor, pieței unice și a capitalului european.

În calitate de politician român, am încredere că, după dezbaterile de astăzi, colegii mei de la guvernare vor avea buna judecată de a adopta un pachet de legi corecte, pro-români și pro-europene.

16. Fundusz Gwarancyjny dla działań zewnętrznych – Gwarancja UE dla Europejskiego Banku Inwestycyjnego na pokrycie strat poniesionych w związku z działaniami z zakresu finansowania wspierającymi projekty inwestycyjne poza granicami Unii (debata)

Πρόεδρος. – Το επόμενο σημείο στην ημερήσια διάταξη είναι η κοινή συζήτηση σχετικά με:

— την έκθεση της Eider Gardiazabal Rubial, εξ ονόματος της Επιτροπής Προϋπολογισμών, σχετικά με την πρόταση κανονισμού του Ευρωπαϊκού Κοινοβουλίου και του Συμβουλίου που αφορά την τροποποίηση του κανονισμού (ΕΚ, Ευρατόμ) αριθ. 480/2009 σχετικά με την ίδρυση Ταμείου εγγυήσεων για τις εξωτερικές δράσεις (COM(2016)0582 – C8-0374/2016 – 2016/0274(COD)) (A8-0132/2017)

— την έκθεση της Eider Gardiazabal Rubial, εξ ονόματος της Επιτροπής Προϋπολογισμών, σχετικά με την πρόταση απόφασης του Ευρωπαϊκού Κοινοβουλίου και του Συμβουλίου για την τροποποίηση της απόφασης αριθ. 466/2014/ΕΕ με την οποία χορηγείται εγγύηση της ΕΕ στην Ευρωπαϊκή Τράπεζα Επενδύσεων για την κάλυψη ζημιών από χρηματοδοτικές δραστηριότητες που υποστηρίζουν επενδυτικά έργα εκτός της Ένωσης (COM(2016)0583 – C8-0376/2016 – 2016/0275(COD)) (A8-0135/2017)

Eider Gardiazabal Rubial, ponente. – Señor presidente, comisario Katainen, presidente Hoyer, en los últimos años ha habido una fuerte crítica a la Unión Europea por su inacción ante la crisis de los refugiados y, de hecho, desde esta Cámara han sido numerosas las veces que hemos reclamado tanto al Consejo como a la Comisión que actuaran urgentemente para poner soluciones encima de la mesa: actuaciones a corto plazo, pero también actuaciones a más largo plazo, para poder abordar de una manera más estructural el fenómeno migratorio y la situación de los países de nuestro entorno que están acogiendo masivamente a los refugiados.

Y al igual que criticamos esa inacción, creo que también es justo reconocer que el Plan Europeo de Inversiones Exteriores, que presentó la Comisión Europea en junio de 2016, da respuesta a una parte de esas necesidades que veníamos señalando. En julio de 2017 este Pleno ya dio luz verde a uno de los componentes de ese Plan, que fue el Fondo Europeo de Desarrollo Sostenible, y hoy debatimos aquí otro de sus componentes, que es la modificación del mandato de préstamos exteriores del BEI, cuyas actividades están garantizadas por el presupuesto de la Unión.

Tras ocho meses de duras negociaciones con la Presidencia maltesa primero y con la Presidencia estonia después, hemos conseguido cerrar un acuerdo que creo que mejora sustancialmente el actual mandato de préstamos exteriores.

Me gustaría empezar recordando que todos los países de la Unión, y la Comisión también, firmaron los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible y que, por lo tanto, todas nuestras actuaciones tienen que ir encaminadas a su cumplimiento.

Con la modificación de este Reglamento, vamos a mejorar cuantitativa y cualitativamente la actuación de la Unión Europea a través del BEI en el exterior y, sobre todo, en los países de la vecindad Sur y Este.

Mejoramos cuantitativamente porque aumentamos la capacidad de inversión hasta los 32 300 millones de euros de aquí al 2020, con un esfuerzo muy especial en los países del Mediterráneo y en los Balcanes.

En cuanto a la mejora cualitativa de nuestras inversiones, hemos trabajado en varios aspectos. El primero, y probablemente el más importante, es que hemos añadido un nuevo objetivo prioritario y transversal para que todas las iniciativas financiadas a través de este programa contribuyan a cumplir con los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible y así erradicar las causas por las que las personas deben abandonar sus hogares.

Dentro de este nuevo objetivo no nos hemos querido olvidar de los países de nuestro entorno que, en una clara demostración de solidaridad, acogen a millones de refugiados y cuyos servicios públicos e infraestructuras están completamente desbordados.

Además, para cumplir con los acuerdos de París y con nuestro compromiso de ayudar a los países en desarrollo hemos aumentado el porcentaje que se debe dedicar a inversiones relacionadas con el cambio climático del 25 % al 35 %.

Otra de las áreas en la que también hemos trabajado y hemos mejorado la Decisión ha sido el apoyo al desarrollo del sector privado local, mejorando el acceso de las pymes a la financiación, fomentando la transición de una economía informal al sector formal y procurando un especial apoyo a proyectos de inversión en zonas rurales, sobre todo para el tratamiento de agua potable, el saneamiento y las energías renovables.

Y, por último, como mejora cualitativa, me gustaría destacar la inclusión de la perspectiva de género en todas las operaciones financiadas por el BEI. Aprobamos los apartados 8 bis y ter, y con esta aprobación garantizamos que se cumplan los compromisos de la estrategia de igualdad y de su plan de acción y, además, fomentaremos el respeto de los principios de transparencia salarial e igualdad de remuneración.

Y, para finalizar, me gustaría destacar dos aspectos muy importantes de esta legislación. Por un lado, hemos introducido todo un nuevo capítulo que tiene que ver con la evaluación del programa; hemos establecido una serie de parámetros y sus correspondientes indicadores para poder evaluar los resultados de las inversiones desde un punto de vista social, medioambiental y económico.

Y, por otro lado, hemos introducido una legislación mucho más restrictiva en la prevención del blanqueo de capitales, la lucha contra la financiación del terrorismo, la fiscalidad y los territorios no cooperadores. Y, en este sentido, el BEI deberá presentarnos cada año un informe sobre la aplicación de esta política, incluyendo un informe país por país y una lista de los intermediarios con los que colabora.

Como decía al principio de mi intervención, creo que este acuerdo mejora sustancialmente el mandato de inversiones del BEI y espero que mañana sea respaldado ampliamente por esta Cámara y que el BEI pueda ponerlo en marcha lo antes posible.

Nirj Deva, *rapporteur for the opinion of the Committee on Development*. – Mr President, a year ago the House backed my proposal to establish stronger ties with the private sector, marking a revolution in EU development financing, a new way of mobilising private capital, key to wealth creation and the fight against global poverty.

As rapporteur for the opinion of the Committee on Development on this proposal, I supported the overall increase in the EU guarantee from EUR 27 billion to EUR 32.2 billion in order to address the root causes of migration. As part of the external investment plan, together with the EIB, this Marshall Plan for Africa is of paramount importance in implementing the shift from global grants to loans, promoting investment rather than handouts.

International development is not just about eliminating poverty, it is also about delivering security, stability and economic opportunities to poor and fragile communities, thereby preventing citizens from having to flee their home country in search of a better life. For the West – eager to stem the flow of refugees and migrants from Africa and the Middle East – supporting development is a much more effective approach than building walls and razor-wire fences.

Jyrki Katainen, *Vice-President of the Commission*. – Mr President, I want to thank the rapporteur, Ms Gardiazabal Rubial, and also Mr Siegfried Mureşan, who chaired the trilogues, for their very constructive work. Following fruitful cooperation among the three EU institutions, I believe we have finally agreed an excellent compromise.

The Commission welcomes the agreement on the compromise package, which was approved successfully by the Committee of the Permanent Representatives (Coreper) on 1 December and by the Committee on Budgets on 4 December by a large majority. This compromise will allow the European Investment Bank to continue rapidly implementing its economic resilience initiative in support of the southern neighbourhood and the Western Balkans and to continue supporting EU external policy objectives in eligible countries.

As soon as adopted, the text will enable the EIB to contribute rapidly to the new objectives by providing up to EUR 2.3 billion of additional financing to private sector beneficiaries. The increase of EUR 5.3 billion in the size of the EU Guarantee Fund over the period 2014-2020 will also reinforce substantially the EIB's capacity to grant loans in the neighbourhood, as well as in Asia and Latin America. It will allow the EIB to act effectively in line with EU external policy priorities.

The compromise will increase the flexibility for the EIB to switch amounts under the regional ceiling allocations from the current 10% between regions to 20%, but only in the direction of high priority regions for the Union, in particular, Ukraine and migration-response-related regions or any forthcoming challenges within the remaining part of the mandate 2014-2020.

The climate-change dimension of the mandate is also reinforced. It includes an increase of the target from 25% to 35% of total EIB financing operations outside the EU by the year 2020.

On taxation and non-cooperative jurisdictions, the compromise text will align with provisions agreed for the EFSI 2.0 and the European Fund for Sustainable Development legislative files. The outcome is very welcome and reflects successful negotiations.

As regards asset management, following negotiations in Council and Parliament, a cross-file compromise was agreed. The EIB will continue to undertake the asset management of the Guarantee Fund while the Commission will do the asset management of the new European Fund for Sustainable Development Guarantee Fund. It was agreed to review the situation in 2019.

Honourable Members, I want to thank you for your excellent cooperation. This is a big step forward and it enables us to be more efficient in order to achieve our external policy goals.

Werner Hoyer, *President of the European Investment Bank*. – Mr President, it is a great pleasure to be here today on the occasion of the formal adoption of the European Investment Bank's revised external lending mandate (ELM), which is a key tool for the bank's activities outside the European Union. I will take the opportunity to thank the members of the Committee on Budgets, in particular the rapporteur, Madam Gardiazabal, and Commission Vice-President Katainen for their excellent cooperation on this difficult matter.

The mid-term review of the ELM began in 2016 and I'm pleased to say it once again recognised the ELM as a highly efficient instrument that allows the EIB to deliver external and development action with real impact on the ground and at a minimal cost to the EU budget. The increase in both scope and size of the revised mandate is, I hope, a sign that you as co-legislators believe in our ability to deliver EU foreign-policy goals under this mandate. I thank you for this endorsement and for your support in ensuring the ELM was adapted in such a way as to allow the bank to deliver in supporting new and continuing priorities outside the EU up until 2020.

Some key changes have been made to the ELM to allow us to address better the latest EU external priorities. We have been called upon to give particular support to countries outside the Union affected by migration, whether host countries, countries of transit or countries of origin. Significantly, the scope of the guarantee has been extended to allow coverage for private-sector lending operations under our new Economic Resilience Initiative, allowing the bank to take more risk in this area. This is fundamental to the success of the Resilience Initiative in the southern neighbourhood and the Western Balkans.

The overall increase in the ELM ceiling from EUR 27 billion to EUR 32.3 billion will also help us meet our objectives under the Economic Resilience Initiative while at the same time ensuring that we continue to meet ambitious lending levels across all regions covered by the mandate.

We have demonstrated our ability to react to evolving EU priorities, not only with the Resilience Initiative but also when we increased our lending to Ukraine to EUR 3 billion over three years as part of the Union's special support package to Ukraine. And we have stepped up considerably our support for climate action. Having committed to providing a minimum of 25% climate action financing (and, by the way, we did 27-point-something in 2017), at 33% for external lending we are already almost reaching the objective of getting to 35% by 2020. So we are on a very good track in this respect.

We've also supported additional requirements for the bank in terms of transparency and accountability, and I know how important this is to the Members of the European Parliament. This is particularly the case in the fields of tax avoidance, fraud and evasion, non-compliant jurisdictions, the prevention of money laundering and the fight against terrorism. I want to assure you that we take these requirements seriously and I will speak more about them later in the debate on the EIB's annual report.

No sooner have we finalised the revision of the ELM that will take us to the end of the current Multiannual Financial Framework than we now have to prepare the landscape for EU spending post 2020. I look forward to exchanges with you on this in the coming months. I can already say with confidence that, given the success of the ELM to date and its ability to leverage investments to an order of 30-40 times the budget provisioning required, I've no doubt that it will continue to be a key tool for the EU post 2020.

Eduard Kukan, *rapporteur for the opinion of the Committee on Foreign Affairs*. – Mr President, my congratulations to Ms Gardiazabal for finalising this report. It is becoming increasingly important to steer our external investments and activities, especially when it comes to our neighbourhood. In this respect, external lending could be a powerful instrument to achieve our policy objectives. However, it needs strategic focus and clear direction. I hope that the European Investment Bank will be a strong partner in executing our policy objectives. The EU is not immune to instability behind our borders. Mounting crises mixed with worsening socio-economic situations in many countries in our neighbourhood exposed us to unprecedented waves of migration. However, we have been able to react and mobilise resources in order to respond to root cases of migration. I'm glad that the renewed lending mandate will contribute to stepping up our investment activities to strengthen resilience, tackle root cases of migration and promote new forms of private sector

participation, especially in neighbourhood countries.

Siegfried Mureşan, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – Mr President, firstly I would like to thank Eider Gardiazabal Rubial who was our rapporteur on this file for the final agreement which she managed to negotiate. I think this reflects the view of the vast majority of the Members of the House and of the political groups, and it is with great pleasure that we are going to support this.

I would also like to thank Vice-President Jyrki Katainen for the very helpful role that the Commission has played throughout the nine dialogues which we held together with two Presidencies, the Maltese and the Estonian, before we managed to agree on this important file. And President Hoyer, to you and to the staff of the EIB, I also thank you for always having been by our side with the adequate expertise.

We have always said from the beginning that we were going to review the External Lending Mandate based on the needs on the ground; we have seen that since the beginning of the External Lending Mandate.

Politically, we have decided to take a more active role in the eastern neighbourhood of the Union to support countries which have embarked on a pro-European path there and also to engage more actively in the southern neighbourhood of the Union to help tackle, of course, the migration and refugee crises.

What we have done with these changes to the External Lending Mandate was to use the flexibility to increase and enlarge it where possible, and also to make use of the reduced exposure in Turkey due to the fact that less financeable projects could be found there; to make use of all of this flexibility to enable us to put resources where they are needed and to respect the political commitments which we have made.

We are of course as a Parliament disappointed that the Council, the Member States, did not agree to increase the overall level of ceilings. It would have meant only increasing the burden on the budget of the Union in a very small manner – by EUR 34 million – and it would have enabled even more predictability in terms of the EIB's engagement in the long term. But I believe that the compromise, the solution found is a good one. And I am looking forward to the vote and a large majority tomorrow in plenary.

Isabelle Thomas, *au nom du groupe S&D*. – Monsieur le Président, je voulais tout d'abord remercier ma collègue Eider Gardiazabal Rubial qui a su, avec patience et détermination, construire une majorité solide au Parlement et faire valoir cette position lors du trilogue. C'est un travail de longue haleine qui porte ses fruits aujourd'hui, et je tiens à l'en féliciter.

Ces rapports constituent des progrès majeurs pour la transparence et le cap à tenir pour l'avenir de l'Union européenne. Ils auront vocation à inspirer les prochaines politiques de l'Union et inspirent déjà les propositions du Parlement pour le prochain cadre financier pluriannuel.

En premier lieu, bien sûr, il y a le combat contre la fraude et l'évasion fiscale. Il est, en effet, inacceptable que l'argent public puisse concourir à des structures d'évasion fiscale et à des planifications fiscales agressives. Elles sont non seulement de profondes injustices, mais elles participent de surcroît à la déstabilisation d'États et constituent des obstacles dans notre lutte contre la criminalité et le terrorisme.

Avec ces rapports, la Banque européenne d'investissement sera préservée de toute relation avec des pays qui ne coopèrent pas avec l'Union en matière fiscale. Les rapports d'aujourd'hui serviront d'exemples dans ce domaine. Ces textes sont également l'occasion de fixer un nouveau cap, un nouvel horizon à la stratégie globale de développement externe de l'Union européenne.

Avec l'accord de Paris, avec les objectifs de développement durable des Nations unies, l'Union européenne et les États membres ont pris des engagements climatiques et de civilisation historiques et majeurs. Nous sommes désormais garants de ces engagements et que ces engagements ne se transforment pas en vœux pieux, en effets d'annonce ou en faux-semblants. Ils doivent rapidement se traduire par des évolutions concrètes et tangibles, comme ont réussi à le faire ces rapports en inscrivant ces engagements parmi les objectifs de la politique externe de l'Union.

Mais nous devons voir plus loin, faire en sorte que ces objectifs soient des boussoles aux politiques européennes et, en premier lieu, au futur cadre financier pluriannuel. Enfin, prenons garde – et ces rapports y parviennent – à ne pas tomber dans un piège, celui d'instrumentaliser la politique de développement au bénéfice d'autres objectifs.

Non, il ne s'agit pas d'une politique de contrôle des frontières, ni de gestion des flux migratoires ou d'accords de réadmission. Non, ce n'est pas un outil de chantage pour financer des régimes corrompus. Au contraire, le développement est une politique de long terme en direction de nos voisins, de nos partenaires. Ces rapports le rappellent clairement et nous devons en faire une ligne dure pour les programmes du futur cadre financier pluriannuel.

Stanisław Ożóg, *w imieniu grupy ECR*. – Panie Przewodniczący! Szanowni Państwo! EKR popiera ogólny kierunek zmian zawartych w raportach. Zajęcie się przyczynami imigracji to jeden z istotniejszych elementów obecnej strategii działania Unii Europejskiej. Rozszerzenie upoważnienia EBI do udzielania pożyczek na rzecz państw trzecich, podniesienie poziomu gwarancji Unii Europejskiej do poziomu 32,3 mld euro to niezbędny element, aby ten cel osiągnąć. Niezrozumiałe jest jednak przeniesienie tego zakresu z EBI – jak się proponuje – do Komisji. Po przeanalizowaniu kosztów i korzyści tego rozwiązania uważam osobiście, że ta ewentualna zmiana nie powinna nastąpić przed 2021 r. Zwracam też uwagę, że jeśli chodzi o zmiany co do mandatu zewnętrznego EBI i podniesienie pułapów, należałoby szczególnie uwzględnić potrzeby wymiaru wschodniego, co strategicznie przyspieszyłoby proces integracji gospodarczej oraz partnerstwa politycznego pomiędzy Unią Europejską a tymi państwami, szczególnie mam na myśli Białoruś i Ukrainę.

Gérard Deprez, *au nom du groupe ALDE*. – Monsieur le Président, félicitations tout d'abord à notre excellente collègue Eider Gardiazabal Rubial pour la qualité de son travail et sa ténacité dans les négociations.

À l'évidence, Monsieur le Président, chers collègues, la pression migratoire qui s'exerce sur les pays de l'Union est un défi majeur pour notre avenir. Chacun mesure bien les tensions que cela entraîne déjà entre les pays de l'Union et les risques politiques pour l'avenir de nos démocraties, qui apparaissent déjà çà et là, à l'occasion des élections.

La gestion des flux migratoires est donc une priorité politique, et pour la construction européenne elle-même et pour la santé de notre démocratie.

C'est sous cet angle principal que je veux apporter mon appui et celui de mon groupe à la proposition de décision qui vise à permettre à la BEI d'élargir quantitativement et qualitativement son mandat de prêt extérieur. Concrètement, cela signifie plusieurs avancées que je veux saluer.

Premièrement, un quatrième grand objectif horizontal consistant à remédier aux causes profondes de la migration est intégré au mandat de prêt extérieur de la BEI. Deuxièmement, le plafond maximal applicable aux opérations de financement est porté à 32,3 milliards étant entendu que 1,4 milliard pourrait être affecté à des projets menés par le secteur public en direction des réfugiés et des communautés d'accueil et qu'un montant de 2,3 milliards, relevant d'un mandat de prêt au secteur privé, pourrait être affecté à des projets remédiant aux causes profondes de la migration.

Bien sûr, ces montants sont modestes, même s'ils s'inscrivent dans le cadre plus global d'une stratégie d'investissement extérieur. Mais, au moment où la démographie explose en Afrique, au moment où les effets du réchauffement climatique se font sentir, au moment où la Chine accapare à son profit une partie de la richesse de l'Afrique, nous ne pouvons pas nous résigner à ce que les laissés-pour-compte de ce continent n'aient pas d'autre choix que celui de l'exil européen.

L'avenir démocratique de l'Europe et la stabilité de notre continent se jouent pour une bonne part en Afrique. Nous devons en avoir conscience et prendre les mesures qui s'imposent.

Xabier Benito Ziluaga, *en nombre del Grupo GUE/NGL*. – Señor presidente, quieren presentar estos fondos como una contribución generosa y humanitaria de la Unión Europea a la cooperación al desarrollo. Y nada más lejos. Esto reúne toda la estrategia insolidaria hacia la que se orienta la Unión Europea.

Estos fondos de garantía convierten la cooperación al desarrollo en un negocio y en un instrumento financiero cuyos beneficios se embolsan las empresas privadas y cuyas pérdidas, en caso de haberlas, se cubren con recursos públicos. Tanto el fondo de garantía de acciones exteriores como el fondo para pérdidas por operaciones exteriores son, ambos, los brazos financieros para hacer de la política de cooperación una política de retención de la migración y un negocio privado.

Y alguien lo tiene que decir, señor Hoyer. El Banco Europeo de Inversiones es a día de hoy una organización criminal. El BEI promueve beneficios financieros y crímenes contra los derechos humanos y contra el medio ambiente. Ayer ustedes aprobaron 1 500 millones de euros para el TAP, un gasoducto sin informe de impacto climático y que obvia las violaciones de derechos humanos en Azerbaiyán, en Turquía y la represión en el sur de Italia. En las islas Canarias, 125 millones para infraestructuras de gas en vez de renovables. Ustedes otorgan grandes sumas a proyectos destructivos, como el monocultivo de eucalipto en Brasil y Uruguay o la minería en Madagascar, que desplaza a la población y contamina el agua.

Lo que está haciendo el BEI es convertir la financiación para el desarrollo en una ayuda pública para incrementar los beneficios de las empresas privadas y del capital privado, y esto es algo que no se puede tolerar.

Por eso, urgimos al BEI a no invertir más fondos públicos en proyectos innecesarios, injustos, insostenibles y, cuando menos, financieramente imprudentes.

Heidi Hautala, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – Mr President, owing to the efforts of the European Parliament and its very competent rapporteur, Ms Eider Gardiazabal Rubial, we have seen improvements through this decision. In particular, the improvements with regard to transparency, to tax justice and climate spending are very positive outcomes. Now we need to monitor to make sure that these requirements are effectively implemented.

It is very important that now it is mentioned explicitly that the aim is, above all, to address the root causes of migration. Let's be honest: this means good, sound development policy, eradication of poverty, combating other global challenges and the EU and Agenda 2030 sustainable development goals really need to be internalised and understood properly by the European Investment Bank (EIB), especially if it wishes to have a more prominent role in EU development policy.

I would also like to see the energy lending criteria be very much taken care of. We need to make sure that the Paris Climate Agreement is implemented. We are very happy – it could have been better but it is already very good – that we have the 35% climate-proofing mentioned in that decision.

The World Bank has announced that it will not finance upstream oil and gas projects after 2019. I think this is something that the EIB also should consider.

David Coburn, *on behalf of the EFDD Group*. – Mr President, the external investment plan was set up with the aim of tackling the root cause of migration by helping to achieve development goals in third countries through loans and grants, financing projects to create jobs. This is another version of the idiotic Juncker Plan which is economically daft. It is a plan to pump-prime businesses with government money.

When will the EU learn that this does not work? Governments do not create jobs. Businesses create jobs, and those sort of false jobs are unsustainable. Give these Third World countries trade deals not handouts. We need to give these people trade deals so that they can create businesses themselves.

As for today's ludicrous inclusion of Tunisia on the financial blacklist, Mr President, for money laundering or something of that ilk: they have done a lot to stop it but they have been included on this list and it is going to damage Tunisian businesses and send waves of migrants to Europe. What can be more ridiculous? Over the past 10 months the European Investment Bank (EIB) has given 136 loans, worth seven billion, to finance projects in non-EU countries, making trade much easier than throwing away money. At the same time, the European Investment Bank owes Britain GBP 35 billion and refuses to pay this bill in 2019. We want our money back.

(The speaker agreed to take a blue-card question under Rule 162(8))

President. – Mr Coburn, I am not able to give you your money back, but you have a blue card.

Doru-Claudian Frunzulică (S&D), blue-card question. – Mr Coburn, you are always very loud, you come from a very civilised country and I had supposed that you were a very civilised person, especially in this very important institution of the European Union. I think that you should have to apologise because you were using the term ‘idiotic’ when referring to the Juncker plan. I don’t think it is appropriate in such a room to use these words. As you are leaving the European Union, you shouldn’t have to use these words because the future of the United Kingdom, Mr Coburn, will always be linked with European Union. Remember this.

President. – That was not a question. It was something else, a comment. But you could answer.

David Coburn (EFDD), blue-card answer. – I think I can manage, I am big enough and ugly enough to manage it. Well, thank you for your question. Well, ‘idiotic’ – perhaps I was being very naughty. Perhaps I shouldn’t have said ‘idiotic’. Perhaps ‘economically illiterate’ might have been better, so I hope you’ll excuse me, I should use the word ‘economically illiterate’, but the Juncker plan was economically illiterate, as illiterate as these plans that you’re trying to put forward at the moment. Thanks again for your question.

Stanisław Żółtek, w imieniu grupy ENF. – Panie Przewodniczący! Europejski Bank Inwestycyjny pożycza ogromne kwoty do egzotycznych państw, gdzie niczego nie można sprawdzić. Programy, na które bank daje pożyczki, mają piękne nazwy: „walka z bezrobociem”, „ocieplenie klimatu”, „równouprawnienie kobiet”. Część pieniędzy jest malwersowana i pożyczki nie są oddawane, ale Unia Europejska te straty bankowi zwraca. Dla zaciemnienia sprawy Unia Europejska sypła bankowi dziesiątki miliardów euro hurtem rocznie, nazywając to konto funduszem gwarancyjnym. Bank pokrywa z tego funduszu swoje straty. Pracować w takim banku to cudowna sprawa. Dzisiaj Komisja Europejska uznała, że ona też ma swoich ludzi. Oni też muszą z czegoś żyć i ona sama chce zarządzać tym funduszem. To kilkadziesiąt lukratywnych pensji najbliższej do tych bezzwrotnych pożyczek. Co na to Parlament Europejski? Nic. Jedyne, co zaproponował Parlament Europejski, to dodanie kilku banałów do treści typu: „należy zachować najwyższe standardy przejrzystości i rozliczalności demokratycznej”; „należy wyeliminować ubóstwo, nierówność, brak zatrudnienia, zmiany klimatu”. Uff! A ja proponuję zażądać zamknięcia tego funduszu, tej maszyny do robienia fortun.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE). – Senhor Presidente, queria cumprimentar o Senhor Vice-Presidente, também o Presidente do Banco Europeu de Investimento, e realçar aqui a importância do Banco Europeu de Investimento até na promoção dos valores da União Europeia. Um banco importante em termos internos mas também em termos externos e, como é evidente, tem como missão e como obrigação defender os objetivos definidos pela União Europeia nos projetos que financia tanto dentro como fora da União Europeia.

E esses objetivos, todos concordámos com eles: apoiar o crescimento, apoiar o emprego, atuar no sentido de evitar e de mitigar as alterações climáticas, apoiar o crescimento e o desenvolvimento sustentável e fazer face aos novos desafios, como é a questão das migrações, procurando que os investimentos nos países parceiros ajudem à estabilidade política e que as pessoas tenham oportunidades nos seus países.

Por isso, saudamos este reforço, proposto também neste relatório, para aumentar para 32,3 mil milhões de euros o Fundo de Garantia para as Ações Externas e a flexibilidade que é sempre necessária na gestão do Fundo, nomeadamente entre regiões beneficiárias, assim como sempre pugnamos pelo aumento da transparência.

Estou certo que, com este reforço, com a aprovação deste relatório, o Banco Europeu de Investimento fará ainda mais investimentos nos sítios onde são necessários e, nomeadamente, nos países parceiros.

Jean-Paul Denant (S&D). – Monsieur le Président, chers collègues, permettez-moi d’abord de m’associer à tous les remerciements à Eider Gardiazabal Rubial pour le travail remarquable sur ce dossier et pour les négociations qui ont été aussi longues que difficiles.

Nous sommes nombreux, ici, à reconnaître la Banque européenne d'investissement comme la principale institution de soutien aux investissements publics et privés au sein de l'Union. Nous sommes également nombreux à apprécier le rôle important qu'elle joue en dehors de l'Union européenne par ses activités de prêt extérieur.

Mais le rayonnement à l'international de l'Union européenne et son engagement concret en matière de coopération au développement en dehors de ses frontières ne sauraient faire oublier que sa capacité d'influence devrait résider également dans l'affirmation de ses valeurs universelles de solidarité, de respect des droits humains et sociaux et d'exercice de la démocratie.

Réduire la pauvreté dans le monde, favoriser le développement économique, social et environnemental, promouvoir la démocratie, l'état de droit, la bonne gouvernance et le respect des droits de l'homme, oui, bien entendu. Mais ces priorités ne peuvent être uniquement tributaires d'engagements financiers privés, dont l'objectif demeure le rendement et le retour sur investissement.

Depuis longtemps, je plaide pour que l'Union aille au-delà de la simple garantie par le financement des investissements mais soit en capacité de mettre de l'argent frais pour amorcer les projets. Ce qui est valable au sein de l'Union européenne, l'est aussi pour ses interventions extérieures dans des pays comme l'Afrique, qui sont aussi accompagnés par de grandes puissances plus généreuses que l'Union européenne.

Je crois que nous devons accorder notre totale confiance à la Banque européenne d'investissement, mais nous devons l'accompagner davantage. Il faut que – je le crois – le prochain cadre financier pluriannuel au-delà de 2020 apporte une primeur aux investissements publics. C'est mon souhait le plus profond.

(L'orateur accepte de répondre à une question «carton bleu» (article 162, paragraphe 8, du règlement))

Paul Rübiger (PPE), *Frage nach dem Verfahren der „blauen Karte“*. – Recht herzlichen Dank! Ich möchte mich auch beim Kollegen Denanot sehr herzlich bedanken, weil er, glaube ich, einen Punkt hervorgestrichen hat, der ganz wichtig ist: Mit diesem Programm kann auch die soziale Sicherheit dementsprechend gestärkt werden.

Glauben Sie, dass auch hier kleine und mittlere Unternehmen eine Chance bekommen in der Zusammenarbeit mit Ländern, die dringend hier Bedarf haben?

Jean-Paul Denanot (S&D), *réponse «carton bleu»*. – Il est évident que l'argent de la BEI doit aller en priorité – je le dis très clairement – en direction des PME. Je crois que c'est le tissu économique de l'Union européenne qui est en question.

André Elissen (ENF). – Voorzitter, vandaag bespreken wij het voorstel om het budget voor het garantiefonds voor extern optreden te verhogen. Daarbij wordt ook het financieel beheer van het fonds aan de Commissie overgedragen.

Wat mijn partij betreft, stoppen we direct met deze ontwikkelingshulp. Waarom heeft de Europese Investeringsbank tientallen vestigingen in allerlei exotische oorden? Wat hebben we te zoeken in Bogota, Dakar, Nairobi en Caïro? De EIB lijkt meer op een reisbureau dan op een investeringsbank. Het plan is om het bedrag waarvoor het Europees Parlement garant moet staan, met meer dan vijf miljard euro te verhogen. Wie gaat dat betalen, voorzitter? Om nog maar niet te spreken over de landen die het meest zullen profiteren van het extra budget, landen als Syrië, Iran en Turkije, islamitische dictaturen waar geen cent Europees belastinggeld naartoe zou moeten gaan.

Turkije spant daarbij de kroon, nota bene een land dat totaal niet voldoet aan de voorwaarden die de EIB stelt in verband met behoorlijk bestuur, het respecteren van mensenrechten en persvrijheid. Zo'n land verdient geen steun en zou de status van kandidaat-lidstaat moeten worden ontnomen.

Voortaan worden ook commerciële risico's gedekt door het garantiefonds. Speculeren met geld van de belastingbetaler. Kwalijk en verwerpelijk. Er is geen sluitend bewijs dat de overdracht van het beheer naar de Commissie enig nut heeft. Dit is niet mijn conclusie, maar de mening van de rapporteur van de Commissie buitenlandse zaken. Men heeft op dit moment geen idee van de kosten en baten.

Ik wil tot slot alle parlementariërs bedanken die afgelopen maandag hun ware gezicht hebben laten zien. Zij stemden tegen het verzoek om enkel de stemmingen met één dag te verplaatsen in verband met de begrafenis van onze gewaardeerde collega Edouard Ferrand. Normen, waarden en solidariteit waar men in dit Parlement geen genoeg van krijgt, waren ver te zoeken.

(De spreker wordt door de voorzitter onderbroken)

Ελευθέριος Συναδινός (NI). – Κύριε Πρόεδρε, τα προηγμένα κράτη στηρίζουν τη βιώσιμη ανάπτυξη στις αναπτυσσόμενες χώρες, επιπλέον της εξυπηρέτησης των στρατηγικών τους επιδιώξεων, από τον περιορισμό των αιτιών της λαθρομετανάστευσης, μέχρι την καταπολέμηση της κλιματικής αλλαγής. Εφόσον υφίστανται συγκεκριμένες δεσμεύσεις και προϋποθέσεις, λαμβάνοντας υπόψιν τις αρχές της αμεσισμότητας και της ανταποδοτικότητας, υπάρχει πεδίο στοχευμένης διάθεσης κονδυλίων.

Αντιμετωπίζω με σκεπτικισμό την περαιτέρω εκχώρηση στην Επιτροπή οικονομικών αρμοδιοτήτων, η οποία ερμηνεύει, κατά περίπτωση, λανθασμένα τις πολιτικές ανθρωπιστικής και αναπτυξιακής βοήθειας και που επηρεάζεται από εξωθεσμικούς παράγοντες και κέντρα αποφάσεων.

Αντιθέτως, παρά τις όποιες αστοχίες, η Ευρωπαϊκή Τράπεζα Επενδύσεων διαθέτει συγκριτικά μεγαλύτερο βαθμό ανεξαρτησίας, κατάλληλη τεχνογνωσία και χρηματοοικονομική εμπειρία.

Αμφιβάλλω λοιπόν κατά πόσο οι προτάσεις εξυπηρετούν το κοινοτικό κεκτημένο, τις Συνθήκες, τη νομολογία και τις αξιακές αρχές της Ένωσης και όχι τις πολιτικές φιλοδοξίες μιας Επιτροπής που ψάχνει για συνεργούς και συνενόχους.

Paul Rübiger (PPE). – Herr Präsident! Ich möchte mich vor allem bei der Berichterstatterin bedanken, weil es, glaube ich, gar nicht so einfach war, hier diesen Rahmen so abzustecken, dass die meisten Interessen dementsprechend berücksichtigt werden konnten. Für mich aus dem Entwicklungspolitikausschuss ist das natürlich ein Meilenstein der Europäischen Union, der hier gesetzt wurde, wo wir sehen, dass wir tatsächlich vor Ort Investitionen tätigen können, die den Menschen helfen. Herr Denanot hat es auch gut gesagt: Das bringt auch einen sozialen Aufstieg, da können kleine und mittlere Betriebe aktiv werden.

Ich glaube, dass es ganz entscheidend ist, dass wir auch die Ziele für nachhaltige Entwicklung damit fördern können, gerade im Bereich der erneuerbaren Energie das SDG7 oder das SDG6, wo man den Menschen endlich sauberes Wasser und Abwasser zur Verfügung stellen kann, damit sie gesund bleiben und auch gesunde Lebensmittel in der Landwirtschaft dementsprechend produzieren können, dass investiert wird für die Zukunft dieser Menschen und nicht nur in Konsum, der schnell verbraucht wird und wo das Geld dann oft in falsche Kanäle läuft.

Ich möchte hier für die Zukunft absolut betonen, dass es für die Menschen nicht nur in diesen Entwicklungsländern ein großer Vorteil ist, sondern auch für unsere Wirtschaft in Europa, weil hier neue Partnerschaften gefunden werden können, weil ein *return on investment* vorhanden ist, weil hier auch dementsprechend Rahmenbedingungen geschaffen wurden, die unser europäisches Modell in andere Länder exportieren. Ich glaube, darauf können wir durchaus stolz sein.

PRESIDENZA DELL'ON. FABIO MASSIMO CASTALDO

Vicepresidente

Daniele Viotti (S&D). – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, anch'io mi unisco in modo non formale ai ringraziamenti alla collega Gardiazabal Rubial per il grandissimo lavoro che ha fatto e per l'impegno che ci ha messo, così come unisco a questi complimenti anche il lavoro fatto dal Vicepresidente Katainen e dalla BEI.

È un documento importante quello che voteremo domani, perché siamo in un'epoca in cui non manca giorno in cui non si accusi l'Europa di non fare nulla, di non essere in grado di affrontare i problemi, di non saper risolvere i problemi alla radice. Io credo invece che con quanto approveremo domani, specie su un tema che è molto importante e molto delicato come quello delle migrazioni, molto delicato per il paese da cui provengo, si darà un esempio totalmente diverso.

Parte di queste proposte arrivano anche dal governo italiano, che negli anni si è fatto promotore di portare avanti un rafforzamento degli interventi per eliminare alla radice le cause dell'immigrazione, e quindi si va in questo senso qua. Non solo quindi aiuti umanitari, ma anche aiuti allo sviluppo vero e proprio, alla crescita e al progresso nei paesi.

Io credo e mi fa piacere ricordare, visto che sono già stati toccati anche molti altri aspetti di natura tecnica, che questo è un documento che si basa fortemente sui valori dell'Unione europea. Naturalmente i valori della solidarietà e della cooperazione, come è naturale e come è evidente per quel che si tratta, ma anche i valori che sono fondamentali per noi: la trasparenza, la lotta alle frodi, i principi saldi per non finanziare regimi autoritari e naturalmente una lotta vera e sincera per i diritti umanitari.

Io mi auguro naturalmente, ribadendo i complimenti alla collega Gardiazabal Rubial, che domani questo documento possa avere una larghissima maggioranza perché va veramente nello spirito dell'Unione europea.

Seán Kelly (PPE). – Mr President, thank you and thanks for this debate. I've just come from a meeting of our group where I will be discussing the next MFF and the various funding mechanisms which will apply, areas where there will be increases, areas where there will probably be cuts – you name it. The key point is that we use the funds we get wisely, and there are certain areas where the European Union has a moral obligation to ensure that we look at the external actions that we can help with. Especially now, I think that, unfortunately, Donald Trump's America has kind of retreated into isolationism, so the world needs the European Union to give leadership, to put the rule of law first and to try and encourage progress all over the world. We are renowned as the best funder for humanitarian development aid and that makes sense, but also we have to work hard to ensure that when there are areas of conflict, et cetera, that we can do something to bring the situation under control and to stimulate progress for people, because whether people are in the European Union or outside of the European Union, I think we have a great opportunity to help them and funding is key to that.

Doru-Claudian Frunzuliță (S&D). – Mr President, I would like first of all to congratulate the rapporteur, Ms Gardiazabal Rubial, for managing to make this a progressive tool for promoting sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as objectives. The Guarantee Fund for external actions is part of the external investment plan, as well as the European Fund for Sustainable Development, which was already voted on in plenary in July 2017. The European Investment Bank (EIB) establishes a coherent, integrated framework to foster investment in Africa and the European neighbourhood, with the aim of promoting decent job creation and inclusive and sustainable development.

I would like to emphasise that, yes, it is also addressing secondary root causes of migration, but it is crucially important to sustain the development of the European Union's eastern neighbourhood, including three countries that are associated with the European Union. The fund protects the EU budget from shocks that might otherwise emerge in the event of defaults on loans guaranteed by the European Union.

(The speaker agreed to take a blue-card question under Rule 162(8))

David Coburn (EFDD), blue-card question. – I thought I would do the honour of giving you a question as well, since you were so kind as to ask one of me. Don't you see the problem – that handing money to people to create fake businesses is simply a waste of the taxpayers' money? What you should be doing is helping to encourage trade, and you should know this, sir, because you lived in an East European country, which was dominated by socialism and communism for the best part of 50 years. That experiment was a catastrophe in Russia and a bigger catastrophe in Eastern Europe. It led to authoritarianism, dictatorship and robbing people of their savings. How can you come here and promote the same nonsense?

Doru-Claudian Frunzuliță (S&D), *blue-card answer*. – Unfortunately, it seems that you do not understand and you do not know the mechanism involved with how this fund is functioning. It is so important for the European Union, and especially for those countries, to promote development and to promote job creation, decent jobs and a better life for all those people. You have to support the same thing if you are a Democrat. If not, unfortunately, you will probably one day come to say that it was a big mistake for you and for your colleagues to support Brexit.

Cécile Kshetu Kyenge (S&D). – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, ringrazio anch'io la relatrice Gardiazabal Rubial. La nostra discussione rientra nell'ambizioso piano per gli investimenti esterni dell'Unione europea in relazione al partenariato con i paesi terzi. Questo argomento è uno dei pilastri dell'Agenda europea sulla migrazione.

Qui trattiamo anche di questioni di bilancio collegate a strumenti finanziari per l'attuazione delle politiche che definiamo. Il mio contributo vuol essere un sostegno alle necessità di assicurare tali garanzie, così da permettere alla BEI di ampliare lo spazio per consentire una più efficace partecipazione del privato economico e sociale all'attuazione delle politiche stabilite nella logica della sussidiarietà. Per il raggiungimento degli Obiettivi di sviluppo sostenibile occorre creare le condizioni di una maggiore sinergia fra i diversi attori. La lotta alla povertà e alle cause profonde dell'emigrazione sarà efficace se gli strumenti finanziari della BEI saranno flessibili e garantiti.

Questo tema richiama quello della moltiplicazione dei Trust Fund in direzione degli ACP, in particolar modo l'Africa. Anche in questo contesto occorrerà istituire garanzia di bilancio e copertura delle politiche di cooperazione. Richiamo qui anche la coerenza delle nostre politiche.

Procedura «catch-the-eye»

Nicola Caputo (S&D). – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, al di là dei programmi, la lotta all'immigrazione irregolare si persegue soprattutto attraverso l'azione concreta di rimozione alla radice delle cause del fenomeno migratorio. Il conseguimento di una crescita inclusiva e sostenibile e la creazione di posti di lavoro permangono tra le sfide cruciali per i paesi in via di sviluppo.

Il clima degli investimenti e il contesto politico generale nel vicinato dell'Unione europea e in Africa non sono sempre favorevoli agli investimenti nel settore privato. L'ampliamento degli obiettivi e delle garanzie fornite dalla BEI per l'azione esterna europea consentirà all'Unione europea di dare il buon esempio nello sviluppo di partenariati più efficaci con i paesi partner e nell'attuazione degli impegni internazionali in materia di finanziamento dello sviluppo.

Le sovvenzioni sono state e restano fondamentali, ma per una strategia di lungo respiro era necessario andare oltre la tradizionale assistenza allo sviluppo, mediante garanzie e strumenti finanziari innovativi a sostegno degli investimenti, degli scambi commerciali, della mobilitazione delle risorse nazionali e della buona governance, moltiplicando l'impatto sul campo delle ricadute dell'azione esterna europea.

(Fine della procedura «catch-the-eye»)

Werner Hoyer, *President of the European Investment Bank*. – Mr President, I thank you very much for this debate and I thank you for the support that the European Parliament has always given to the European Investment Bank, the EU bank. I will have to come back to many of you because I cannot respond to each and every question right now because of time limitations. Let me concentrate on just a very few points.

Number one: the migration crisis has opened the eyes, hearts and minds of many people in Europe with regard to development policies. I think many had closed their eyes vis-à-vis the real problems in developing countries. Now we need to address the root causes of that migration, which finally opens up the possibility to really talk about migration. There is a paradigm change going on in development policy: we are moving from donor-recipient thinking to partnership thinking and development. That's huge progress and it goes hand in hand with the second big paradigm change in budget policies. It was a hugely courageous move by President Juncker to go in the direction of reserving budgetary funds – very limited ones, by the way – EUR 60 billion – from subsidies and grants to guarantees and loans. This is a paradigm change in the use of the budget. Ms Georgieva would have said 'better spending', and that's exactly what we need in the field of development, too, because if we want to achieve the sustainable development and climate goals, we will need to crowd-in the private sector. We need to broaden the financial base, and the crowding-in institution of the European Union is the EU bank, the EIB.

Second remark – the Juncker plan: one day we will write the history of the European Union in this decade, and I'm pretty sure that the Juncker plan will be one of the outstanding events of this decade when it comes to the history of the European Union and the further development of our instruments.

There have been words about the loss of money and lack of control. Ladies and gentlemen, we are the leanest bank among the multilateral banks in general and also among commercial banks. With 3 500 people, we produce a volume of roughly EUR 80 billion per year. Go to the World Bank, they do roughly half of what we're doing with 18 000 people, and that is the reason why we are not in each and every place in the world with boots on the ground, that's why we need the partnership of other institutions when we are in developing countries, too. We only have 100 people out of 3 500 not residing in Luxembourg.

Finally, the loss of assets. Ladies and gentlemen, we have never lost more than 0.4% of non-performing loans. This is the lowest figure you'll find for any big bank, at least in Europe, probably in the world.

I don't comment on the world of the criminal organisation, I don't chair any criminal organisation, and I'm very proud to chair a very decent institution which delivers success. We are the EU bank, we are the only institution that's owned and controlled only by the EU and the EU Member States, and that means the objectives are set by the Treaty and by the European Council in connection with Parliament and the Council and the Commission. That means we are bound to the values of the European Union, whether that's on human rights, the social dimension, the environmental dimension, on procurement law, whatsoever, and this means that you can expect us to deliver on this promise of sticking to the values of the European Union.

Jyrki Katainen, *Vice-President of the Commission*. – Mr President, honourable Members, thank you very much for a mostly very constructive, forward-looking discussion. Thank you once more for an excellent job that Parliament has done with the other institution, the European Investment Bank (EIB).

I can be very brief. With this tool we can increase investments in order to achieve our three goals: first, the sustainable development goals; second, climate change; and third: to strengthen long-term economic resilience. The beauty of this tool is that it helps to crowd-in private resources in order to address all these or answer all these challenges. That is why we have an EU bank. And thanks to the EIB's activity we can reach these goals faster and to a larger extent than just providing grant financing for the same purposes.

I once more want to thank all those who participated in this discussion and their work in finalising the file.

Eider Gardiazabal Rubial, *ponente*. – Señor presidente, en mi primera intervención ya he intentado resumir el acuerdo al que llegamos con el Consejo, así que me gustaría utilizar este minuto para agradecer primero el tono del debate, porque creo que ha sido muy constructivo. Quiero dar las gracias a la Comisión y al equipo del Banco Europeo de Inversiones, que nos han facilitado estas duras negociaciones, que, como decía, han durado ocho meses y, por supuesto, quiero dar las gracias por el trabajo y el apoyo que he recibido de la mayoría de los grupos y de los ponentes alternativos, y en especial de mi colega Siegfried Mureşan porque, además de ser ponente alternativo, ha sido quien ha liderado las negociaciones presidiendo todas esas interminables horas de negociación en los trílogos.

Creo que hemos conseguido, fundamentalmente, la mayoría de los objetivos que nos pusimos en este Pleno; solo nos quedó uno, ya que desde el Parlamento Europeo queríamos incluso haber aumentado todavía más esa garantía del Banco Europeo de Inversiones, pero, al final con los movimientos de posiciones con Turquía, pudimos reorganizar esas inversiones y al final volver a poner el foco tanto en la vecindad Este como en el Mediterráneo, y por lo tanto el objetivo ha sido igualmente cumplido. Así que yo solo quiero agradecer el trabajo de todos.

Presidente. – La discussione congiunta è chiusa.

La votazione si svolgerà giovedì 8 febbraio 2018.

Dichiarazioni scritte (articolo 162)

Monika Beňová (S&D), písomne. – Dlhodobu sa debatuje o tom, ako vyriešiť migračnú krízu, a prečo sa vlastne deje. Jeden z najčastejšie skloňovaných spôsobov je vyriešiť takzvané root causes, to znamená konkrétne dôvody, ktoré vedú k odchodu utečencov z ich domovskej krajiny. Európska únia pripravila, ako súčasť nového Externého Európskeho Investičného balíčka plán ako postupne zlepšovať situáciu v krajinách, kde sú ľudia, ktorí sa kvôli zlej socio-ekonomickej situácii rozhodnú k odchodu do EÚ. Podpora infraštruktúry, ale aj rozvoja sociálnej politiky v rozvojových krajinách na periférii Európskej únie je zároveň aj investícia do našej bezpečnosti a ekonomického rozvoja. Veľké množstvo prognóz ukazuje, že práve rozvojové krajiny budú v najbližších rokoch zažívať silný ekonomický rast. Nakoniec treba podotknúť, že naše úsilie budovať stabilnejší a udržateľný systém vo svete je dnes dôležitejšie ako kedykoľvek v histórii. Úroveň globalizácie je na rekordných leveloch a úspech a bezpečnosť regiónov je priamo napojená na stabilitu zvyšku sveta a predovšetkým susedných krajín.

Janusz Zemke (S&D), na piśmie. – Polityka zagraniczna jest instrumentem realizacji przez UE jej interesów i celów. Siła polityki zewnętrznej UE nie polega jednak na wykorzystywaniu głównie środków militarnych, lecz na stosowaniu innych instrumentów. Jednym z takich najskuteczniejszych instrumentów jest wspieranie na miejscu państw, które przeżywają problemy związane z wojną, gwałtownymi konfliktami czy też dużą falą migracji. W ostatnich dwóch latach ta polityka potwierdza swoją skuteczność, czego wyrazem jest duże zmniejszenie niekontrolowanej fali migracji do państw UE. Wspieranie na miejscu takich państw jak Jordania czy Liban oraz państw z Zachodnich Bałkanów stwarza szanse na ich bezpieczeństwo i stabilizację. Kluczową rolę we wspieraniu inwestycji w tych państwach odgrywa Europejski Bank Inwestycyjny i jego gwarancje dla lokalnych przedsiębiorców. Warto przypomnieć, że na działania zewnętrzne UE przewiduje wydać w latach 2014-2020 32,3 mld euro. Z przekonaniem chcę zatem wesprzeć proponowane rozporządzenie, gdyż w interesie UE jest wspieranie stabilności w państwach leżących w sąsiedztwie Unii Europejskiej, zarówno na południu, jak i na wschodzie.

17. Sprawozdanie roczne z działalności finansowej Europejskiego Banku Inwestycyjnego (debata)

Presidente. – L'ordine del giorno reca la relazione di Eider Gardiazabal Rubial, a nome della commissione per i bilanci, sulla relazione annuale sulle attività finanziarie della Banca europea per gli investimenti (A8-0013/2018).

Eider Gardiazabal Rubial, ponente. – Señor presidente, de nuevo acabamos de tener un debate sobre las inversiones en el exterior del Banco Europeo de Inversiones, en el que ha quedado de manifiesto la importancia que tienen sus actividades para acompañar las prioridades políticas de la Unión Europea.

El informe que debatimos ahora va mucho más allá de un programa concreto y lo que pretendemos es dar una visión general sobre las actividades del BEI tanto dentro de la Unión como fuera y, sobre todo, marcar el camino que desde el Parlamento creemos que tiene que seguir en los próximos años para que sus actuaciones se acompasen con las decisiones de la Unión.

El BEI ha demostrado ser un actor clave en la movilización de la inversión pública y privada al servicio de las políticas europeas, reforzando la competitividad de los Estados miembros, apoyando la economía real, la creación de empleo, o también, por ejemplo, financiando la innovación en las pequeñas y medianas empresas. En este sentido, por ejemplo, este Parlamento apoyó y trabajó para la ampliación del plan de inversiones europeo como un instrumento para reforzar la inversión dentro de la Unión Europea, haciendo una serie de modificaciones para resolver los problemas que detectamos en su primera versión.

Porque desde luego si queremos lograr con éxito los objetivos que como Unión nos hemos propuesto, debemos mirar además de la sostenibilidad económica otro tipo de criterios a la hora de valorar los proyectos, como pueden ser los criterios sociales, los medioambientales o los de cohesión territorial. De hecho, este año el BEI tiene previsto acometer una revisión de sus criterios de préstamo energético. Y creemos que es una magnífica oportunidad para adaptarlos a los nuevos compromisos que como Unión Europea hemos adquirido a través del Acuerdo de París. Así que, desde este Parlamento les animamos a enfocar su política energética hacia proyectos de eficiencia energética y de energías renovables.

Dentro de estos criterios que deben valorar consideramos que se encuentran también la igualdad de género y el empoderamiento de las mujeres, que tienen que tener mayor relevancia a la hora de evaluar los proyectos. Y, en este sentido, también valoramos positivamente no solo la existencia de una estrategia sobre igualdad de género en el Grupo BEI, sino el recién aprobado plan de acción en materia de igualdad. Espero que este plan de acción empiece a dar sus frutos rápidamente y que esto se vea reflejado en la actividad del Banco.

Siguiendo con los criterios que tienen que guiar las actuaciones del BEI, me parece fundamental destacar la vertiente social de las inversiones. No podemos olvidar que las tres instituciones acaban de firmar el acuerdo sobre el pilar social y que, por lo tanto, el BEI debe poner todo su empeño para conseguir que ese acuerdo pase del papel a la realidad.

En los últimos años, en este Parlamento -y lo hemos visto en el debate anterior también— hemos hecho de la lucha contra el fraude fiscal, la evasión y el blanqueamiento de capitales una de nuestras máximas prioridades. En este sentido, hemos pedido una política ambiciosa sobre jurisdicciones no cooperadoras. Reconocemos los avances en esta materia del BEI y consideramos que está en una posición privilegiada para liderar una política estricta y ejemplar en temas de fiscalidad.

Otro de los temas a los que este Parlamento siempre da especial importancia es todo lo que tiene que ver con la transparencia, la rendición de cuentas y el acceso a la información. Teniendo en cuenta el volumen de negocios que tiene el BEI y su cada vez mayor presencia en el desarrollo de las políticas de la Unión Europea y, sobre todo, que el presupuesto comunitario avala gran parte de esas operaciones, es fundamental que se garantice un auténtico control público de sus actividades, de la selección de proyectos y de las prioridades de financiación.

La transparencia en la aplicación de las políticas públicas es fundamental, ya que, por un lado, favorece la credibilidad del banco y de las instituciones y, por otro, facilita también el control de la inversión movilizada, de los intermediarios financieros, de los beneficiarios finales y sobre todo de la eficacia y de la sostenibilidad de los proyectos financiados.

Presidente Hoyer, usted es perfectamente consciente de los retos a los que nos enfrentamos en la Unión Europea y estoy convencida de que de nuestra cooperación dependerá que alcancemos nuestros éxitos y que los resultados sean los que los ciudadanos están esperando.

Luděk Niedermayer, *rapporteur for the opinion of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs*. – Mr President, let me start by saying that the European Investment Bank (EIB) is the institution that helped us overcome post-crisis problems and it has for sure a firm place in our future. In doing so, there are two issues that I want to highlight from the opinion of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON).

First of all, all public support – even from the development bank – is not free of risk. Here, especially, I am talking about the risk of crowding-out private financing. We, as well as the EIB, must be fully aware of this risk and try to minimise it.

Secondly, the EIB is a bank. Banking is about money and risks; about finding the right balance. Too low a risk means limited impact. Too high a risk can lead to losses in capital. Too narrow a focus means that we will be missing some targets. Too many mandates at the same time can lead to fragmentation and to high costs. We should keep finding the right balance and finding the trade-offs, to be focused and efficient in the work and the EIB. This is the way to ensure that the EIB will serve good purposes for the future.

Werner Hoyer, *President of the European Investment Bank*. – Mr President, it is a great pleasure to be back today for the second time and to thank again the rapporteur and the co-rapporteur for their excellent work and cooperation.

I notably appreciate the explicit support you give to the European Investment Bank in its role as a catalyst for investments to support growth and jobs, both within and outside the European Union. In 1958, the European Union was already in full swing – or the European Economic Community was in full swing – when the bank was founded and began its work on the basis of the Treaty of Rome, and I can tell you that we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the bank with pride and with thanks and appreciation for the support received from this House.

In the past 60 years we've operated in 160 countries, we have engaged in close to 12 000 operations globally and dispersed over EUR 1.1 trillion. And this has mobilised up to EUR 3 trillion of investment, a very efficient use of EU resources. A good deal by the way! After all, only around EUR 14 billion was ever paid in, in cash, by the Member States, a little more than 1% of the total investment this bank has contributed to generating. So it has been a good 60 years – and I believe that if we are the 'good news' institution of the European Union we should tell the good stories.

The largest share of EIB group financing, close of EUR 30 billion, last year went to small and medium-sized and mid-cap enterprises, the backbone of the European economy and jobs. We estimate that this financing sustained 3.9 million jobs in more than 285 000 firms.

One area where Europe is lagging behind in terms of investment is the innovation sector, so I am particularly proud of the fact that in 2017 we managed to increase lending for innovation to close to EUR 14 billion –that is at the heart of competitiveness and ultimately of sustained and sustainable growth. Moreover, in 2017 we financed close to EUR 7 billion in environmental projects and EUR 18 billion in infrastructure.

The EIB once again met its target for climate action, with approximately EUR 19 billion of financing, representing over 27% of total EIB financing in 2017.

But what I really want to draw your attention to is this. In 2017 we approved more projects than ever – 901, roughly a 15% increase from the previous year – but the average size of the projects we financed is considerably smaller than previously. This means that we are enabling more and more firms and public entities to invest, and we are also getting better at assessing our impact on GDP and jobs. As the report from the Commission's institute in Seville points out, EIB-Group-supported investments in 2015 and 2016 alone are expected to create 2.25 million extra jobs and to generate a 2.3% increase in the EU GDP by 2020.

A big part of why we are able to do this is the investment plan for Europe, the Juncker plan, which, as you know very well, is backed by a guarantee from the EU budget and the EIB's own resources to finance riskier investments. I have already talked about this plan and we are very grateful that, with Parliament's decision in December, it has been extended to the end of 2020 with an increased goal of mobilising EUR 500 billion.

By the end of 2017 we had approved 717 European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) transactions, mobilising EUR 257 billion, or 82% of the original EUR 315 billion target. That means we are well on track to reach the goal in the coming months. The EFSI is working, and it's working well. Additionality is key. Three out of four EFSI clients are new to the bank and this clearly demonstrates how much the EFSI has changed the EIB Group. It has changed our DNA!

Most EFSI operations are higher risk, so-called special activities. The EFSI is a great example of what the EIB, the EU bank, can do to help scarce human resources achieve more. It is a spectacular endorsement of the fact that the paradigm shift from grants and subsidies to loans and guarantees is a very strong tool in Europe's public policy toolkit, and we should now think about the lessons to be learned from the EFSI plan, inside the European Union, in relation to our activities outside the European Union. And we already discussed the Sustainable Development Goals and the climate goals in the previous debate.

For this reason, we are engaged in extensive dialogue with the Member States, the Commission and this House to make financial instruments more effective in the Union's Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) post 2020.

The report also stresses how important it is that EIB continues to be a financial institution of good practice, leading by example. I can assure you that we are continually in contact with other international financial institutions, international organisations and relevant authorities to ensure that we apply best banking and accountability principles.

In preparation for this plenary debate we provided you with the state of play on the recommendations tabled through the previous report. I am open to discussing how future arrangements could work even better, and we will, of course, continue to inform you regularly on our activities and their impact on the ground. Thank you very much for your attention. I'm looking forward to the debate. And again, thank you for your support.

Jyrki Katainen, *Vice-President of the Commission*. – Mr President, first of all let me highlight our excellent partnership with the European Investment Bank (EIB) – the EU bank, as President Hoyer rightly likes to call it – on the financial implementation of our political priorities. The EIB is an indispensable partner in financing infrastructure, supporting SMEs, boosting employment and delivering on climate action, sustainable transport and external policies. The Commission welcomes the report and I would like to congratulate the rapporteur again on a good job.

Allow me to restrict myself to three issues of particular relevance to the Commission. First, on compliance, which features prominently in your report: the Commission has taken action to prevent the use of EU funds in support of projects that contribute to tax avoidance or tax evasion. Let me stress that there was already, in the Financial Regulation, a prohibition on support for projects leading to tax evasion but the Commission has proposed to extend it to include tax avoidance in its scope. Rules have already been adopted to this effect in respect of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) and European Fund for Sustainable Development regulations and the External Lending Mandate decision. A similar approach is expected to be included in a new Financial Regulation still under discussion by the legislators. Therefore, the Commission welcomes the calls to enhance compliance on tax matters.

We are currently preparing guidelines that will provide clarity on the new legal provisions linked to non-cooperative tax jurisdictions. In that regard the Commission expects that the EIB will improve its internal policies to reflect the new legal environment.

The second point is on geographical balance and cohesion. The size of the national economies, by definition, influences the volume of EIB activities. In relative terms, however, smaller Member States benefit more than it appears at first glance. With the EFSI, for instance, the top five beneficiaries in terms of GDP are Estonia, Greece, Bulgaria, Portugal and Spain. But the Commission takes concerns about coverage and geographical balance very seriously. Efforts are ongoing to place more emphasis on using local knowledge and cooperating with local and regional actors. The Commission and the EIB are working very closely with national and regional promotional banks, which have local expertise and understand the local financing needs. The revision to the Financial Regulation will make it easier to combine financial instruments and EFSI financing with other sources of EU funding such as the structural funds. This should lead to more projects in the regions less covered so far.

Furthermore, under the EFSI, the European Investment Advisory Hub provides more targeted technical assistance at local level and the Commission encourages the EIB to extend its local outreach.

Finally, in relation to the number and types of financial instruments under the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF): as you know, the Commission is currently working intensively on the next MFF. We share Parliament's concern about the multiplication of financial instruments and especially the complexity of the rules that apply them. We want to continue providing support to all sectors that are in need of EU support, but we need to do so more efficiently under a single rule. The partnership with the EIB will remain a central pillar in delivering these financial instruments. It will be shaped by our successful common history and also by constructive criticism from Parliament and other stakeholders.

Today's report forms an essential part of that input.

Ivana Maletić, *izvjestiteljica za mišljenje odbora REGL*. – Gospodine predsjedniče, ono što je važno naglasiti je da je zaista uloga EIB-a jako važna u razvoju čitavog europskog gospodarstva. EIB treba osigurati jačanje jedinstvenog tržišta, isto tako financiranje projekata za modernizaciju i razvoj novih djelatnosti, ali i ono što je još dodatno posebno podcrtano u Ugovoru o Europskoj uniji, a to je podupiranje razvoja slabije razvijenih krajeva.

To je jako važna uloga EIB-a u provedbi same kohezijske politike. Dakle, EIB svojim instrumentima financira savjetodavne usluge u pripremi i provedbi projekata kohezijske politike. Isto tako osigurava sredstva za nacionalno sufinanciranje, za izgradnju kapaciteta. Međutim, ne možemo znati koliko je u tome uspješan jer nema dovoljno jasnih podataka koji se vezuju uz te aktivnosti. Zato pozivamo na transparentnost.

I važno je još naglasiti da se kad smo analizirali u kojim državama se troši najviše sredstava, odnosno, za koje države se daje najviše zajmova, to su Francuska, Njemačka, Italija, Španjolska i Velika Britanija. Dakle, zaista je teško povezati to s najnerazvijenijim krajevima.

Siegfried Mureșan, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – Mr President, it is good to see you. I would say to EIB President Hoyer and Commission Vice-President Katainen that good investments are, of course, crucial for Europe in this ever-changing global economic landscape, and 2016, the year that the report refers to, was a very good year for the European Investment Bank. EIB investment amounted to EUR 83 billion and helped to mobilise investment of EUR 280 billion. This is emphasised in our report, in which we place particular emphasis on three aspects.

Firstly, delivering on the Juncker plan: through the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), we entrusted the EIB to put money to work in Europe by making loans and 'crowding in' private capital. However, the investment gap is still an issue for many European countries. It is important, President Hoyer, that the EIB should continue to provide much-needed technical assistance and advisory support to reduce the existing regional discrepancies, especially in regions with low investment capacity. This can be achieved, of course, by cooperating with national promotional banks.

Secondly, on addressing the migration challenge: we have been, with Parliament's Committee on Budgets, in Tunisia last year, and two years ago in Jordan and Lebanon, countries which are seeing hundreds of thousands of refugees coming from various countries in the region. We have seen that we have to do more for infrastructure in those countries – healthcare, education, electricity and waste infrastructure – and in terms of helping the host communities, making sure that SMEs, not only in capitals but also in regions, have access to credit. This is also something on which Parliament's rapporteurs, led here by Eider Gardiazabal Rubial, have focused.

Thirdly, on the External Lending Mandate, which we had a chance to debate an hour ago: the important message is that, with the changes we have made, the EIB will be capable of fulfilling the needs on the ground. Lastly, of course, I would mention SMEs, which are so important for the European economy.

I would like to conclude by thanking all the colleagues involved and the rapporteur, who has worked tirelessly on this report. We adopted it with a large majority in the Budgets Committee. I am confident that we will be able to adopt it with a large majority here in plenary as well.

(The speaker agreed to take a blue-card question under Rule 162(8))

Molly Scott Cato (Verts/ALE), *blue-card question*. – There is considerable concern about EIB investments that may lead to increased carbon dioxide emissions. A recent example is yesterday's announcement of a EUR 1.5 billion loan for the Trans Adriatic Pipeline, which will lock us into a fossil fuel future. Since we are all now agreed that the EIB has to work within the framework of our Paris commitments, would Mr Mureșan agree that we should have no further fossil investments by the EIB?

Siegfried Mureșan (PPE), *blue-card answer*. – I think we have found a good compromise in the framework of this report, in which we said that tackling climate change is an important objective. It is a political objective of the Union; the EIB is the bank of the European Union; we are working together with them to achieve climate change. In parallel, of course, we should work on developing infrastructure within the Member States of the Union and in our immediate neighbourhood – that meaning energy, digital, road, railways – but, of course, always with this overarching objective in mind that, together, we need to tackle climate change.

Pervenche Berès, *au nom du groupe S&D*. – Monsieur le Président, Monsieur le Président Hoyer, vous avez ce rendez-vous devant le Parlement européen. C'est un moment important pour que vous rendiez des comptes et je voudrais vous interpellier sur trois sujets.

Le premier, l'orateur précédent vient de l'évoquer, c'est la façon dont vous évaluez votre soutien à des projets du point de vue des engagements de la conférence de Paris. Or, trop souvent, on voit encore un engagement, un financement de la BEI qui, finalement, finance l'énergie fossile plutôt que les renouvelables. Je me demande si vous ne devriez pas prendre l'engagement, vis-à-vis de cette Assemblée, d'avoir une stratégie de *reporting* plus explicite en fonction des critères de financement durable, dans l'esprit du rapport que les experts de haut niveau viennent de rendre, et de vérifier avec vous comment vous entendez les mettre en œuvre dans votre institution.

Deuxièmement, s'agissant de la fiscalité, vous avez dit votre disponibilité. Mais, là encore, je crois que nous avons besoin d'avoir des engagements plus précis, car la simple coopération avec les organisations internationales, et notamment l'OCDE, qui est une institution largement bloquée par les autorités américaines, n'est pas, me semble-t-il, un fil conducteur suffisant pour les autorités chargées d'une institution européenne.

Enfin, troisièmement, je voudrais vous interroger sur les raisons d'un investissement en Grèce, qui a conduit la BEI à soutenir, à hauteur de 280 millions d'euros, un aéroport réalisé par l'entreprise Fraport dont certaines activités ont été identifiées dans les *Panama Papers*.

Stanisław Ożóg, *w imieniu grupy ECR*. – Panie Przewodniczący! Sprawozdawca nazwał Europejski Bank Inwestycyjny finansowym ramieniem Unii Europejskiej i faktycznie trudno nie zgodzić się z wyjątkową rolą EBI w procesie pobudzenia inwestycji, zwłaszcza w sektorze małych i średnich przedsiębiorstw. Szczególnie doceniamy znaczenie Europejskiego Funduszu Inwestycji Strategicznych. To właśnie ten instrument, a nie – moim zdaniem lekkomyślny – dodruk pieniądza przez EBC, już przynosi wymierne efekty. Zgadzamy się również z podstawową diagnozą sprawozdawcy, który wskazuje na wciąż istniejące zróżnicowanie regionalne w dostępie do instrumentów finansowych EBI. Dlatego też kolejny raz z tego miejsca apeluję o zwiększenie pomocy technicznej i wsparcie doradcze dla małych i średnich przedsiębiorstw z krajów tak zwanej „nowej Unii Europejskiej”. Grupa ECR w głosowaniu poprze projekt sprawozdania.

Nedzhmi Ali, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Mr President, this report presents the perspective of the European Parliament on the financial activities of the European Investment Bank (EIB) in support of the EU policy goals. It has a broad scope, describing the Bank's activities in the areas of the main policies: accountability, financial operations and communication. The macroeconomic impact of the Bank's activities is visible when assessed at its cumulative investments; in 2015 in 2016 we were up to 2.3% EU GDP growth and 2.25 million jobs by 2020. In order to speed up the economic recovery in the Union and to help certain economic sectors and geographical areas to catch up, the report welcomed the development of extended European Fund for Strategic Investment and calls for further efforts to avoid geographical imbalances. The results at the end of 2017 show that the total investment related to EFSI approvals have reached the level of EUR 257 billion. While the implementation of the investment plan for the time being is intact, we expect better results from EFSI too, with its EUR 500 billion.

At the same time, we are concerned that the five biggest economies in the EU received 54% of the total loans granted in 2016. While the information in the form of investment per unit of GDP could be misleading, we insist on further territorial distribution of funds, including as regards the EFSI.

The EIB's impact in the implementation of key public policy areas can be monitored through the results of investment in the key areas, for which purpose the EIB should continue to define its monitoring indicators. The EIB needs to further develop its risk culture in order to improve the effectiveness of its interventions with regard to the contribution to EU policies.

While the potential beneficiaries of financing are generally not sufficiently aware of the bank's products, there is a need for better information and a policy of inclusiveness.

Liadh Ní Riada, *thar ceann an Ghrúpa GUE/NGL*. – A Uachtarán, is baolach nach féidir liom tacú leis an tuairisc seo mar a sheasann sé, mar go dtugann sé moladh do EIB agus an méid atá ar bun aige agus cé go bhfuil ról EIB thar a bheith tábhachtach i dtaobh infheistíochta poiblí san Aontas Eorpach, ní dóigh liom go bhfuil sé ag feidhmiú maith go leor. Táimid tar éis neart airgid ó bhuiséad AE a fheiceáil ag dul go dtí EIB, agus leis seo tagann freagracht agus tá díomá ormsa go bhfeicim go bhfuil mórchuid den chumhacht a bhí ag buiséad an Aontais Eorpaigh anois ag dul go dtí EIB.

Feicimid go bhfuil cuir i bhfeidhm polasaithe agus cláracha bainteach leis an AE anois ar bun ag EIB, abair an Plean Juncker, fiú tograí bonneagair, taighde agus a leithéid.

Cá bhfuil an gné thrédhearcach? Cá bhfuil an dianscrúdú? Cá bhfuil an próiseas daonlathach? Agus cá bhfuil an chunta-saíocht dár saoránaigh? Saoránaigh atá ag brath orainn san teach seo chun a chinntiú go bhfuil infheistíocht á cur i bhfeidhm dóibh siúd go bhfuil géarghá acu leis. Iad siúd gan bhaile agus gan an deis acu teach a cheannach, iad siúd atá ag iarraidh billí a íoc, agus iad siúd atá ag iarraidh a bpaistí a chur ar scoil. Tá deiseanna iontacha ann má dhéantar infheistíocht mar is cuí chun an geilleagar a bhorradh agus tá an deis ann do EIB na cinntí cearta a dhéanamh ar son ár saoránaigh. Ach bliain i ndiaidh bliana, bíimid istigh sa teach seo ag trácht ar an saghas seo raiméis chéanna agus gan aon toradh fóna ag teacht air agus dáiríre, tá géarchéim amuigh ansin ann agus tá an t-am tagtha go n-athróimid an port agus aghaidh a thabhairt ar na géarchéimeanna seo.

Molly Scott Cato, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – Mr President, with the Commission focusing its attention on sustainable finance in 2018, it's important to recall that the EIB is a key actor in the successful implementation of the Commission's upcoming action plan. However, the EIB has not done as well as we would expect on climate action, even though it has just met its 25% target. For instance, in 16 EU Member States, EIB support for climate action did not reach even the level of 20%. Climate action investment in 2016 was predominantly located in the EU's stronger economies, and this seems to be the rule rather than the exception. Seventy per cent of EFSI support for renewable energy was concentrated in just one country, Belgium, while 80% of energy efficiency within the EFSI was allocated to France, Finland and Germany. These aren't the countries that need the sort of support from this investment bank, and we need to spread the renewable investment wider and to the other economies in Europe. To ensure sustainability of investment in coordination with the Commission, the EIB needs to evaluate their national and collective public investment to ensure that the EU is on track to meet its climate change goals as agreed in Paris within the next five years. In order to achieve this the EIB should only agree future lending compatible with the 1.5 °C climate limit.

Marco Valli, *a nome del gruppo EFDD*. – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, ringrazio il presidente Hoyer per la sua presentazione e per essere qui oggi a riportare l'attività della Banca europea per gli investimenti che, ricordo, è la banca pubblica in termini di volumi più grande al mondo. È fondamentale però che ci sia un controllo anche democratico su tutto questo volume di denaro. Quindi è importante che voi rispettiate le raccomandazioni formulate dalla commissione per i bilanci e dalla commissione per il controllo dei bilanci, in cui io sono relatore per la relazione sulla BEI, per garantire la trasparenza e affinché ci sia una *compliance* sempre corretta da parte della valutazione che fa la Banca europea per gli investimenti.

Un particolare punto va sollevato sulle questioni legate ai progetti che devono avere una valutazione ex ante ed ex post indipendente, appunto per valutare se realmente c'è un'addizionalità o un valore aggiunto in tutti i progetti che finanziate, soprattutto sulle grandi opere infrastrutturali. Su questo c'è un problema fondamentale che è sollevato in Italia e riguarda il progetto della *Trans Adriatic Pipeline*, che è un progetto fortemente voluto anche dalla politica, sul quale si nutrono forti dubbi che la *compliance* sia stata rispettata, anche perché è un'opera che passa attraverso dei territori ad alta corruzione dove nei subappalti e negli appalti si potrebbero creare grosse problematiche. In più ci sono le problematiche dei territori che appunto subiscono queste opere molto invasive; quindi andrebbero rispettati i territori e la politica dovrebbe appunto agire e la *compliance* dovrebbe essere appunto rispettata.

Quindi, al netto di queste mie considerazioni, sono convinto che la Banca europea per gli investimenti stia facendo in alcuni casi un buon lavoro, ma dove la politica influenza i progetti si rischia poi dopo di cadere troppo spesso in quelle che sono opere inutili, ancora legate alle fonti fossili, e quindi che gli obiettivi che ha questo Parlamento e che ha l'Unione europea non vengano rispettati in termini di combattere le emissioni di CO₂ e in termini appunto legati a quelli che sono gli obiettivi Europa 2020.

Ho solo due minuti e quindi mi limito a questo, ma ci saranno tante altre cose che segnaleremo nella relazione della commissione per il controllo dei bilanci, e invito appunto il Presidente e tutta la BEI a prenderne carico e rispettare quello che sarà scritto in queste relazioni.

Marco Zanni, a nome del gruppo ENF. – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, io personalmente ho ascoltato gli interventi del Presidente Hoyer, del Commissario Katainen, dei relatori e dei miei colleghi e non condivido tutto questo ottimismo, l'ottimismo che c'è nella relazione e l'ottimismo espresso dagli interventi.

La BEI è uno degli strumenti a supporto dell'economia più potenti che ha l'Unione europea ed è la banca pubblica che eroga più credito al mondo. Parliamo di più di 80 miliardi di EUR di crediti erogati ogni anno. Guardando lo stato in cui versa l'Unione europea e in cui versano le economie dell'Unione europea, credo che si possa fare molto di più in termini di supporto della Banca europea per gli investimenti all'economia reale.

Un primo tema che mi sta a cuore è quello della destinazione degli investimenti e dei paesi di destinazione degli investimenti e dei crediti della BEI. Oggi torna d'attualità il tema della Turchia. La Turchia è un paese che ha beneficiato e continua a beneficiare di un'ingente quantità di crediti da parte della BEI, però purtroppo – e se ne stanno accorgendo anche le istituzioni europee – il regime turco non è compatibile con quelli che si definiscono i valori di democrazia, di trasparenza e di rispetto che sono propri dell'Unione europea.

I numeri della Turchia dovrebbero far riflettere. Dal 2000 la BEI ha erogato circa 30 miliardi di EUR in crediti a questo paese, e questo paese rimane uno dei maggiori beneficiari dei soldi e dei prestiti della BEI, molto al di sopra di alcuni paesi appartenenti all'Unione europea. Quindi, un primo punto fondamentale è riorientare i crediti verso paesi problematici e verso il mercato interno. Il ruolo della BEI deve essere quello di supportare, soprattutto in un momento di crisi, la domanda interna che è crollata e gli investimenti interni.

Un altro tema molto importante è quello dei cosiddetti strumenti innovativi che abbiamo visto in questi ultimi due anni. Parlo dell'EFSD e del Fondo europeo per lo sviluppo sostenibile. Anche qui necessitiamo di più trasparenza, necessitiamo di un lavoro migliore sul concetto e sul criterio di addizionalità, e questi strumenti devono essere più realistici anche nel supporto che danno. Moltiplicatori senza senso possono essere belli da dichiarare ai giornali, ma l'impatto in termini di investimenti e di lavoro purtroppo è di molto inferiore.

(L'oratore accetta di rispondere a una domanda «cartellino blu» (articolo 162, paragrafo 8, del regolamento))

David Coburn (EFDD), *blue-card question*. – Mr Zanni, I'd like to ask you what you think about this: Britain is owed somewhere in the region of GBP 35 billion, which obviously we want back in 2019. What do you think that's going to do to the bank's finances, and will they be able to pay it back? Have they got the money? Because we want it back – they're certainly punishing Britain as hard as they can, so let's punish them. Do you think we should, Sir? Give me an answer; you're Italian.

Marco Zanni (ENF), *risposta a una domanda «cartellino blu»*. – Sicuramente è un diritto del Regno Unito e dei cittadini del Regno Unito riavere indietro quanto gli spetta, in termini sia di *asset* sia di denaro da parte dell'Unione europea, una volta che la Brexit avrà effetto.

Il contributo quale grande azionista della BEI da parte del Regno Unito ovviamente dovrà essere tenuto in considerazione quando si troverà un accordo definitivo sulla Brexit. Certo immagino che la BEI avrà un impatto ovviamente nella sua attività, vista la mancanza di un grande contributore come il Regno Unito. Spetta ai manager trovare il modo di far quadrare i conti. Però è giusto che i cittadini del Regno Unito riabbiano quanto gli spetta in termini di *asset* e di denaro anche dalla BEI.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE). – Senhor Presidente, queria saudar o Vice-Presidente da Comissão, o Senhor Presidente do Banco Europeu de Investimento e realçar, saudar também, todo o trabalho que o Banco Europeu de Investimento tem feito, um trabalho que é fundamental para o investimento sustentável, quer o investimento público quer o investimento privado.

Em 2017, é verdadeiramente impressionante o trabalho realizado e o financiamento de projetos no valor de 78 mil milhões de euros, que geraram um investimento de cerca de 250 mil milhões de euros, apoiando mais de 285 mil pequenas e médias empresas, ajudando à criação e à manutenção do emprego.

Um Banco Europeu de Investimento que tem apoiado projetos nas áreas que consideramos estratégicas e que também tem evoluído com o EFSI, com o Plano Juncker, o Fundo Europeu para Investimentos Estratégicos, de que fui correlator. Um fundo que já mobilizou mais de 257 mil milhões de euros, que não vai substituir a política de coesão, mas que também se preocupa com a coesão territorial. Aqui é necessário também que haja plataformas de investimento para concluirmos a união de energia, a Agenda Digital e, nesse sentido, as plataformas entre Estados-Membros são essenciais, e daí termos reforçado o conceito de adicionalidade e também o termos pedido para que os projetos aprovados no plano Juncker tenham em conta a realidade local. E, portanto, saudar mais uma vez e realçar o trabalho positivo que o Banco Europeu de Investimento tem feito.

John Howarth (S&D). – Mr President, I thank Ms Gardiazabal Rubial for a very thorough report. It demonstrates well the value of an investment bank driven not solely by the need for commercial return but also by the urgent need for investment in the parts that commercially driven investment banking cannot reach. There are always areas in which the market will fail and there will always be projects that cannot be delivered by the market alone, and that is where the contribution of the European Investment Bank (EIB) will remain essential.

The priority areas for the EIB's operations – innovation and skills, SMEs, climate and the environment and our infrastructure – encompass some of the most important priorities of the European Union budget. The low-carbon economy and the shift from the internal combustion engine will require substantial investment across the Union in power network infrastructure. The completion of a digital single market that enables rural as well as urban communities to engage will require substantially different forms of infrastructure investment, which will represent the changing face of cohesion policy.

These real needs will require a European Investment Bank that is agile as well as forward-thinking. Unfortunately, the United Kingdom, which has a 16% stake in the EIB's capitalisation is intending to leave the European Union but, however long it may take to refund the UK's stake, it is worth remembering that the UK has received more than EUR 30 billion in investment from the EIB. What a pity that will come to an end!

(The speaker agreed to take a blue-card question under Rule 162(8))

David Coburn (EFDD), blue-card question. – Thank you Mr Howarth, it is always fascinating listening to you, but I do believe you're from the North East, am I correct?

John Howarth (S&D), blue-card answer. – Was that the question? I was originally. I represent the South East.

David Coburn (EFDD), blue-card question. – You represent the South East. Well, how are you going to explain to the people who elected you – the ordinary working people of Britain – that you do not want our EUR 35 billion back? That's a lot of hospitals, that's a lot of infrastructure, that's a lot of nurses. How are you going to explain that, Sir? They have decided to leave. Try and explain it to me, Sir. I'd love to hear.

John Howarth (S&D), blue-card answer. – First of all, I will not allow Mr Coburn to put words into my mouth. I have never said that I do not want the European Investment Bank to return the British investment stake in it, but it has to be able to return that stake over a period in which the loans that the UK has received – which, as I have already told him, are worth GBP 30 billion – are amortised, and therefore you will find that the return in that stake and the other things cancel each other out. When you talk about ordinary people, let's talk about what this investment has delivered – like secondary schools in exotic places like Yorkshire; like Crossrail in London and the Thames Valley in my constituency; like the Thames Tideway Tunnel; like smart meters for seven million homes in the United Kingdom, which enables those people to save energy and pay less for their energy. Why will you not join me in backing the UK's continued involvement with this investment bank, if and when we do leave?

(Applause)

Karol Karski (ECR). – Panie Przewodniczący! Nie ulega wątpliwości, że Europejski Bank Inwestycyjny wyraźnie poprawił warunki inwestycji w sektorze małych i średnich przedsiębiorstw na rynkach europejskich. Dzięki takim instrumentom jak Europejski Fundusz Inwestycyjny czy Europejski Fundusz na rzecz Inwestycji Strategicznych EBI może stać się prawdziwym filarem polityki spójności, eliminując gospodarcze i społeczne nierówności między europejskimi regionami. Zgadzamy się również z postem sprawozdawcą, że EBI powinien odgrywać podstawową rolę we wdrażaniu strategii „Europa 2020”. Szczególnie doceniamy w tym miejscu znaczenie instrumentu „Łącząc Europę”, z którego funduszy częściowo finansowane są odcinki wielkiego projektu „Via Carpatia”. Ponadto podzielamy pogląd, iż EBI może aktywnie uczestniczyć w zwalczaniu pierwotnych przyczyn migracji oraz podejmować działania w krajach szczególnie

dotkniętych kryzysem migracyjnym, w tym przez intensyfikację działań humanitarnych.

Delegacja polska w grupie ECR, podzielając większość wniosków pana posła sprawozdawcy, będzie głosowała za przyjęciem jego sprawozdania.

Bas Eickhout (Verts/ALE). – Mr President, I want to thank Mr Hoyer. We have been discussing this but something we need to discuss is fossil-fuel lending by the European Investment Bank (EIB). I know, Mr Hoyer, that you have your emissions performance standard of 550 g CO₂/kWh, which is taking out the lending to coal, but we need to talk about gas. What we see in Europe is that we are binding ourselves to a new addiction to fossil fuels, and that is not part of the implementation of the Paris Agreement, whereas you said in your first reaction to the Paris Agreement that you would be leading in its implementation.

Well, lending to gas is not leading on implementation of the Paris Agreement, and let me just mention some numbers before you answer that such lending is needed for energy security. Current European imports stand at 300 billion cubic meters of gas per year. The infrastructure is already in place for 600 billion cubic meters. If we count plans to be funded, it goes to the level of thousands – a tripling of current imports. That is locking ourselves into fossil!

So can you please promise us that you will make sure the EIB is going to eradicate fossil lending totally?

David Coburn (EFDD). – Mr President, according to the Rubial report which we have discussed today, the European Investment Bank (EIB) is considered to be the financial arm of the EU and the key institution that sustains public and private investment in the EU. The European Investment Bank is owned by the EU taxpayers; the United Kingdom represents 16% of the EIB capital. Although it is one of the largest shareholders since Article 50 has been triggered, the European Investment Bank only guaranteed three loans worth GBP 285 million to British projects. Over the same period, the EIB gave more than 700 loans to other EU Member States. This funding was worth more than GBP 40 billion.

In the meantime, Mr Hoyer, as President of the EIB, stated in the German press that we will not get back our capital – an equivalent of almost GBP 35 billion – before 2054. This is a scandal. British taxpayers want their money back – not in 2054, not in 2021, after the transition period that the Prime Minister is advocating, but at the end of March 2019: on the day we leave the EU. We would like it back before the EIB squanders it on flaky projects. And, Mr Howarth, the money that was spent by this is our money. We contributed it, so we are just getting our own money back.

Bogusław Liberadzki (S&D). – Panie Przewodniczący! Niech nasza debata wróci do normalności po tej chwili odmienności. Mianowicie mamy do czynienia z dobrym sprawozdaniem na temat dobrych wyników działalności finansowej dobrego, a może nawet bardzo dobrego banku. To jest pierwszy istotny, trwały element. Po drugie, wszystkie cele priorytetowe, które sobie tutaj określamy, Europejski Bank Inwestycyjny podejmuje, realizuje i z reguły robi to i bez błędów, i z sukcesem. Po trzecie, mamy nowe elementy, jak chociażby nowe instrumenty finansowe i Fundusz Inwestycji Strategicznych, co jest ważne dla regionu, z którego ja pochodzę, dla Polski i dla krajów ościennych. Powinniśmy ponadproporcjonalnie skierować środki w tę część, żeby ten poziom spójności nam wzrósł.

Zostało mi tylko sześć sekund, chciałbym się podzielić dobrą wiadomością. Byłem świadkiem dziesięć dni temu, jak prezes Hoyer w Warszawie od stowarzyszenia biznesmenów otrzymał zasłużoną honorową nagrodę. Gratuluję panie prezesie i tą radością dzielę się tu ze wszystkimi.

Rosa D'Amato (EFDD). – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, ringrazio la collega per la sua relazione che presenta, a mio avviso, degli aspetti sicuramente positivi, quali l'importanza degli obiettivi relativi agli accordi di Parigi in materia di clima, il potenziale della BEI nel migliorare la situazione economica nel vicinato e soprattutto il rilievo che viene dato ai meccanismi per evitare finanziamenti a società che compiono frodi fiscali.

Vi sono però degli elementi che non ci convincono e mi riferisco, in particolare modo, a due aspetti. In primo luogo, una preoccupante mancanza di trasparenza, ed è bene qui ricordare che la BEI non garantisce sempre pieno accesso ai dati relativi ai progetti finanziati.

In secondo luogo, la decisione da parte della BEI di finanziare impianti infrastrutturali ad alto impatto ambientale e dubbia addizionalità, come la TAP, viola un principio, fra gli altri, quello di precauzione, a cui noi teniamo molto. Finanziamenti di tal genere ad opere impattanti l'ambiente, con effetti sociali ed economici disastrosi sulle comunità locali, andrebbero immediatamente interrotti.

Diane James (NI). – Mr President, good evening sir, good evening chamber and thank you very much for the opportunity to address you. Well, what did we actually learn from this report? What are the financial activities actually being conducted? Let me start with a very simple list. The EIB has involved itself in geopolitics, notably in the Ukraine, stirring up tensions there. It has also involved itself in offshore vehicles and some rather unsavoury, always interesting the word unsavoury, counterparties inside and outside of Europe. Small wonder then, that well over 100 cases, on public record I would remind you, of alleged fraud involving EIB funds are opened every year. Now for decades the EU has disguised the true size of its budget via funding from the European Investment Bank. The EIB is supposedly mandated to only lend to projects which were in line with the objectives of the EU. Yet its portfolio has ballooned to well over EUR 500 billion and this doesn't include the 500 billion the EIB manages on behalf of the Juncker fund. In short, the EIB has extended its reach to eight times the size of the stated EU budget. Were it a school report, could do better I think would be the result.

Procedura «catch-the-eye»

Nicola Caputo (S&D). – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, la crisi economica ha indebolito la crescita nell'Unione europea, determinando un calo degli investimenti che ha raggiunto livelli allarmanti nei paesi maggiormente colpiti dalla crisi. Accolgo con fiducia le parole del Presidente della BEI Hoyer quando afferma la volontà di fornire un sostegno reale per la crescita e la creazione di posti di lavoro, perseguendo gli obiettivi dell'innovazione, della maggiore coesione economica e sociale e della tutela ambientale.

Proprio in relazione alle politiche ambientali, ritengo necessario un maggiore ricorso della BEI ai *Green Bond*, uno strumento finanziario in uso da pochi anni che ha registrato un vero e proprio boom nel 2016 e che potrebbe essere una delle chiavi per la risoluzione di moltissimi problemi, come ad esempio quelli delle zone ad alta pressione ambientale, come la Terra dei fuochi, che necessiterebbe di investimenti in bonifica delle aree contaminate, proprio come si è già fatto con i terreni inquinati in Belgio e in Olanda. È fondamentale investire con modalità innovative sull'ambiente per favorire concretamente la crescita economica e sociale dei territori.

Νότης Μαριάς (ECR). – Κύριε Πρόεδρε, κύριε Πρόεδρε της Ευρωπαϊκής Τράπεζας Επενδύσεων, κύριε Hoyer, θα σας θέσω τα ίδια ερωτήματα που έχω θέσει και σε προγενέστερη συζήτηση αλλά δεν μου απαντήσατε και αφορούν τη χρηματοδότηση της Fraport από την Ευρωπαϊκή Τράπεζα Επενδύσεων με 280 εκατομμύρια EUR. Η Fraport πήρε, για 40 χρόνια, 14 περιφερειακά αεροδρόμια στην Ελλάδα και υποτιθεται ότι έπρεπε να καταβάλει στο ελληνικό δημόσιο 1,2 δισεκατομμύρια EUR. Πήρε από τράπεζες 688 εκατομμύρια EUR σε δάνεια, εκ των οποίων 284 εκατομμύρια ευρώ από την Alpha Bank στην οποία εσείς, ως Τράπεζα, δώσατε 100 εκατομμύρια ευρώ. Δεύτερον, η Fraport έπρεπε να πληρώσει 330 εκατομμύρια EUR για έργα στην Ελλάδα. Που τα βρήκε τα χρήματα; Μα εσείς δώσατε στη Fraport 280 εκατομμύρια EUR. Τα υπόλοιπα 50 θα τα βρει στα κέρδη. Κάθε χρόνο, τα κέρδη της Fraport από τα αεροδρόμια είναι 100 εκατομμύρια EUR. Τέτοιους επενδυτές, ξέρετε πώς τους λέμε στην Ελλάδα; Τους λέμε «τζάμπα μάγκες» διότι, στην ουσία χωρίς να έχουν χρήματα, με δική σας συμβολή, αρπάζουν την ελληνική κρατική περιουσία. Αυτή είναι η δραστηριότητά σας και θέλω αυτή τη φορά να απαντήσετε. Να απαντήσετε αυτή τη φορά!

(Fine della procedura «catch-the-eye»)

Jyrki Katainen, Vice-President of the Commission. – Mr President, thank you very much for a good and partially very colourful discussion.

Just a few comments. Many Members said that the EIB should be more transparent. Just to look at this issue from one perspective. If somebody is interested in EFSI projects just go to the EIB's website and you can find every single project that has been signed. Unfortunately this opportunity is not taken up very often and many MEPs could spread the good word about what EFSI can do in your region or in your country if you could see what the others have already done, how money is being used.

The second point. EFSI and the EIB more generally speaking is a demand-driven bank. So EFSI or the EIB generally speaking doesn't send money according to its own decisions. You have to ask. You have to negotiate and then if preconditions are met the company or the public authority can get financing. This is why, for instance, if you look at the difference between Bulgaria and Romania it is so big. Whereas Bulgaria is the second biggest beneficiary of EFSI funding, Romania is one of the countries which have barely used EFSI opportunities. But you cannot push on a rope, even though we try. The EIB is offering technical assistance through the technical investment advisory hub and this is one of the tools we want to use even more in order to make sure that all countries and regions can benefit from EFSI financing. Many Members were worried about climate-related investments and many Members said that the EIB should finance more climate-related investments. The EIB is already now – and correct me, Mr Hoyer, if I am wrong – but according to my knowledge, the EIB is the biggest climate financier when looking at these kind of banks. Also EFSI 2.0 has already decided to dedicate some 40% of overall investment capacity to address climate change.

Finally, to our British friends, concerning Britain and British businesses: the British business sector is one of the most active users of EFSI and the EIB has a significant portfolio in Britain. British businesses and the public sector have deliberately sought to use EFSI and the EIB because it had created added value to the British economy.

Werner Hoyer, *President of the European Investment Bank*. – Mr President, there are so many – sometimes colourful – questions, as the Commissioner has said, that I cannot respond individually to each and every one, but I promise you that my people have written everything down, so we will approach you individually in order to answer your questions. Let me concentrate on a very few points.

Number one: the geographical balance of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) and the lending of the Bank in general. If somebody writes big articles in newspapers, comparing the investment volume in the United Kingdom with the investment volume in Malta, you will be surprised that the UK has more than Malta. There's a little bit in relation to GDP and a little bit in relation to the overall investment activity in a country that has to be observed in that context. So you have to see the figures by GDP or the figures as a percentage of overall investment activity. There, I think we are very good now.

Secondly, the Juncker plan consists of three equally important strands: EFSI, advisory services and the institutional and regulatory improvements that the European Union needs. The Commission, the Parliament and the Council are working on all three of them, and this is why we take advisory services so seriously, and we cooperate closely on the advisory hub, together with the European Commission. For some countries this is, for the time being, the only way to be able to participate in EFSI, and where more can be done, we are ready. In some cases where the percentage of investments via EFSI or via the EIB in general is extremely low, we see also that the overall investment activity – private investment activity – in that country is extremely low. There must be a reason for that and we must address it together.

On the third issue, we should remind ourselves of the status of the Bank, which emanates from the Treaty of Rome. There it says that the objective of the Bank is to contribute to the forming of an internal market – that was sensational in the year 1957 – and to the levelling-out of regional differences. Neither job has been done yet. Too much of our GDP in the Member States of the European Union still follows the rule of the national, local or regional legislation, and not European legislation. So the internal market is not perfect yet, and in addition to that, we still have huge regional differences. This is why cohesion policies are of such importance for us.

The accountability / compliance question is extremely serious. We know that we have to continually improve on that, but I think that, in comparison to our peers in the multilateral development institutions and financing institutions, we are second to none.

There was a word on crowding-out in the remarks by Mr Niedermayer and I take that very seriously, because it is my firm conviction that there is no role for a public bank to finance something if that can be financed by private institutions. But let's be honest: in very many cases it is our engineers (because we are *the* engineering bank in the world) who check a project, come to a positive conclusion, say it is good project and give the stamp of approval to the project and then, all of a sudden, private investors think it is a good project and say, 'let's participate and let us ourselves be crowded-in'. So sometimes the opposite of crowding-out is true: we crowd in. Basically, the EU Bank is the crowding-in institution in the world. We sell our bonds (EUR 70 to 80 billion per year) on the international capital markets, with which we finance all these activities. In addition to that, we never finance more than one third, so this brings you to the level of roughly EUR 80 billion of activities, producing EUR 272 billion of overall additional investment in Europe.

We can talk forever about energy lending. The energy policy of the European Union, unfortunately, is not set by me, or it would look a little bit different. We finance activities that are in line with the energy objectives of the European Union. We are going a little bit beyond that. There is no doubt about that, because our energy lending is energy-source neutral, but still I cannot promise you that some day I will have stopped financing fossil-fuel energy projects. This would not be honest, because the Member States of the European Union who own us will say that they do not follow that way.

On the question of the Paris Agreement, I must say that we are extremely proud that we were the driving force behind the role of the multilateral development banks in the Paris Accord, and we still believe that we should continue that role. As a matter of fact, when it comes to green bonds, which were just mentioned, we were the inventors of the green bonds (climate awareness bonds). We are still the largest issuer of climate awareness bonds and we are the ones who are now trying to find ways of expanding the idea of these – let's say social responsibility bonds – to other areas in order to help finance sustainable development goals and other goals – in particular, for instance, right now when it comes to the Ocean Conference which is just ahead, where we have to bring a big European contribution to cleaning up the oceans.

One final word on Brexit. Brexit can break my heart, but I think that, whether we like it or not, we have to accept the decision, although sometimes one wonders what had been done in order to give the British people the real picture of what will happen when Brexit takes place. It probably will take place, but let's look at the figures. The United Kingdom has paid EUR 3.5 billion into the Bank over the last 40 years. They will get that back, but the overall volume of indebtedness of the European Investment Bank is EUR 243 billion. With that, the Member States of the European Union guarantee our projects, which consist of a number of assets of, all in all, close to EUR 600 billion. That means that if something goes wrong, the Member States have liability here. The United Kingdom has a contingent liability of EUR 36 billion (or EUR 35 point something billion), and that will remain. It is not so that we pay out to the United Kingdom – they have never paid in, and if something goes wrong, they have a contingent liability. So these are the facts. Unfortunately, Mr Coburn has already left, because that additional information would probably have been too much.

Eider Gardiazabal Rubial, *ponente*. – Señor presidente, ya llevamos aquí casi tres horas debatiendo sobre el Banco Europeo de Inversiones, sobre sus actividades, sobre su coherencia con las políticas de la Unión, y yo creo que ya va siendo hora de concluir.

Yo simplemente quería hacer un pequeño resumen de cuál era el objetivo de este informe porque lo que hemos tratado de hacer es, evidentemente, analizar cómo es la situación del Banco Europeo de Inversiones, cómo realiza sus actividades, y, sobre todo, le hemos puesto muchos deberes para el futuro, porque al final le pedimos que haga más para las pequeñas y medianas empresas, que mejore el equilibrio geográfico en sus inversiones, que haga más en su política contra el cambio climático modificándola, que haga más en política de igualdad, más en infraestructuras sociales, más en transparencia, más en rendición de cuentas, más en indicadores, etc.

Al final le hemos puesto una serie de deberes para el futuro y, como estos son informes anuales, yo simplemente invito al Banco Europeo de Inversiones a que ponga en marcha todas estas modificaciones, a que siga trabajando en aquello que ya ha empezado, como hemos mencionado antes en el debate. Y, bueno, nos veremos dentro de un año para poder evaluar una vez más cómo van esos cambios dentro del Banco Europeo de Inversiones, y espero que sigamos mejorando el trabajo del Banco y también el trabajo de la Unión Europea. Porque, como hemos dicho en este debate y en el anterior, el Banco al final es una herramienta fundamental para poner en práctica las políticas que en este hemisferio decidimos. Así que esperemos que todos sigamos avanzando por este buen camino.

Presidente. – La discussione è chiusa.

La votazione si svolgerà giovedì 8 febbraio 2018.

Dichiarazioni scritte (articolo 162)

Valdemar Tomaševski (ECR), *raštu*. – Garantijų fondo finansinio valdymo klausimas yra labai svarbus atsižvelgiant į Europos Sąjungos finansinius interesus. Pranešime teisingai pažymima, kad Garantijų fondo finansinį valdymą iš EIB turėtų perimti Komisija. Komisija turi ilgalaikės panašių investicijų valdymo praktikos. Valdymas turėtų būti vykdomas laikantis aukščiausių skaidrumo ir demokratinės atskaitomybės standartų. Perimdama Garantijų fondo turto valdymą Komisija turėtų toliau racionalizuoti ir konsoliduoti Fondo turto valdymo veiklą ir toliau gerinti jo pasiekus rezultatus. Valdymo perdavimas turėtų padėti sutaupyti lėšų Sąjungos bendrajame biudžete ir sudaryti galimybę Komisijai pateikti Europos Parlamentui geresnę ir tikslesnę informaciją apie Garantijų fondo valdymą ir padėti. Be to, ataskaitoje turėtų

būti pateikiama išsami informacija apie Fondo panaudojimą ir apie pažangą, kurią finansuoti projektai paskatino paramą gaunančiose šalyse. Tai paskatins ES institucijų skaidrumą.

18. Pogarszające się warunki działalności organizacji społeczeństwa obywatelskiego (debata)

Presidente. – L'ordine del giorno reca la discussione sulle dichiarazioni del Consiglio e della Commissione sulla riduzione degli spazi per la società civile (2017/2529(RSP)).

Monika Panayotova, President-in-Office of the Council. – Mr President, the Treaties stress the need for the Union to have an open, transparent and regular dialogue with civil society organisations, and they recognise civil society's role in the good governance of the European Union. We share the view of the European Parliament on this topic, that a healthy democracy requires an active and well-developed civil society. The active engagement of citizens is the cornerstone of our open and free societies.

Only recently, in October 2017, in its conclusions on the application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights in 2016, the Council stated that civil society organisations serve as a watchdog and play an important role in promoting and implementing fundamental rights on the ground. They are irreplaceable in raising awareness of fundamental rights among rights-holders and in supporting their efforts to exercise and defend their rights. To fulfil their task civil society organisations must be enabled to carry out their work.

As for external relations, the Council reaffirmed that civil society organisations are both actors of governance and development actors in their own right. As such, they are key partners for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the EU Global Strategy. There are many examples of policy fields where civil society is regularly consulted and integrated by the Union in the decision-making process. This is, for example, the case in the work of the European Union High Level Group on combating racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance, the EU Forum on the rights of the child, the EU Forum on migration and integration, and many others. Capacity-building of civil society's national human rights bodies is supported through EU funding in areas such as anti-racism, anti-discrimination, access to justice, rights of the child, women's rights, the elderly, disability, etc. As for the Council's work, for several years already there has been a tradition of regular contact and dialogue between the presidencies and civil society.

In the programme of the Bulgarian Presidency we have committed to realising a presidency which is open to citizens. Both in the process of preparation and conducting the Presidency, we strongly rely on cooperation with civil society and the non-governmental sector, as their intellectual imagination, expert contribution and creative, innovative approach have a very important added value for us. As recently as December 2017, Council working parties discussed how to ensure and enhance coherence and possible synergies between the internal and external aspects of civil society policies. The Fundamental Rights Agency participated in that debate. The agency is closely cooperating with civil society and has initiated work on a better understanding of the challenges and positive experiences of civil society organisations in the European Union. This work was recently concluded with a report. It stresses that the decision makers need to ensure that the important work of civil society is not undermined through policy and legal changes and funding cuts. The report also contains good practices that are being used to address these challenges.

I would like to conclude by stressing that civil society brings forward citizens' concerns. It represents and supports democracy, human rights, the rule of law, social justice and pluralism. It contributes to the effective and inclusive policies and engages in initiatives to further social inclusion, participatory democracy and governance, both in the European Union and also in third countries. Therefore it is our legal and political responsibility to guarantee good conditions for a strong civil society in our countries and in the Union.

Věra Jourová, Member of the Commission. – Mr President, I cannot stress enough the importance the Commission attaches to the existence of a vibrant civil society, and to a regular and transparent engagement with civil society actors – both as allies and as critical minds. As we can see in several States, elections are not the only sufficient proof of a democracy. A strong civil society is heavily needed.

The importance of preserving and protecting the civil society space has become more evident in our time, where fundamental rights and values are under high pressure. Indeed, civil society is unfortunately facing pressures in many parts of the EU.

I am aware and deeply concerned by these worrying trends, or – as this debate is called – the shrinking space for civil society. It includes funding cuts, stringent regulatory frameworks, lack of involvement in policymaking, or smear campaigns affecting public perceptions of the credibility and legitimacy of civil society organisations and those that fund them.

We are monitoring such developments at national level, touching upon the role and functions of civil society organisations. We take very seriously actions by public institutions aimed at deliberately shrinking the capacity and position of action of civil society organisations or attempting to control, delegitimise or stigmatise their work.

We will not hesitate to take action when measures are taken in violation of Member States' obligations under the Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights, as we have already done in the case of Hungary. In December 2017, the Commission referred Hungary to the Court of Justice concerning its law on foreign-funded NGOs.

We also continue to provide concrete support, including capacity-building and funding, to raise awareness, encourage advocacy and foster the enforcement of fundamental rights, and we are currently mapping gaps and needs to identify how to further empower civil society and other independent human rights actors, such as national human rights institutions. This takes up a specific request from the European Parliament, on the basis of which we are about to launch a feasibility study.

This is also a timely moment for the new ideas to feed ongoing reflections on the future EU Multiannual Financial Framework. We are in contact with civil society partners, with the Council of Europe and with the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights to reflect on how to build on and complement existing research-surveying experiences on how the space for civil society is evolving.

All actors have a role to play, be it at national, European or international level, and we are fully committed to playing ours. Keeping our civil society strong, independent and pluralistic requires these joint efforts, and we welcome the continued engagement of the European Parliament on this matter.

PŘEDSEDNICTVÍ: PAN PAVEL TELIČKA

místopředseda

Roberta Metsola, f'isem il-grupp PPE. – Ir-rwol tas-soċjetà ċivili hu kruċjali f'demokrazija. Fuq naħa nqisuhom bħala l-kuxjenza tas-soċjetà tagħna, u fuq in-naħa l-oħra jghassu biex jassiguraw li l-poteri tal-istat jiġu użati b'mod sew, kif għandu jkun, b'responsabilità. Is-soċjetà ċivili dejjem kienet protagonista fl-iżvilupp u t-tibdil li sar fl-Unjoni Ewropea. Gabet il-bidla u bidlet l-istatus quo.

Fil-Polonja u fir-Rumanija, is-soċjetà ċivili wasslet għall-kollass tal-komuniżmu. Fi Franza, is-soċjetà ċivili kellha sehem mill-aktar importanti fl-istorja reċenti. F'Malta għandna wkoll soċjetà ċivili ħajja, organizzazzjonijiet differenti li qed jahdmu favur il-protezzjoni tal-libertà tal-midja, favur l-ambjent u l-ghajta qawwija għall-gustizzja fost l-oħrajn.

Dawn ukoll, bħall-midja indipendenti, jaffaċċjaw ostakli, theddid u intimidazzjoni. Hemm min jista' jqishom bħala xkili għall-politiċi, imma r-raġuni għalfejn is-soċjetà ċivili teżisti hi proprju biex tixpruna u tningeż lill-politiċi. Soċjetà ċivili b'saħħitha hi bżonjuża u essenzjali. Mingħajrhom, id-demokrazija tkun ifqar. Huma essenzjali biex min hu fil-poter jagħti kont ta' għemilu, jgħid il-verità u jimxi bi standards mill-aktar għolja.

Ghalhekk meta ma jkunux jistghu jahdmu bil-libertà kollha ghandna ghalxiex nithassbu, u din hi s-sitwazzjoni. Jinsabu taht theddida kif wera r-rapport tal-Aġenzija tad-Drittijiet Fundamentali. Irridu nindirizzaw l-isfidi li qed ihabbtu wiċ-ċhom magħhom. Ma nistghux inkunu siekta quddiem sitwazzjonijiet li qatt ma ghandhom ikunu aċċettabbli. Ma nistghux inkunu siekta meta naraw li l-aċċess għall-fondi għal ċertu organizzazzjonijiet qiegħed jiġi fgat minhabba li jinghata lill-ohrajn li jappoġġjaw lill-gvern. Ma nistghux nibqghu fil-muta quddiem it-theddid b'azzjonijiet legali, b'intimidazzjoni, bi vjolenza, b'burokrazija biex jaqtgħulhom qalbhom jew inkella b'liġijiet li jimminaw il-hidma tagħhom.

L-Istati Membri jridu joqogħdu għall-istandards internazzjonali li jippromwov u l-partecipazzjoni fl-iżvilupp tal-politika. Dawn huma l-prinċipji ...

(Il-President waqqaf lill-kelliema minhabba raġunijiet ta' hin allokat.)

Péter Niedermüller, a S&D képviselőcsoport nevében. – Elnök Úr, erős és jól működő civil társadalom nélkül nincs demokrácia. A civil szervezetek nagyon hatékonyan tudják segíteni a társadalmi problémák kezelését, miközben megteremtik az állampolgárok számára a politikai cselekvésnek a lehetőségét. Az utóbbi időben annak vagyunk tanúi, hogy illiberális demokráciákban, mindenekelőtt Magyarországon és Lengyelországban, kormányok brutális módon igyekeznek megakadályozni a civil szervezetek működését. Igen, idegen hatalmak ügynökeinek bélyegzik őket, különadókat vetnek rájuk ki, hogy pénzügyileg is lehetetlenné tegyék a munkájukat, célzatosan ellenük irányuló törvényeket fogadnak el, sőt, titkosszolgálati eszközök bevetésével igyekeznek őket megfélemlíteni. Meggyőződésem, hogy az Európai Parlamentnek alapvető politikai és morális felelőssége, hogy határozottan felemelje a szavát ez ellen a diktatórikus politikai gyakorlat ellen.

Mindenki, aki civil szervezetek ellen fordul, aki megpróbálja akadályozni a munkájukat, az tudatosan szembe fordul az Európai Unió alapértékeivel, a demokráciával és a jogállamisággal. De nemcsak szavakra van szükség, hanem tettekre is. Ezért azt javaslom, hogy az Európai Unió haladéktalanul hozzon létre egy demokráciaalapot, ahova az Európai Unió tagállamaiban működő civil szervezetek közvetlenül tudnak folyamodni anyagi támogatásért, nemcsak projektek, hanem a hosszú távú működés feltételeinek biztosítása érdekében is. Ha nem támogatjuk a civil szervezeteket, maga a jogállamiság és a demokrácia kerül veszélybe.

Marek Jurek, w imieniu grupy ECR. – Panie Przewodniczący! Bez aktywnego społeczeństwa, bez ducha obywatelskiego, bez odpowiedzialności społecznej nie ma demokracji. Tym bardziej, że żyjemy w czasach, gdy tak łatwo jest fabrykować w mediach wolę ogółu, gdy rzeczywistość wirtualna tak łatwo zastępuje aktywną, autentycznie kształtowaną oddolną opinię publiczną. I musimy robić wszystko, by chronić nasze demokracje, by chronić naszą wolność przed rządami pieniądza. Doskonale to wiemy w Europie Środkowej. Zresztą dziwię się, że kolega, który pochodzi z kraju bliskiego, nie rozumie, że dzisiaj głównym zadaniem naszych społeczeństw jest odbudowanie aktywnego społeczeństwa po czasach, gdy komunizm nie tylko ograniczał wolność polityczną, ale zniechęcał ludzi do jakiegokolwiek aktywności.

Rzeczywiście dziś równość obywatelska jest ogromnie zagrożona przez pieniądze i bardzo dobrze, że rządy w Europie środkowej podejmują działania, żeby zagwarantować rzeczywistą równość organizacji działających na forum publicznym.

Sophia in 't Veld, on behalf of the ALDE Group. – Mr President, today we are finally discussing the shrinking space for civil society, but what we are really discussing is the shrinking space for democracy because, despite the passionate plea of my colleague just now for civil society, we also know that his government party is trying to shut up NGOs that do not echo the views of the government. This is actually what presents a threat to democracy: it is not NGOs that we disagree with but actually silencing parties that we disagree with. The Commissioner rightly said that democracy is not about elections, but democracy is about checks and balances. That means that we should even have the courage to fund our own opposition if necessary. This is not just about shrinking space for civil society but also for media, opposition parties and so on.

I have a couple of questions for the Commission and the Council.

First of all, there have been proposals, as mentioned by colleague Niedermüller, and I know Mr Boni is also arguing for it, that setting up EU funding for not just European NGOs but also local NGOs – what initiatives will the Commission take?

Secondly, regarding the litigation fund that was adopted in the budget by Parliament last year, I would really like to hear the Commissioner confirm that it will be set up quickly and that it will actually be a litigation fund and not watered down to a kind of general NGO fund, as some people would like.

Thirdly, you started infringement procedures against Hungary for laws that unduly restrict the space for civil society, but we know that the same problems exist in Poland and that in other countries such laws are being considered. Will you also start infringement procedures against Poland?

To the Council: I very much welcome your words but they are of a very general nature. I would like to hear what the Council will actually do to ensure – and I am coming to a conclusion – to put this on the agenda and discuss it. Will you put on the agenda the situation in Hungary, the situation in Poland, the situation in Romania?

(The President cut off the speaker)

(The speaker agreed to take a blue-card question under Rule 162(8))

Marek Jurek (ECR), pytanie zadane przez podniesienie niebieskiej kartki. – Stawiać zarzuty łatwo, dokumentować je trochę trudniej. Dlatego prosiłbym o tę dokumentację. Co Pani miała na myśli, mówiąc konkretnie o ograniczeniach działalności organizacji pozarządowych w Polsce i na Węgrzech?

Sophia in 't Veld (ALDE), *blue-card answer*. – That is a bit difficult in 30 seconds because of the wide range of measures that have been taken to harass and intimidate NGOs, restrict their freedom of manoeuvre and registration requirements: the government, for example, giving priority to events organised by organisations that are friendly to the government at the expense of other NGOs. Need I go on? I think it is clear to everybody. I understand there are organisations – even organisations funded by this House – that are supportive of your views, and I very much disagree with them, but I prefer to argue with them and to debate with them rather than cutting off their funds as you are doing.

Tania González Peñas, *en nombre del Grupo GUE/NGL*. – Señor presidente, los movimientos sociales, activistas y organizaciones que luchan por la justicia social se enfrentan a un entorno cada vez más represivo en muchos países de Europa. Lo estamos viendo a diario en Hungría, en Polonia, en Bulgaria o en Francia mismamente. En España, el Gobierno del Partido Popular aprobó en 2015 la ley mordaza, una ley que vulnera los derechos de reunión y de protesta pacífica, una ley que nos da miedo a todos y todas las ciudadanas que defendemos un sistema plural.

¿Se imaginan un país donde los tuiteros son juzgados y encarcelados por la Audiencia Nacional? No es Arabia Saudí. Es España, y ya hace tiempo que lo viene denunciando Amnistía Internacional.

La participación política y la libertad de expresión son señales de salud democrática. Que la sociedad civil pueda intervenir en las decisiones políticas a través de sus propuestas, pero también a través de la protesta, construye un sistema político de mayor calidad democrática. Porque en democracia cuantas más son las voces que se escuchan mejores son las decisiones.

Benedek Jávor, *a Verts/ALE képviselőcsoport nevében*. – Elnök Úr, tisztelt Biztos Asszony, kedves Kollegák, négy évvel ezelőtt döbbenetes képek járták be a magyar és a nemzetközi sajtót. Rendőrségi razziával megszállt civil szervezetek irodák, elvezetett civil vezetők egy EU-s tagállamban. A magyar kormány háborúja a civil szervezetekkel szemben immár négy éve folyik. Folytatódott tavaly a civil törvénnyel, amely körüli vita immár az Európai Bíróságon van. De a magyar kormány képtelen leállni. Éppen a közelmúltban terjesztették elő azt az új törvényjavaslatot, amely immár a látszatát sem próbálja megőrizni a jogállami normáknak, és még magasabb szintre emeli a civil szervezetek megbélyegzését, a civil szervezetek elleni jogi és gyakorlati megtorlást. A civil szektor megfélemlítése persze nem magyar találmány. Ezt látjuk Budapeستől Moszkváig, és Ankarától Varsóig. De nem is pusztán egy magyar ügy. Európát bomlasztja szét, ha nem tudunk gátat szabni a civil szervezeteket elnyomó autokratikus törekvéseknek és szisztematikus fenyegetéseknek az Európai Unió határain belül.

Michał Boni (PPE). – Demokracja, to nie tylko sam akt wyborczy, to coś więcej. To świadomość obywateli i reguły chroniące ich prawa. Populizmy w dzisiejszym świecie w imię wyników wyborów podważają fundamenty demokracji i de facto budują nowy autorytaryzm, poparty większością wyborczą ślepo idącą za wodzami. Nie ma dzisiaj demokracji bez społeczeństwa obywatelskiego. W wielu krajach partie nie tyle służą państwu, co je zawłaszczają. Niszczą to demokratyczną naturę państwa i ogranicza dostęp organizacji obywatelskich do środków na rozwój żywej demokracji.

A codzienna praktyka demokracji jest kluczowa dla jej trwałości. Daje jej żywotność. Aktywność obywateli, ich uczestnictwo w debatach, konsultacjach, protestach, procesach decyzyjnych są niezbędne wszędzie: w małych miastach i wsiach, w metropoliach i regionach.

Kluczowym aktorem żywej demokracji jest społeczeństwo obywatelskie. Potrzebuje ono jednak swobody funkcjonowania. Niezależność działalności musi być zagwarantowana dostępnością środków finansowych, nieograniczaną przez rządy, jak widać to w zmianach prawnych z ostatnich dni na Węgrzech i grozi to też Polsce.

Trzeba więc znaleźć sposób, by organizacje obywatelskie działające lokalnie wspierać europejsko. Potrzebujemy Europejskiego Instrumentu Wartości. Niezbędna jest osobna linia w budżecie europejskim na takie cele. Decyzja ta wymaga współpracy Parlamentu, Komisji i Rady, by umieścić te cele i działania w nowych Wieloletnich Ramach Finansowych.

Josef Weidenholzer (S&D). – Herr Präsident! Eine wichtige Grundlage für ein gutes Zusammenleben ist, dass Staat, Ökonomie und Gesellschaft in einem ausgewogenen Verhältnis zueinander stehen. Wenn das gesellschaftliche Element fehlt, dann besteht die Gefahr, dass es kein freiwilliges Engagement der Individuen gibt. In den Zeiten des Kommunismus konnten wir das beobachten. Der von der Partei dominierte Staat erstickte das Engagement freier Menschen bis zu dem Zeitpunkt, als sich Widerstand formierte. Vor diesem Hintergrund entstand eine zivilgesellschaftliche Bewegung, die sich schließlich zur friedlichen, zur samtenen Revolution wendete – in Ungarn, in der Tschechischen Republik oder in Polen und in vielen anderen Ländern.

Lange Zeit war dieser Zusammenhang klar, wurden NGOs als wichtiger Pfeiler der neuen Ordnung betrachtet. Tadeusz Mazowiecki drückte das einmal so aus, dass alles von der Kraft der Gesellschaft abhängt – von ihren geistigen Werten, von ihrer Klugheit bei der Geltendmachung der Menschenrechte und der Rechte der Nation. Es ist bedenklich, dass gerade in diesen Ländern jetzt systematisch und mit großem Druck der gesellschaftliche Raum für NGOs eingeschränkt wird. Das bedeutet ein Zurück in eine Vergangenheit, die wir alle nicht wollen, und deshalb müssen wir allen einschlägigen Tendenzen ganz entschlossen entgegenreten.

Lynn Boylan (GUE/NGL). – Mr President, active civil society is vital to the functioning of any healthy democracy. NGOs, human rights organisations, critical media and trade unions all work to hold governments to account, to protect people's rights and to protect transparency.

But we are increasingly witnessing a shrinking civil society – not just in third countries, but within the EU itself. I was an eyewitness to the police brutality that was meted out on Catalans as they attempted to exercise their right to vote, not to mention the arrest and imprisonment of civil activists or the shutting-down of their websites. Other EU countries are using government-funded smear campaigns and restrictive legislation to shut down organisations campaigning for fundamental rights. In my own country, peaceful protesters were consistently demonised by the Government and, in one case, criminalised for their actions.

Civil society needs our protection. We cannot tolerate its shrinkage within the EU, but nor can we continue to provide funding to countries with oppressive regimes that shut down any form of civil society just because they are carrying out the dirty work of Fortress Europe.

Асим Адемов (PPE). – Г-н Председател, г-жо Комисар, ползите от гражданската организация са безспорно много и разнообразни и затова е важно да се подкрепят и популяризират организациите, които се застъпват за фундаменталните човешки права.

Организациите на гражданското общество в някои страни, които насърчават и защитават върховенството на закона, демокрацията и основните права на равенство и толерантност, срещат все повече трудности да добият гласност и да сформират легални структури. Тези проблеми изтъква и последният доклад на Агенцията на ЕС за основните права от януари 2018 година.

Точно както човешките права се нуждаят от гражданско общество, така и гражданското общество се нуждае от защита на човешките права, за да изпълни своята мисия. Предизвикателствата, които срещат неправителствените организации в някои от държавите на Европейския съюз, са свързани със свиването на пространството за диалог между гражданското общество и властите. Този проблем трябва да добие гласност. Европейският съюз трябва да подкрепя и защитава гражданското общество в рамките на Съюза, но и в трети държави кандидат членки. Трябва да подкрепим тези държави да стабилизират законодателствата си и да поставят на дневен ред върховенството на основните човешки права, които улесняват формирането и функционирането на гражданските структури.

Демокрацията е сърцето на нашето общество. Нека не я уронваме, като потискаме гласа на гражданите! Проблемите на нашето сложно общество трябва да се излагат на показ, а решенията да се намират в ръцете на избирателите.

Enrique Guerrero Salom (S&D). – Señor presidente, esta mañana en este Parlamento hemos estado debatiendo cómo mejorar los procesos electorales para que se exprese mejor el consentimiento de los ciudadanos por medio de la elección de sus representantes, y también hemos reforzado el vínculo democrático entre esos representantes y quienes ejercen el gobierno.

Hace unas pocas semanas, en este Parlamento aprobamos un informe sobre la reducción del espacio de la sociedad civil en algunos de los países con los cuales cooperamos en las políticas de desarrollo. Pero ese mismo problema lo tenemos dentro de la Unión. Lo cierto es que la democracia son procesos electorales, es reforzamiento del vínculo entre elegidos y gobernantes, pero también es vitalidad de la sociedad civil, que alimenta estos procesos de participación política. La democracia es participación, es deliberación, y necesitamos una sociedad civil vibrante que active ambos mecanismos sociales.

Francis Zammit Dimech (PPE). – Jidher li qed naqblu hawnhekk li s-soċjetà ċivili ghandha verament rwol kruċjali f'pajjiż demokratiku għaliex il-vuċi tagħha fil-fatt hija l-vuċi li hi strumentali biex ikollok soċjetà b'saħħitha u biex ikun hemm l-iskrutinju fuq il-gvernijiet u l-awtoritajiet, u anki l-operat tagħhom.

Għalhekk f'dan is-sens – u anki aċċennat qabli l-kollega Roberta Metsola – huwa hażin li jkollok fl-Istati Membri, anki f'Malta, fejn l-appelli tas-soċjetà ċivili jiġu injorati, inkluż appelli rigward sistema ta' governanza serja, u mhux biss jiġu injorati imma jkollok każijiet fejn ikollok anki tentattiv biex dawn jiġu skreditati b'mod sistematiku, anki permezz ta' tattiki qarrieqa.

Is-soċjetà ċivili jrid ikollha d-dritt tal-opinjoni, dritt anki li tircievi l-informazzjoni kollha, id-dritt li hi tkun verament parteċipi f'dak kollu li jkun qiegħed isir, u allura ma jista' jkun qatt aċċettat li nhallu lis-soċjetà ċivili tiġi soġġetta għal tattiki anki li jistgħu jitqiesu biss bħala tattiki ta' intimidazzjoni.

Irrid niehu din l-opportunità, għalhekk, biex minn hawnhekk insellem lis-soċjetà ċivili bħala l-vuċi ta' min m'għandux forma oħra ta' rappreżentazzjoni. Insellem b'mod partikulari l-ħidma li, pereżempju f'Malta, qed titwettaq mis-Civil Society Network, preċiżament biex iressqu 'l quddiem ilmenti li jirriflettu dak li qed iħoss il-poplu Malti b'mod ġenerali.

Cécile Kashetu Kyenge (S&D). – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, uno Stato che restringe lo spazio politico nel quale le organizzazioni della società civile operano non è uno Stato di diritto. Uno Stato che non riconosce questa forza viva all'interno della sua società, che cerca di limitarne il campo di azione, che impone vincoli e oneri di natura finanziaria e che reprime gli attivisti merita la nostra più assoluta condanna.

È riprovevole il comportamento di alcuni Stati, e qui parlo dell'Ungheria, che con leggi subdole criminalizzano la solidarietà ai rifugiati, ai migranti, ai gruppi marginalizzati, colpendo al cuore l'azione svolta dalla società civile nel fornire quei servizi sociali che lo Stato in questione è incapace di fornire. Per questo motivo sostengo la creazione di un fondo europeo per la democrazia. Stiamo parlando di diritti e di democrazia, di buon governo e di trasparenza.

Un invito pertanto alla Commissione a far sentire maggiormente la sua voce nella difesa di questi principi e ad adottarsi tempestivamente alle leggi e alle pratiche restrittive nei confronti delle organizzazioni della società civile e dei suoi esponenti ben prima della loro adozione.

Jiří Pospíšil (PPE). – Pane předsedající, paní komisařko, já jsem pozorně poslouchal Vaše vystoupení a je dobře, že Komise věnuje pozornost rozvoji občanské společnosti ve státech Evropské unie.

Nikdo zde nepochybuje, že občanská společnost je mimořádně důležitá pro fungování demokratického právního státu. Je-li silná, pak může bránit posilování extrémistických tendencí, extrémistických názorů a přispívá k tomu, že lidé jsou odolní k nacionálním a extrémním tendencím, to znamená, je v našem vlastním zájmu mít silné občanské společnosti v případech, že v některých zemích začnou výrazně posilovat extrémistická nacionální protievropská politická hnutí. V tom já vidím velmi důležitou úlohu, pokud se bavíme zde na půdě politického orgánu, jako je Evropský parlament.

Na druhou stranu jasně říkám, že podle principu subsidiarity Evropská unie jako taková by neměla zasahovat do fungování občanských společností v jednotlivých členských státech. Spíš bychom měli přistupovat k tomu pozitivně a případně finančně a jinak podporovat občanská hnutí a jiné instituce občanské společnosti v těch zemích, kde třeba dosud nejsou tak plně rozvinuty.

A já třeba cítím v bývalých postkomunistických státech i ve své zemi nebo v zemích Visegrádu, že je třeba, aby Evropská unie podporovala ta občanská hnutí, která šíří informace o evropské integraci, informace o evropské identitě, o tom, co v poslední době je často módní popírat a relativizovat.

Catch-the-eye procedure

Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D). – Señor presidente, en las distintas lenguas de la Unión estamos aquí recordando un principio que no puede ser subestimado y es que la democracia —¡claro!— exige votar, pero no consiste solo en votar, ni mucho menos en votar cualquier cosa, en cualquier momento y de cualquier manera. La democracia exige proteger los derechos de las minorías y la función de la oposición y de la propia sociedad civil, respetando los derechos individuales de las personas físicas y jurídicas.

Y tenemos derecho a sospechar de un Gobierno, sea cual sea en la Unión Europea, cuando legisla para reprimir o perseguir a sus adversarios políticos con leyes que llegan a ser conocidas incluso por el nombre de la persona a la que ha identificado como su adversario, o aún peor, como su enemigo. Es el caso de Hungría con la ley que reduce el margen de maniobra de las organizaciones no gubernamentales y que se inscribe en una estrategia xenófoba y ultranacionalista de identificación de la inmigración con la seguridad nacional.

Por eso, la Unión Europea, la Comisión tienen todo el derecho y el deber de reaccionar ante esas iniciativas y ante esas leyes y de frenar con toda contundencia esa deriva autoritaria.

Julie Ward (S&D). – Mr President, shrinking space is a trend that can be observed globally. For instance, in Israel, the situation of human rights defenders and civil society organisations has severely deteriorated in the past few years. In addition to systematic human rights violations by the State of Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory, the Israeli Government has now launched a violent crackdown against civil society.

The recent ban on BDS-supporting organisations from entering the country is an additional attack on freedom of expression in Israel, and although I am not in favour of a total boycott of everything Israeli, I find it very important that the organisations that do support it are able to say it. I have been personally targeted by some of these right-wing attacks on freedom of expression. NGO Monitor has targeted me and my staff because I called them out and exposed their far-right anti-human rights agenda. Under the pretence of transparency concerns, they have managed successfully to attack organisations that work to end human rights violations in the occupied territories – and that includes representatives from Breaking the Silence, the organisation that gathers testimonies from ex-IDF soldiers against the occupation.

Νότης Μαρτιάς (ECR). – Κύριε Πρόεδρε, η κοινωνία των πολιτών πράγματι συμβάλλει στην εμφάνιση της δημοκρατίας. Συμβάλλει στη δυνατότητα των πολιτών να αποκτήσουν ακόμη πιο ισχυρή φωνή. Και έχουμε οργανώσεις της κοινωνίας των πολιτών, όπως είναι τα συνδικάτα, που πραγματικά παίζουν πολύ σημαντικό ρόλο. Από την άλλη, πρέπει να προσέξουμε να μην υπάρξει μετατροπή της κοινωνίας των πολιτών, και κυρίως των μη κυβερνητικών οργανώσεων, σε ομάδες που εξυπηρετούν τα λόμπι. Αυτό είναι πολύ σημαντικό και πρέπει να το λάβουμε υπόψη. Τέλος, πρέπει να αναφέρω ότι, στην Ελλάδα, οι μη κυβερνητικές οργανώσεις σε σχέση με τα ζητήματα των προσφύγων έχουν πάρει πάρα πολλά χρήματα και γίνεται κυριολεκτικά ένα πάρτι. Επικράτησε αδιαφάνεια, κυρία Γιουγονά. Έχουν πάρει πολλά χρήματα και ενώ τα χρήματα αυτά έπρεπε να έχουν δοθεί για τη στήριξη των προσφύγων σε πάρα πολλές περιοχές, όπως στη Λέσβο, τελικά τα αποτελέσματα είναι οικτρά, γιατί εκεί γίνεται ένα πάρτι. Το έχω πει μέσα σε αυτήν την αίθουσα: πρέπει να υπάρξει έλεγχος της χρηματοδότησης και πρέπει να μπει η OLAF στο παιχνίδι για να ελέγξει πού πάνε τα χρήματα. Δεν πάνε υπέρ των προσφύγων, ενώ έχουν δοθεί γι' αυτούς.

(End of catch-the-eye procedure)

Věra Jourová, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, honourable Members, this has been a very interesting debate and also very encouraging for me, because we have to focus more on the support of civil society and NGOs, not only in the Member States, which have been mentioned here, but in the whole of Europe.

In real democracy, people are encouraged and invited to participate in decision-making. A healthy, self-confident society welcomes people to have a say. In a fake democracy, people are invited once every four years to come and cast their vote, to elect, and to be silent in between. This is the real threat to democracy, and I think that it is our role to – fight against it is maybe too activist – but to be very vigilant, to monitor the situation and to give support where it is needed, because silencing and shrinking civil society is one of the parameters of populism. Populists hate civil society because they love a strong state and, unfortunately, in part of our society there is now the demand for an ever-stronger state, because there are people who promise they will do everything to facilitate things for you, to guarantee you a happy life. They want everything but critical thinking from the people. Unfortunately, online and digital development is not helping. We should analyse this phenomenon more, and what it means, because when I speak to the courageous people of the NGOs, they say hate speech online is something which is censoring and silencing them. It is not only journalists, but also a large number of people working for NGOs, publicly-known people, who are affected by hatred online. It is a factor which we should think about and maybe do something about.

There is also the factor of societal changes, which we see in relation to the development of the digital area. I have nothing against digital development. There are many positive things in this respect, but what we see is that the populists like this sphere because they have an easily manipulated crowd. Again, this is something which goes directly against civil society, and I think that we should analyse the reasons for shrinking space for civil society, react appropriately and find remedies. I do not think that the only possible remedy we have in hand is infringement against a state where we see that the law is deviating from how the legislation should look. Of course, we are monitoring the situation in Hungary and in Poland. Today we discussed Romania. We are monitoring some other Member States where there are worrying developments – not only in the east of the EU; I must make this clear. Maybe the approach of the Commission might be seen as pretty legalistic, that we wait for a bad law to be enacted before we act, but we have to be very careful here and maybe trust more the people in Europe that there are enough democrats who will not be silenced so easily. We have to be careful and we have to support civil society by means other than infringements directed against the laws in some Member States.

How can we do it? The fund – I am very much for creating such a fund. We are now launching a feasibility study where we want to map the various funding instruments in the Member States, to fill the gap and not to duplicate or do something which would not be systemic and transparent enough. I also have an expert meeting, and I invite those who are interested in this issue to participate in this debate, because I think that it should be our common work.

Let me conclude by speaking about big money, which is also now in debates such as the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) after 2020. Here we have a great chance to open better and easier possibilities for the NGOs to get funding. I am not so sure about opening the special chapter in MFF which was, I think, the proposal of Mr Boni. I think that we should deliberately and thoroughly analyse the possibility of opening the space for NGOs, who in many cases substitute the tasks of the state while being miserably paid. We have to change this situation. We see one year of financing, so the NGOs invest 90% of their initiatives in collecting or seeking money, instead of doing the core thing. We also have to look into the rules for financing. We will hear more and more about the need to simplify the rules for the new MFF. Whenever I hear politicians, including myself, speaking about simplification, I start to fear we will complicate it more. Now we have to manage to simplify the rules, especially for the small-scale projects, not to allow again a system where you have to invest as much effort into getting EUR 100 000 as EUR 5 million. The system and the rules must be proportionate. EU funding is my hobby. I could continue, but I will spare you. Thank you very much, and let us work together to stop the shrinking of space for civil society. It is vital for Europe and it is vital for all democrats in Europe.

Monika Panayotova, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – Mr President, first of all I would like to respond to the question from Ms Sophia in 't Veld. I would like to underline that I speak on behalf of the Presidency of the Council and therefore in the name of all its members, and for this reason it is not for the Presidency to comment on particular subjects related to the Member States. But what I can underline is that the Council shares the view of the European Parliament that civil society plays a vital role in our societies, and – as you said – it is an essential part of the system of the checks and balances. In 2017, the Council encouraged the Member States to promote EU citizenship and the values and rights attached to it, involving as far as possible civil society – it was underlined.

Secondly, I would like also to conclude by saying that an empowered and resilient civil society in all its diversity is a crucial component and voice, as mentioned by some of you, of any democracy. Ensuring that civil society has sufficient space to operate in support and protection of fundamental rights in the European Union remains a common endeavour for the European institutions and the Member States.

President. – The debate is closed.

Written statements (Rule 162)

Francisco Assis (S&D), *por escrito*. – Em muitas partes do globo – e não só nos países em vias de desenvolvimento – assistimos hoje a fenómenos de carácter autoritário contra a democracia e os direitos humanos, que se manifestam muitas vezes através da redução do espaço de intervenção da sociedade civil. Determinados grupos como as mulheres, os jovens, as pessoas LGBTI e as minorias, as comunidades ciganas, as populações indígenas, as pessoas com deficiência, a imprensa ou os defensores dos direitos humanos são alvos preferenciais da repressão, da limitação dos direitos à liberdade de expressão, de reunião e de associação. A UE e os seus Estados-Membros têm o dever de liderar pelo exemplo respeitando escrupulosamente os direitos fundamentais da sociedade civil e a fazerem face a quaisquer tendências negativas neste domínio. Mas a UE tem também o dever de agir quando esses direitos fundamentais não são respeitados em países terceiros com os quais mantêm relações comerciais ou diplomáticas, usando para tal os seus instrumentos de política externa, nomeadamente os instrumentos em matéria de direitos humanos e desenvolvimento e os acordos bilaterais com países terceiros.

Kinga Gál (PPE), *írásban*. – Magyarországon nagy tiszteletnek örvendenek a civil szervezetek, hiszen az állampolgárok ezen önkéntes szerveződései a társadalmi-kulturális élet fontos alkotóelemei, amelyek tevékenységük révén hozzájárulnak a társadalmi problémák hatékony kezeléséhez és a közösségi szükségletek kielégítéséhez. Magyarországon több mint 60 000 civil szervezet működik problémamentesen, ám a szervezetek csupán kevesebb mint 1 százaléka törekszik politikai befolyásra. Teszik mindezt anélkül, hogy bármilyen demokratikus elszámoltathatósággal rendelkeznének, így csakis álproblémaként értelmezhető e szervezetek Európát telekiabáló felháborodása. A civil szervezetek fontos szerephez jutnak a közvélemény-formálásban, ezért alapvető közérdek fűződik ahhoz, hogy a társadalom egészének egyértelmű legyen, e szervezetek milyen érdekeket képviselnek. A külföldről támogatott civil szervezetek átláthatósága rendkívül fontos jogállami követelmény, ami mindenkire vonatkozik. A transzparenciát hirdető civil szervezetektől elvárható, hogy saját maguk esetében is eleget tegyenek az átláthatóság követelményének és nyilvánosságra hozzák pénzügyi támogatásaikat. Ez egy teljesen legitim elvárás a civil szervezetektől és nem példa nélküli a világban. Az Európai Parlamentet elárasztó feljelentő leveleket ugyanaz a néhány, Soros terveit elősegítő, migrációt támogató civil szervezet terjeszti, amelyek évek óta támadják nyíltan vagy burkoltan a magyar kormányt.

Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg (S&D), in writing. – Regarding the fact that independent and well-functioning civil society is a fundament of the country's democracy, stability and prosperity and one of the most important actors in overseeing the situation of human rights, social justice and citizens participation, a spread of limitations and closing down of civil society in developing democracies across the world is a deeply worrying phenomenon. In order to fight this negative trend, the representatives of the EU institutions and Member States should give a strong signal and support the threaten human rights defenders and NGOs, by holding meetings, publically expressing support to individual cases or by providing consultations and guidance in their activities. At the same time the EU actors should be more vocal in defending the international legal instruments promoting democracy and human rights on the level of international organisations, such as United Nations, African Union and others. Furthermore, I believe a clearer structure should be given to the framework of cooperation with civil societies in problematic regions consisting of regular in-depth consultations, establishing an alert system notifying about introducing restrictive pieces of legislation and continuously monitoring potential threats to NGOs and human rights defenders.

Davor Škrlec (Verts/ALE), napisan. – Civilno društvo, odnosno aktivnost i sudjelovanje građana u kreiranju politika predstavljaju temelj demokracije, a pritisak nad njime u konstantnom je porastu unutar i izvan granica EU-a. Posebno je zabrinjavajuće upravo širenje trenda sužavanja prostora civilnog društva i među razvijenim demokratskim državama. Organizacije civilnog društva, ali i individualni aktivisti koji se bave socijalnim, ekološkim i drugim važnim pitanjima, nailaze na mnoštvo prepreka – od pravnih i administrativnih, pa se sve do zastrašivanja, pritvaranja i uhićenja.

Takav negativni trend nije zaobišao ni Hrvatsku gdje se organizacijama civilnog društva političkim pritiscima i rezanjem sredstava ograničavaju slobode govora i djelovanja.

Civilno društvo iznimno je značajno za Europu, stoga rješavanje ovog problema zahtijeva njeno djelovanje – pružanje snažne zakonske zaštite za OCD, kao i kreiranje konkretnih političkih mehanizama i instrumenata s ciljem da se onima koji se bore za ljudska prava i demokratizaciju omoguće uvjeti za rad.

19. Sytuacja obrończyn praw człowieka oraz wsparcie udzielane im przez UE (debata)

President. – The next item is the debate on

— the question for oral answer (O-000102/2017) by Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz, Barbara Matera, Dubravka Šuica, Elissavet Vozemberg-Vrionidi, Teresa Jiménez-Becerril Barrio and Rosa Estaràs Ferragut, on behalf of the PPE Group, Iratxe García Pérez and Soraya Post, on behalf of the S&D Group, Arne Gericke, on behalf of the ECR Group, Malin Björk, on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group, Terry Reintke and Ernest Urtasun Domènech, on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group, Angelika Mlinar, Izaskun Bilbao Barandica and Hilde Vautmans, on behalf of the ALDE Group, to the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy: Situation of women human rights defenders and their support by the EU (2017/2531(RSP)) (B8-0004/2018),

— the question for oral answer (O-000101/2017) by Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz, Barbara Matera, Dubravka Šuica, Elissavet Vozemberg-Vrionidi, Teresa Jiménez-Becerril Barrio and Rosa Estaràs Ferragut, on behalf of the PPE Group, Iratxe García Pérez and Soraya Post, on behalf of the S&D Group, Malin Björk, on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group, Arne Gericke, on behalf of the ECR Group, Terry Reintke and Ernest Urtasun Domènech, on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group, Angelika Mlinar, Izaskun Bilbao Barandica and Hilde Vautmans, on behalf of the ALDE Group, to the Commission: Situation of women human rights defenders and their support by the EU (2017/2531(RSP)) (B8-0003/2018).

Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz, autorka. – Kobiety obrończynie praw człowieka, szczególnie te działające w odległych, biedniejszych, rozwijających się rejonach świata doświadczają licznych przeszkód w swojej pracy. Kwestionuje się ich pozycję i legitymację do podejmowania aktywności w dziedzinie praw człowieka. Umniejsza się znaczenie ich pracy, ich stanowisk i ich samych. Bywają atakowane nie tylko słownie, ale i fizycznie. Atakuje się nawet członków ich rodzin i ich dzieci. Ich działalność postrzega się jako wymierzoną w rodzinę i w religię. Czasami są oskarżane o szpiegostwo na rzecz Zachodu. Mimo oficjalnie zajmowanych stanowisk obrończynie praw człowieka doświadczają braku zaufania, także od przedstawicieli władz państwowych. Nie zawsze mogą liczyć na ochronę policji, ochronę ze strony państwa. Przeciwnie – ponieważ ich działalność bywa postrzegana jako antysystemowa, a więc wroga państwu, nawet z tej strony może przyjąć atak.

Powinniśmy dostrzec trudną rolę obrończyni praw człowieka i zrozumieć skalę i rodzaj trudności, jakie napotykają na swej drodze w zabieganiu o prawa człowieka, w tym prawa kobiet, i zrozumieć, że część tych trudności wynika z faktu, że są kobietami. Wspieranie obrońców praw człowieka od dawna jest elementem, jednym z priorytetów, polityki zewnętrznej Unii Europejskiej. Jest to potrzebne szczególnie dziś, gdy – co przedstawialiśmy w wielu sprawozdaniach oraz przed chwilą w debacie – kurczy się przestrzeń, w jakiej może działać społeczeństwo obywatelskie, przestrzeń wolności i pluralizmu, wyznawanych wartości i religii.

Chciałabym zapytać, jakie mechanizmy i praktyki stosuje Komisja Europejska, aby wesprzeć obrończynie praw człowieka, oraz jaką rolę odgrywają w tym delegatury Unii Europejskiej? Co robi Komisja, aby wzmocnić pozycję kobiet obrońców praw człowieka oraz zwiększyć wartość i uznanie ich stanowisk? I na koniec, czy w tych działaniach ukierunkowanych na wsparcie kobiet obrońców praw człowieka dostatecznie uwzględnia się lokalny kontekst kulturowy?

Liliana Rodrigues, Autora. – Senhor Presidente, Senhora Comissária, em 2016, pelo menos 281 ativistas foram mortos. Outros tantos estão dados como desaparecidos. São crescentes os riscos que enfrentam os ativistas e o espaço para os defensores dos direitos humanos exercerem as suas atividades tem vindo a diminuir no mundo inteiro.

A liberdade no mundo atingiu em 2017 o pior nível em 12 anos. Sabemos que a liberdade e a democracia estão de facto sob ameaça. Mais perigoso é o ativismo quando é praticado por mulheres. As mulheres que se dedicam a defender os outros enfrentam problemas acrescidos. Existem ativistas que foram detidas ilegalmente, ativistas que são violadas, difamadas, atacadas inclusive com ácido, mulheres de causas que veem os seus filhos, familiares e amigos ameaçados.

A União Europeia tem uma política para a igualdade de género e para a defesa dos direitos humanos nas suas relações externas. As suas delegações desenvolvem atividades e financiamos programas precisamente com esse objetivo. Quantas mulheres defensoras dos direitos humanos são apoiadas pela União Europeia? Que avaliação de dados cruzados existe sobre o impacto que estas medidas têm nos países que recebem financiamento europeu? Qual a correspondência entre os compromissos assumidos pela União Europeia no que respeita ao apoio aos defensores de direitos humanos e o que se passa realmente no terreno? Há resultados concretos? Que mecanismos existem de monitorização e de avaliação e que estão a ser usados para garantir que são cumpridos todos estes objetivos?

Como estamos a garantir que todas as delegações cumprem efetivamente as diretrizes nesta matéria? Quem é que protege aqueles que se dedicam a proteger os outros? Mais, como é que os vamos proteger?

Arne Gericke, Verfasser. – Herr Präsident, werte Frau Kommissarin Jourová! Jede Person hat das Recht auf Gedanken-, Gewissens- und Religionsfreiheit. Sie hat die Freiheit, ihre Religion oder Weltanschauung einzeln oder gemeinsam mit anderen öffentlich oder privat durch Gottesdienst, Unterricht, Bräuche und Riten zu bekennen.

So steht es in Artikel 10 der EU-Grundrechtecharta.

Ich möchte den Fokus nun genau auf diese wunden Punkte legen, auf viele Menschenrechtlerinnen weltweit, die für das Grundrecht der Religionsfreiheit eintreten und dafür verfolgt werden: Missionarinnen, Nonnen und Ordensfrauen, Frauen von Priestern, Gläubige. Sie alle kämpfen millionenfach und weltweit für Religionsfreiheit und das Recht, den Glauben zu leben.

Ich möchte Sie fragen, Frau Kommissarin: Haben wir auch diese Frauen, die verfolgten Christinnen, übrigens gerade im Monatsschwerpunkt des kirchlichen Hilfswerks *Open Doors*, im Blick, wenn wir heute über Menschenrechtlerinnen sprechen? Ich finde, wir sollten es im Blick haben, gerade auch, weil ihre Zahl so erschreckend hoch ist. 200 Millionen Christen werden weltweit verfolgt, weil sie für das Menschenrecht auf Glaube kämpfen. Mehr als die Hälfte von ihnen sind Frauen. Behalten wir sie im Blick, wenn wir heute von mehr Unterstützung für Menschenrechtlerinnen sprechen.

Ángela Vallina, autora. – Señor presidente, aquí le traigo algunos de los casos de mujeres a las que quiero homenajear: Berta Cáceres, líder indígena asesinada en Honduras en marzo de 2016; Aminatu Haidar, activista prosaharawi que estuvo treinta y dos días en huelga de hambre; Ahed Tamimi, símbolo de la resistencia palestina, nuevamente detenida por Israel; y Milagro Sala, activista argentina detenida arbitrariamente por motivos políticos. Mujeres. Ejemplos de lucha de cientos de mujeres en todo el mundo que están al pie de conflictos y que, además de ser asesinadas, torturadas, vejadas e incluso violadas, suelen estar invisibilizadas.

La Comisión, el Servicio Europeo de Acción de Exterior y los Estados tienen una obligación que emana de los Tratados, señora comisaria. Esa obligación es la que ha de llevar a la Unión Europea a reforzar su papel como promotora de los derechos humanos en el mundo, protegiendo a los defensores de los derechos humanos, especialmente a las mujeres, pero no a cualquier precio.

Financiar a los y a las defensoras de los derechos humanos no significa utilizar esos fondos como una herramienta más para derrocar gobiernos no alineados con los intereses comerciales de esta Unión. Lo hemos visto también aquí en numerosas resoluciones contra países a los que se les imponía sanciones mientras otros han sido ignorados y dejados fuera de la agenda política.

Por ello, le pregunto qué están haciendo ustedes para proteger a todas y a todos los activistas de derechos humanos y, más importante aún, comisaria, ¿qué criterios hay para financiar a las ONG y a los activistas? ¿Cómo se movilizan esos fondos? En relación con los 1 300 millones de euros destinados al Instrumento Europeo para la Democracia y los Derechos Humanos, ¿quiénes son los receptores de esas ayudas?

Necesitamos una política exterior que promueva los derechos humanos y ser líderes mundiales. Pero aquí, más que nunca, necesitamos transparencia, cifras, datos y saber qué se está haciendo y si se está haciendo según criterios justos y no oportunistas.

Ernest Urtasun, autor. – Señor presidente, señora comisaria, en todo el mundo vemos un preocupante crecimiento de la violencia y represión política contra defensores de los derechos humanos, activistas y organizaciones de la sociedad civil. Y la situación es aún más preocupante cuando hablamos de mujeres defensoras de los derechos humanos, ya que, además, deben hacer frente a múltiples riesgos añadidos por el hecho de ser mujeres: deben enfrentarse a violaciones, violencia sexual, campañas de difamación y calumnias, ataques con ácido, amenazas y daños a sus familias.

Lolita Chávez, finalista al Premio Sájarov de este Parlamento, lleva años enfrentándose a esta discriminación y violencia. La semana pasada nos llegaron noticias sobre la posible emisión de una orden de arresto contra Lolita por parte de la fiscalía guatemalteca. Creo que hoy es un día para pedir que las instituciones europeas sean firmes con Guatemala acerca de la necesidad de proteger y defender a Lolita.

Me gustaría también recordar, por ejemplo, a luchadoras como Berta Cáceres, asesinada en la madrugada del 3 de marzo del año 2016. Creo que un caso como el de Berta deja claras las limitaciones de las estrategias existentes de protección de activistas y sus organizaciones y la urgencia de repensar nuestro enfoque como instituciones europeas para una mejor protección frente a los riesgos y la violencia que afrontan miles de mujeres que trabajan a favor de la justicia y la igualdad.

Por ello, me gustaría señalar que las orientaciones de la Unión Europea en esta materia reconocen la importancia de aplicar la perspectiva de género en este tema, pero, sin embargo, no tenemos datos sobre cómo los desafíos específicos a los que se enfrentan las mujeres defensoras se tienen en cuenta a la hora de realizar, por ejemplo, la programación de los diferentes fondos disponibles.

Por ello, nos gustaría hoy que la señora comisaria nos pudiera aclarar cómo se tienen en cuenta estas necesidades específicas de las defensoras, tanto en el ámbito de la actuación del Servicio Europeo de Acción Exterior como en el ámbito de la utilización de esos fondos.

Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, autora. – Señor presidente, comisaria, quiero poner también cara y ojos a esta iniciativa como lo han hecho mis compañeros. Y en este caso, son los de Lolita Chávez, amenazada de muerte en Guatemala, perseguida y con una nueva orden de detención, procesada por defender las comunidades indígenas y su medio natural en Guatemala.

Fundadora del Consejo de Pueblos K'iche', se acogió a un programa de protección temporal de defensores de los derechos humanos del Gobierno vasco, y se convirtió, durante los ocho meses que residió en Euskadi, en un referente y una inspiración, al extremo de ser finalista del Premio Sájarov.

Hace unas semanas, ha recibido en el País Vasco el Premio Ignacio Ellacuría a la cooperación. Antes de partir Lolita recordaba que, sin el apoyo recibido, ahora estaría bajo tierra. «No he nacido para ser asesinada, he nacido para seguir viva y llamo a todos los pueblos a tejer lazos de solidaridad recíproca». Este mensaje, primero, certifica que este tipo de programas de protección es útil, que aporta, que resuelve, pero, además, nos interpela porque nos anima a organizar mejor, a coordinarnos y aportar más medios a la solidaridad que debemos a quienes se juegan la vida en todo el mundo para defender los derechos fundamentales.

Cuando, además, son mujeres, cuando superan estereotipos y patrones culturales para pasar a primer plano y convertirse en líderes de una comunidad, tenemos una triple obligación porque corren más riesgos, porque lo tienen más difícil y porque en muchos países las mujeres son la gran esperanza.

Ese es el sentido de las preguntas que presentamos hoy, señora comisaria. ¿Qué seríamos capaces de hacer si coordinamos todas las voluntades y recursos disponibles, si los sumamos, si somos capaces de generar una sinergia que haga mucho más eficaces los esfuerzos de hoy? ¿Cree usted que se generarían nuevas iniciativas y programas más completos? ¿Somos conscientes de la especial situación de las mujeres y la doble dificultad que afrontan para poder liderar estos movimientos pro derechos humanos?

Hay mucho conocimiento disponible, muchas voluntades que sumar, y un buen tema para que la Unión profundice en su vocación de agente de paz y defensora de las libertades en el mundo.

Věra Jourová, *Member of the Commission, on behalf of the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.* – Mr President, support for women defenders of human rights is a priority for our external action on human rights. Human rights defenders, both men and women, are our natural and indispensable allies in the promotion of human rights and democracy. We know that many of them are constantly risking their life and their freedom, but women defenders are suffering very specific threats and obstacles on account of their gender as much as their fight for human rights.

Yet women defenders play an increasingly prominent role in many partner countries. They are, of course, particularly active in advocating for progress on gender equality. However, it is important to recall that women defenders are not working exclusively on gender equality. They also make an essential contribution in promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.

Women defenders are targeted, in particular, when they challenge traditional patterns and perceptions of gender roles and other social stereotypes. We have seen attacks against women defenders working on sexual and reproductive health and rights, promoting gender equality in schools or advocating for the rights of women victims of sexual and gender-based violence, including domestic violence, and the most harmful practices. Our external action has always focused strongly on the protection of women's rights and of women defenders.

Let me just mention, inter alia, the Foreign Affairs Council conclusions of June 2014. They clearly identify women defenders of human rights as a priority and confirm the EU's commitment to improving its support. The commitment is turning into practice on a daily basis and, in recent times, we have stepped up our engagement in order to react to growing threats against women defenders. I would like to mention, in particular, our mechanism to protect defenders. This is a unique mechanism that can be used to provide targeted assistance to human rights defenders. In 2017, more than 200 women defenders were supported by this mechanism. Our support measures include not only funding to cover attorney fees and physical protection but also, in the most serious cases, temporary relocation to a safer destination.

Another example of such targeted financial support is the Emergency Grants Fund for human rights defenders at risk, provided by the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights.

Our contacts with human rights defenders on the ground have also become more constant. The embassies of EU Member States and EU delegations are at the forefront of this work. Staff in EU delegations around the world regularly meet with women defenders and consult with them both on human rights and on the conditions of their daily work. Furthermore, our bilateral dialogues with partner countries are a powerful tool for raising women's rights issues and for exchanges on individual cases involving women defenders of human rights.

The EU strongly encourages governments to engage with women defenders and ensure their active, free and meaningful participation. Gender equality and women's empowerment, including support for women defenders, are identified among the main priorities in the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy. The plan recognises and supports the critical role of human rights defenders and women's organisations in relation to achieving fair and inclusive societies. When women, including young women, are empowered the benefits are perceived by their entire community. When they have access to good education and good jobs, social and economic inequality is easier to overcome. When women are recognised as full and equal citizens the whole society is more stable and democracies get stronger.

Our work for women and women defenders is for them and it is for all of us, women and men alike.

Michaela Šojdrová, za skupinu PPE. – Pane předsedající, paní komisařko, pokud jde o obhájce lidských práv, pak naši podporu si zaslouží muži i ženy. Rozdíl v pohlaví není žádný, pokud se týká jejich statečnosti, úsilí nebo utrpení, kterým jsou často vystaveni.

O ženách hájících lidská práva chci hovořit proto, že jsou přirozeně fyzicky i psychicky zranitelnější. A jsou také citlivější k některým tématům. Ne náhodou známe první pákistánskou nositelku Nobelovy ceny, kterou byla v roce 2014 mladá Malála, která málem přišla o život, když hájila ve svých patnácti letech právo dívek na vzdělávání. Ve vzdělávání viděla možnost obrany proti radikálním myšlenkám. V roce 2013 jí právě Evropský parlament ocenil Sacharovovou cenou.

I když ženy-aktivistky a bojovnice za lidská práva nemusíme hledat jen ve třetích zemích, přece jen jde o mnohem vážnější problémy, které ženy mimo EU řeší. Jako úspěšný příklad jejich boje bych uvedla Saudskou Arábii. Díky snahám žen zde dochází ke zmírnění zákonů, například v opatrovnictví. Ženy, když jdou na návštěvu k lékaři, už nemusí žádat o doprovod svého manžela a mužský souhlas. Dokonce od letošního června budou moci ženy samy řídit. Vybojovaly si to samy. Za nezbytnou vnímám výzvu směrem k občanské společnosti. Ta může být v této problematice nápomocna také při sledování a při podpoře konkrétních příkladů obhájců lidských práv.

Pane předsedající, dovoluji mi ještě zmínit jednu obhájkyni lidských práv, kterou nesmíme vynechat, a tou je Matka Tereza. Ta o lidských právech nemluvila, ale obětovala jim celý svůj život.

Pina Picierno, a nome del gruppo S&D. – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, quando si difendono i diritti umani lo si fa, è stato detto, sempre in condizioni molto rischiose. Quando lo fanno delle donne, per il semplice fatto di essere donna, come è stato detto, questo fatto aumenta notevolmente il fattore di rischio.

Allora le istituzioni, la politica europea, devono continuare ad aumentare il sostegno che già danno, è stato detto, nell'ambito della politica esterna in tema di diritti umani, in particolare ora, perché ora noi stiamo per negoziare il nuovo Quadro finanziario pluriennale.

Ma io penso che sia necessario ancora di più prestare la massima attenzione quando si parla di donne, come stiamo dicendo, perché le donne continuano a subire delle minacce ulteriori, continuano a subire ulteriori umiliazioni per arrivare addirittura ad attacchi fisici, a stupri, proprio perché simboleggiano, se ci pensate per un attimo, tutto quello che i dittatori oppressori non vogliono.

Rappresentano l'indipendenza, la libertà, l'autonomia, e queste donne si trovano per davvero in ogni angolo del nostro pianeta. Dal Guatemala, dove pochi giorni fa è stata arrestata Maria Magdalena Cuc Choc, fino al Messico, dove Graciela Rodríguez si occupa di cercare persone scomparse, fino ad arrivare in Asia, in Africa e perfino in Europa. Insomma, colleghi, Commissari, noi possiamo e dobbiamo fare di più per proteggere queste donne e per proteggere gli attivisti per i diritti umani.

Νότης Μαρίας, *εξ ονόματος της ομάδας ECR*. – Κύριε Πρόεδρε, το Ευρωπαϊκό Κοινοβούλιο δίνει πραγματικό αγώνα για να υποστηρίξει τους ακτιβιστές· όσους υπερασπίζονται τα ανθρώπινα δικαιώματα σε όλο τον κόσμο. Έχουμε συζητήσει πολλές φορές αυτά τα ζητήματα και έχουμε εκδώσει ψηφίσματα. Από εκεί και πέρα, είναι προφανές ότι πρέπει οι γυναίκες που αγωνίζονται για τα ανθρώπινα δικαιώματα να έχουν την υποστήριξη της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης, ακριβώς επειδή είναι πολύ πιο ευάλωτες. Πρώτα απ' όλα, τα στερεότυπα στην ίδια την οικογένεια πολλές φορές δεν επιτρέπουν στις γυναίκες να αναδείξουν τον ηγετικό τους ρόλο. Ταυτόχρονα, έχουμε επιθέσεις κατά των γυναικών που αγωνίζονται για τα ανθρώπινα δικαιώματα, βιασμούς και δυσφήμιση σεξουαλικού περιεχομένου. Επίσης, σε ορισμένες θρησκείες, ιδίως στις μουσουλμανικές χώρες, οι γυναίκες έχουν πολύ περιορισμένα δικαιώματα. Άρα, λοιπόν, χρειαζόμαστε πραγματικά σημαντικές πολιτικές για να στηρίξουμε τις γυναίκες που αγωνίζονται για τα ανθρώπινα δικαιώματα.

Eleonora Forenza, *a nome del gruppo GUE/NGL*. – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, voglio innanzitutto ringraziare i colleghi per questa interrogazione orale di cui sentivo la necessità e penso che sia utile che il Parlamento discuta. Personalmente mi sono impegnata sul tema del riconoscimento dei diritti delle donne come diritti umani nelle relazioni in cui sono stata relatrice, nella relazione sui diritti umani come diritti delle donne nei trattati di commercio e anche dei diritti delle donne nel commercio internazionale.

Penso che la discussione che stiamo facendo oggi manchi di un pezzo importante, che è la negazione dei diritti umani e dei diritti delle donne, la prigionia a cui sono costrette tantissime attiviste, quello che sta accadendo ad Afrin: la negazione dei diritti umani sostenuti da tante attiviste da parte del regime di Erdogan. Credo che l'Unione europea su questo dovrebbe fare di più.

Csaba Sógor (PPE). – Elnök Úr, az Unió külső emberi jogi politikája sok emberjogi védőnek jelent támaszt. Mindannyian tudjuk, hogy milyen kihívásokkal néz szembe egyes országokban az, aki az emberi jogok védelmének érdekében, adott esetben a hatósági túlkapasok ellen lép fel. Vannak olyan országok, ahol a jogvédők az életükkel játszanak akkor, amikor feltárják a jogsértéseket és védelmet biztosítanak az áldozatoknak. Mindezen tevékenység hatványozottabban veszélyessé válik, amikor maguk a jogvédők is egy társadalmilag sérülékeny csoportból származnak és sajnos a női nemhez való tartozás is ilyen sérülékenységet jelent egyes helyeken. Másrészt éppen a női emberijogvédők azok, akik a legnagyobb elszántsággal és beleéléssel állnak ki az elesettekért és az emberi jogaikban sérült személyekért vagy csoportokért, ezért az ő munkájuk ellehetetlenítése sok esetben teljes szervezetek lebénulását eredményezheti. A jogvédők tevékenységének ellenzői számára a női emberijogvédőkkel szembeni egyik legkönnyebb támadási felület éppen a nőkkel kapcsolatos társadalmi előítéletek kihasználása. Ez sok országban valós problémaként jelentkezik, és komoly válaszokat igényel a jogvédő tevékenységet támogató nemzetközi szervezetek részéről.

Inés Ayala Sender (S&D). – Señor presidente, señora comisaria, necesitamos que la Unión Europea sea defensora de las defensoras. Y hace tiempo ya que vemos con enorme preocupación cómo también las ONG defensoras de los derechos humanos empiezan a ser señaladas como sospechosas, tanto aquí, en la lucha para evitar más muertos en el mar Mediterráneo, como en América Latina o en otras regiones y territorios, donde, además, las mujeres defensoras que las integran y que son el componente más débil también necesitan nuestro apoyo de una manera cada vez más visible, más fuerte y más evidente, puesto que son las que, como líderes de sus comunidades, trabajan día a día a favor de sus desaparecidos, de las familias, luchan contra la violencia contra ellas y sus hijos, en la defensa también de sus comunidades, del entorno y de los recursos naturales. Y es, por lo tanto, cada vez más urgente poder asegurarles la seguridad en su tarea, puesto que es fundamental para nuestra democracia, para la democracia en general y para los derechos humanos. También para la paz y la estabilidad por las que tanto trabajamos.

Y querría nombrar a Amal Habani, a Nahid Yabralá, en Sudán, a Atena Daemi, a Golrockh Irae y a Mansura Behkish, de Irán, que también están sufriendo abusos y situaciones muy peligrosas en las cárceles. Pero también a Maru Villalpando, en los Estados Unidos, que defiende a los migrantes, y a Helena Maleno, que en el sur de España también defiende a los migrantes y, además, está ahora mismo ante los tribunales marroquíes porque el Gobierno de España no ha comunicado el cierre de su caso. Es necesario, pues, ayudarlas cuanto antes, señora comisaria.

Lola Sánchez Caldentey (GUE/NGL). – Señor presidente, Berta Cáceres, Helena Maleno o la finalista del Premio Sájarov Lolita Chávez son solo tres ejemplos de mujeres valientes que dieron un paso al frente en defensa de algo tan fundamental como los derechos humanos.

Defender los derechos humanos es un derecho, pero además es un derecho que al ejercerlo evidencia el actual e injusto orden global en el que la dignidad de las personas y de los pueblos vale mucho menos que el beneficio empresarial. A Berta, como a otras tantas mujeres, denunciar este abuso le costó la vida. A Lolita le cuesta al exilio y la separación familiar.

Las mujeres defensoras se enfrentan a una doble amenaza. Se enfrentan a los poderes corporativos, a gobiernos y sistemas judiciales corruptos, a medios de comunicación parciales y un largo etcétera. Pero, además, por el hecho de ser mujeres, combaten la violenta brecha de desigualdad que todas sufrimos.

Las defensoras representan lo que más temen las élites. Ellas son el símbolo de la vida y los cuidados frente a la destrucción, contra la que luchan. Por esos son atacadas, silenciadas, asesinadas. En el 70.º aniversario de la Declaración Universal de Derechos Humanos, la Unión debería tener claro quiénes son las heroínas de nuestro tiempo y protegerlas, no solo en el papel, sino con programas específicos. Muchas gracias a todas.

Julie Ward (S&D). – Mr President, women human rights defenders face gender-specific threats and obstacles and need to be protected accordingly. The multiplication of feminicides against women human rights defenders in the last few years has been a devastating example of the need for safety measures to protect them. In Iran, the women human rights defender Atena Daemi has been in prison for years for her work on women and children's rights. On 24 January, she and her colleague Golrokh Iraee were beaten in prison and transferred. They are now on hunger strike to protest their treatment. The woman's right defender Mansoureh Behkish could spend 11.5 years in prison for her work with mothers of imprisoned or executed people. After years of harassment and imprisonment, she now faces a heavier sentence. So the EU and all Member States must push for all these women to be set free. And one last word about taking into account the obstacles faced by trans and queer human rights defenders: they often face the same threats as women, but they are not visible in our policies or our discourse, and their safety in general is an issue that is not addressed.

President. – Before proceeding with catch-the-eye, I must say that I am glad to chair the session on this item, although I regret that I could not be in the Chamber – and, indeed, take the floor – because I think that the defence of human rights among women is something special, as it is so very difficult. Also, as Vice-President responsible for human rights, I would love to speak on the item and pay tribute not just to those whose names have been mentioned but also to many, many others.

Catch-the-eye procedure

Caterina Chinnici (S&D). – Signor Presidente, onorevoli colleghi, signora Commissario, come i colleghi che mi hanno preceduto, esprimo la mia profonda preoccupazione riguardo al crescente numero di attacchi ai danni di esponenti di organizzazioni in difesa dei diritti umani in tutto il mondo, indirizzati in particolare contro le donne, le attiviste che lottano contro gli stereotipi di genere, sfidando talvolta norme sociali e valori patriarcali per difendere i diritti e la democrazia, e per questo affrontano discriminazioni e atti intimidatori e minacce di genere davvero incredibili, quali stupri, attacchi con l'acido, violenze ai danni dei figli o campagne diffamatorie a sfondo sessuale.

Spesso queste donne sono vittime di vere e proprie campagne denigratorie, come ad esempio in Salvador dove delle attiviste per i diritti riproduttivi sono state accusate dalla stampa di essere traditrici antipatriottiche che gettano discredito sul paese. È necessario quindi che la Commissione europea, nel contesto della revisione dello strumento europeo per la democrazia e i diritti umani, investa impegno e risorse per sostenere le donne che lottano per la difesa dei diritti umani in tutto il mondo.

(End of catch-the-eye procedure)

Věra Jourová, Member of the Commission, on behalf of the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. – Mr President, this has been a very useful exchange, and I thank the honourable Members for their interventions. From this debate, I conclude that we all recognise the vital importance of women human rights defenders and share common commitments to help protect them and promote their work.

We are living in extremely difficult times for civil society and human rights defenders all around the world. We are collectively facing a situation where the space for civil society is shrinking. However, let me be clear that the European Union will never leave human rights defenders alone, and we will continue to work together with you and civil society to defend human rights defenders around the world.

May I close by signalling once again my appreciation of Parliament's role in keeping this important issue on the agenda.

President. – Commissioner, thank you for staying with us until this late hour.

The debate is closed.

Written statements (Rule 162)

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D), raštu. – Vis dar yra nemažai šalių įvairiuose pasaulio regionuose, kur moterys, aktyviai dalyvaujančios pilietinėje ar politinėje veikloje bei aktyviai ginančios žmogaus teises, sulaukia diskriminavimo, grasinimų ar net patiria prievartą. Viena tokių šalių – Lietuvos ir ES kaimynystėje esanti Baltarusija, kurioje socialiai ir politiškai aktyvios moterys, savo veikla bei patirtimi prisidedančios prie demokratinės visuomenės Baltarusijoje kūrimo, patiria persekiojimą ar represijas. Maža to, Baltarusijos valdžia taiko skirtingas represines priemones moterims, ginančioms žmogaus teises, nei vyrams. Vyrai, ginantys žmogaus teises, paprastai nubaudžiami pinigine bauda arba yra įkalinami. O tuo tarpu moterys, ginančios žmogaus teises, gali susidurti su visa įvairove represinių priemonių, tarp kurių – uždarymas į psichikos sveikatos gydymą, motinystės teisių atėmimas, atleidimas iš darbo, orumo pažeminimas, priverstinis skyrybos ar turto areštas. Jos patiria pačius įvairiausių persekiojimo būdus, kurių visų tikslas – pažeminti moteris ir sunaikinti jų asmenybes. Taigi, situacija yra labai sudėtinga ir palaikau raginimą Komisijai pradėti atsižvelgti į lyties aspektą dirbant su žmogaus teisių gynėjais pasaulyje, nes, kaip matome iš konkrečios šalies konkrečių pavyzdžių, parama turi būti tikslinė ir turi būti numatyta apsauga ypatingai rizikingoms grupėms, tokioms kaip moterys. Dabar yra labai tinkamas metas kelti šį klausimą ir tikiuosi, Komisija skirs prioritetinį dėmesį žmogaus teisių gynėjų, ypatingai moterų, ginančių žmogaus teises, veiklos tinkamo finansavimo nustatymui.

Nessa Childers (S&D), in writing. – In 2015, Oxfam recorded that at least 31 women activists were murdered because they were standing up for human rights. Women's rights defenders not only face violence from state actors, but also from within their own movements, their communities and members of their own families. This is because women defenders are defying what it means to be a woman in society, simply by stepping into the public space. Even though, in theory, the EU guidelines on this issue refer to gender perspectives, it is deeply disappointing that the European Commission is still not providing any information as to whether it consults women human rights defenders, and therefore whether they take into account the gender factors to any great extent and whether they are addressing any gender specific needs. At the moment, the majority of funding programmes put in place to support human rights defenders are not aimed specifically at supporting women human rights defenders. We need to make sure this changes.

Agnes Jongerius (S&D), schriftelijk. –Als ik het Parlement binnenloop om te stemmen, realiseer ik mij dat ik hier mijn democratisch recht kan uitoefenen dankzij Aletta Jacobs, Emmeline Pankhurst en anderen. Dankzij hun strijd sta ik hier. Deze week heeft het Verenigd Koninkrijk 100 jaar vrouwenkiesrecht, volgend jaar is Nederland aan de beurt. Vrouwenkiesrecht ging niet over één nacht ijs. Zo werden getrouwde Nederlandse vrouwen pas in 1956 handelingsbekwaam en bracht de EU in 1980 de wet gelijke behandeling van mannen en vrouwen naar Nederland. In dit Parlement is nog steeds maar één derde van de parlementariërs vrouw. De strijd gaat onverminderd door! Denk aan de vrouwen van de Womens March. Denk aan She Decides, een door mijn partijgenoot Ploumen geïnitieerde campagne voor veilige abortussen, voorlichting en kraamzorg in arme landen. Denk aan alle vrouwen die elke dag opstaan en roepen: "ik ben trots op mezelf, ik kan de hele wereld aan!" Tegen hen zeg ik: "you're on top of your game! Keep fighting!"

We moeten onze steun uitspreken voor de strijd voor vrouwenrechten binnen de EU. Mede daarom roep ik vrouwen in Nederland op om op 21 maart te gaan stemmen. Zoals Emmeline Pankhurst zou zeggen: "Deeds, not words".

Karol Karski (ECR), *na piśmie*. – W Europie przyjmujemy prawa człowieka za coś oczywistego. Cieszymy się szerokim wachlarzem gwarantowanych prawnie swobód, co dotyczy także kobiet (nawiasem mówiąc muszę zaznaczyć, że tak często krytykowana tu Polska, również za rzekome łamanie praw kobiet, została w najnowszym badaniu New World Wealth uznana za szósty najbezpieczniejszy dla kobiet kraj na świecie). Niestety w wielu miejscach sytuacja kobiet jest znacznie gorsza; ich prawom się zaprzecza, uznaje się je za osoby drugiej kategorii. Choćby dziś Parlament Europejski zdecydowanie potępił jeden z przejawów takiego podejścia, czyli obrzezanie kobiecych narządów płciowych. Jednakże nawet w tych krajach, w których sytuacja kobiet jest zła, znajdują się zawsze odważni obrońcy praw kobiet, którymi często są one same. Ich los nie jest godny pozazdroszczenia – zmagają się z krzywdzącymi stereotypami, niezrozumieniem ze strony władz i dużej części populacji, a często są wprost zastraszane, bite i poniżane. Im samym oraz ich rodzinom grozi często fizyczne niebezpieczeństwo, łącznie z zagrożeniem życia. Dobrze, że Unia Europejska pracuje nad uwrażliwieniem swojej dyplomacji na potrzeby tych dzielnych kobiet, które potrzebują naszego wsparcia. Zdecydowanie popieram takie podejście i proszę wysoką przedstawiciel ds. polityki zagranicznej o zapewnienie, że wszystkie delegatury UE będą stosowały się do tego podejścia niezależnie od miejsca, w którym operują.

20. Akty delegowane (art. 105 ust. 6 Regulaminu): Patrz protokół

21. Środki wykonawcze (art. 106 Regulaminu): Patrz protokół

22. Składanie dokumentów: patrz protokół

23. Przesunięcie środków: patrz protokół

24. Porządek obrad następnego posiedzenia: Patrz protokół

25. Zamknięcie posiedzenia

(The sitting closed at 22.16)

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Skróty i symbole

*	Procedura konsultacji
***	Procedura zgody
***I	Zwykła procedura ustawodawcza, pierwsze czytanie
***II	Zwykła procedura ustawodawcza, drugie czytanie
***III	Zwykła procedura ustawodawcza, trzecie czytanie

(Typ procedury zależy od podstawy prawnej zaproponowanej w danym projekcie aktu.)

Rozwinięcia skrótów nazw komisji parlamentarnych

AFET	Komisja Spraw Zagranicznych
DEVE	Komisja Rozwoju
INTA	Komisja Handlu Międzynarodowego
BUDG	Komisja Budżetowa
CONT	Komisja Kontroli Budżetowej
ECON	Komisja Gospodarcza i Monetarna
EMPL	Komisja Zatrudnienia i Spraw Socjalnych
ENVI	Komisja Środowiska Naturalnego, Zdrowia Publicznego i Bezpieczeństwa Żywności
ITRE	Komisja Przemysłu, Badań Naukowych i Energii
IMCO	Komisja Rynku Wewnętrznego i Ochrony Konsumentów
TRAN	Komisja Transportu i Turystyki
REGI	Komisja Rozwoju Regionalnego
AGRI	Komisja Rolnictwa i Obszarów Wiejskich
PECH	Komisja Rybołówstwa
CULT	Komisja Kultury i Edukacji
JURI	Komisja Prawna
LIBE	Komisja Wolności Obywatelskich, Sprawiedliwości i Spraw Wewnętrznych
AFCO	Komisja Spraw Konstytucyjnych
FEMM	Komisja Praw Kobiet i Równych Szans
PETI	Komisja Petycji
DROI	Podkomisja Praw Człowieka
SEDE	Podkomisja Bezpieczeństwa i Obrony

Rozwinięcia skrótów nazw grup politycznych

PPE	Grupa Europejskiej Partii Ludowej (Chrześcijańscy Demokraci)
S&D	Grupa Postępowego Sojuszu Socjalistów i Demokratów w Parlamencie Europejskim
ECR	Grupa Europejskich Konserwatystów i Reformatorów
ALDE	Grupa Porozumienia Liberalistów i Demokratów na rzecz Europy
GUE/NGL	Konfederacyjna Grupa Zjednoczonej Lewicy Europejskiej/Nordycka Zielona Lewica
Verts/ALE	Grupa Zielonych/Wolne Przymierze Europejskie
EFDD	Europa Wolności i Demokracji Bezpośredniej
ENF	Grupa Europa Narodów i Wolności
NI	Niezrzeszeni