

TUESDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER 2014

BRUSSELS

THE COMMITTEE ON THE CIVIL LIBERTIES, JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

HEARING OF DIMITRIS AVRAMOPOULOS

COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE

(Migrations and Home Affairs)

IN THE CHAIR: CLAUDE MORAES
Chair of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

(The hearing opened at 13.30)

Chair. > I am very glad to welcome Commissioner-designate Dimitris Avramopoulos to this hearing by the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE). Later this week, this committee will question Commissioner-designate Jourová on justice questions, and Vice-President-designate Timmermans on fundamental rights and the rule of law, but today we question Commissioner-designate Avramopoulos on the central questions of migration and home affairs. He will be the first Commissioner to have ‘migration’ as part of his title and I think every member of our committee is aware of the importance of this central issue.

According to Annex 16 of the Rules of Procedure which contain the guidelines for the approval of the Commission, Parliament shall evaluate Commissioners-designate on the basis of their general competence, European commitment and personal independence. It shall assess their knowledge of their prospective portfolio and their communication skills. I want to remind you that Parliament submitted a preparatory questionnaire to the Commissioner-designate, with two common questions drafted by the Conference of Presidents and three specific questions prepared by the Civil Liberties Committee. The Commissioner-designate has replied in writing to the questionnaire and the answers have been distributed to Members in all languages.

The debate will be structured as follows, and please listen carefully: the Commissioner-designate is invited to make an opening oral statement of no longer than 15 minutes; after the introduction, there will be time for 45 questions and answers from Members; each slot will be of three minutes – one minute for the question and two minutes for the answer. The first round of questions will be asked by representatives of political groups. At the end of the hearing the Commissioner-designate will have five minutes for a closing statement.

Please be aware that I will be strict in ensuring that speaking time is respected. Obviously, if it is not respected the final speakers will have no time to ask their questions so I will cut speakers off.

Interpretation will be provided in 23 languages, therefore you can use your own language. Please keep in mind that interpretation has been provided so please speak carefully and slowly. The debate will be streamed live on Parliament’s website and it will also be possible to access a video recording of the hearing on the same site.

I now have great pleasure in giving the floor to our Commissioner-designate Mr Avramopoulos for his presentation.

Dimitris Avramopoulos, Commissioner-designate. > Chairman, honourable Members of the European Parliament, the Charter of Fundamental Rights reminds us that the Union is founded on the indivisible, universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity. It is based on the principles of democracy and, of course, the rule of law. It places the individual at the heart of its activities, by establishing the citizenship of the Union and by creating a wide area of freedom, security and justice. More than anything else, this Charter describes what Europe is all about, and it defines the mission that we have in front of us in Migration and Home Affairs.

The reality that we face in this field is challenging, and to a large extent our shared responsibility will test the pace of European integration and the legitimacy of the European promise.

What is the reality today? An exploding geopolitical environment. A new terrorist threat that has declared its intention to hurt our societies. A European economy struggling to recover from the crisis. An ageing continent in a demographically young world. Ghettos inside our cities that increasingly seek refuge to extremist causes. Sophisticated forms of crime that know no borders. And a continuous humanitarian disaster in our borders, that is in painful contrast to our shared moral, cultural and political heritage. And we face as well the growing dissatisfaction of European citizens.

Let me be clear from the beginning: the answer to these challenges is definitely not Fortress Europe. History has proven that fortresses built for protection from external threats became in the end fortresses that enslaved those who intended to protect and led finally to isolationism. This direction is not a part of our mandate. Europe can only prosper so long as it energetically facilitates the mobility of ideas, goods and people.

Openness and security are the pillars of the European edifice. This is the mission of the Commission in relation to migration and home affairs, and the mission is clear: we have to turn security and facilitated mobility into the stepping stones for a Europe that grows without fear.

To this end, we have to protect the identity of Europe as the area in our world that guarantees fundamental rights. We have to implement an integrated and targeted policy so as to attract the talent and the workforce that each Member State needs. We have to make sure that Europe will support smooth integration of migrants in our societies. Moreover, we have to guarantee that crime and terrorism stay out of European borders and are combated effectively.

When it comes to migration and home affairs, if we do not move together as a Union, we will not move at all. If I am confirmed, I will count on you, the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs.

I am proud to be designated as the very first Commissioner on Migration – a fact that underlies the commitment of President-elect Juncker and of the new Commission to addressing the critical challenges of migration. We are confronted with rising numbers of persons seeking protection within our borders. As a Union committed to upholding universal human rights, it is Europe's responsibility to offer protection to refugees fleeing war or persecution, to respect the rights of asylum seekers and, in particular, to respect human beings' lives and the right of non-refoulement in all circumstances.

You, the European Parliament, substantially contributed to the establishment of a robust Common European Asylum System. We now have a comprehensive legal framework and our priority will be to ensure that all Member States apply those principles in a uniform manner. There are still some additional areas that need to be discussed – most notably the possibility to work towards a uniform status, valid throughout the Union.

Based on the results of the health check on the Dublin System, I will analyse possible further steps. Daily we hear news about the arrival of migrants on our shores and the news about desperate people embarking on often fatal journeys in the Mediterranean. One more example came just last night in Cyprus.

We have to improve our capacity to handle asylum crises while at the same time support those who are facing high temporary pressure on their asylum systems. More solidarity is needed and this is possible only if Member States trust each other and assume also their responsibilities.

I am, however, also aware that the majority of refugees and people needing international protection are hosted outside the EU by developing countries facing challenges of their own. International solidarity must not stop at the European Union's borders. In my view, the EU should do more to support countries in the regions from which many refugees originate, or through which they pass.

I will work closely together with my colleague, Vice-President Mogherini and the Commissioners responsible for external matters to create a more joined-up policy on refugees and immigration.

At the same time, I am fully committed to encouraging Member States to host more refugees from third countries. Resettlement of refugees is one of the most tangible acts of generosity and solidarity vis-à-vis third countries hosting large refugee populations. The European Union has to protect those in need but can at the same time only be credible if it tackles irregular migration in full respect of fundamental rights. This includes that rejected applicants are treated with efficient and rapid returns.

Priority should go to assisted voluntary return and, in addition, sustainable reintegration in the countries from where they come should be strengthened. Here we will also need to reinforce our cooperation with countries of origin, transit countries, as well as international and non-governmental organisations.

A comprehensive approach includes also, of course, the possibility to come legally to the EU. We have to maximise the benefits of international mobility, migration and integration. Europe is part of a globalised and interconnected world where international mobility is expected to increase. We need to assess the needs of the European labour market, identifying skills shortages in different economic sectors. The international competition for high-level skills already is intense, but Europe needs also people working in other sectors.

I would like to engage in a regular dialogue with all the relevant players and stakeholders: Member States, businessmen and trade unions. I believe that a European Platform coordinating that dialogue would be very, very useful.

The first years of implementation of the Blue Card Directive have shown, it is true, several shortcomings. That is why President-elect Juncker highlighted this for early attention in his political guidelines.

One of my priorities will also be to ensure that the negotiations on the directive on students and researchers are concluded in 2015.

And now about Schengen. Schengen is one of the greatest achievements of European integration and we have to maintain the absence of controls at the internal borders. A precondition for no internal border control is to have efficient external border control, without making Europe, as I said at the beginning, Fortress Europe. While Member States are responsible for controlling their section of the external border, the capacity of Frontex should be used to the full, to ensure European solidarity.

But are the tools at our disposal sufficient? The Commission, the European Parliament and the Council should open a debate on the long-term development of Frontex and the need for and feasibility of creating a true European Border Guard System. Migratory pressure at the borders and smuggling are steadily increasing, and therefore our response capacity should be reinforced to address holistically the whole problem. Efficient border management requires us to build on modern technology. We have to make better use of the opportunities offered by digital technologies for the management of migration and mobility.

The fight against people smuggling remains a priority. We have to bring to justice those who exploit the needs of people in distress. And the abominable form of modern slavery that is trafficking in human beings should be combated efficiently as well. This is also mainly a fight against organised crime inside the European Union and worldwide, and we need global responses.

Citizens ask us to protect them as they fear that there are threats to their security because of terrorism and violence. At times of conflict in our neighbourhood and threats posed by foreign fighters, we need to better combat terrorism and organised crime. Crime travels across Europe and undermines our societies and the economy. We need an updated framework for European action, with a focus on respect for fundamental rights, and better synergies with external action.

Action against cybercrime will make it easier for citizens and businesses to make full use of the Internet. Likewise, actions against other forms of organised crime such as drug trafficking or against corruption will allow business and industry to benefit more from the internal market and avoid losses to public budgets.

Data retention is a security instrument that has been much discussed. Now we have the ruling of the European Court of Justice. We will have to examine the best options for the way forward, fully respecting the principles inherent in the ruling, namely, the principle of proportionality and the right to personal data protection and the other fundamental rights we hold dear.

Recent events in Europe and beyond have shown that we are confronted with a renewed terrorism threat. The role of the European Union is to assist Member States in countering that threat and particularly the serious threat posed by foreign fighters. We have to work in particular on prevention by combating radicalisation, addressing its causes and disrupting terrorist financing.

Police cooperation and the exchange of information are the backbone of European action in the fight against crime. In this area, there is a lot of room for improvement.

2-005

Mesdames et Messieurs les membres du Parlement européen, j'ai l'intention de travailler étroitement avec vous afin d'arriver à des résultats concrets et tangibles.

Pour que les politiques de l'Union en matière de migration et d'affaires intérieures soient couronnées de succès, nous devons nous concentrer sur les domaines où l'action de l'Union peut faire la différence et nous assurer que notre action soit strictement conforme au respect des droits fondamentaux.

Si je suis confirmé, j'aiderai le président élu à mettre en œuvre les lignes directrices dans les domaines qui sont directement liés à mon mandat.

Dans ce but, je serai en liaison directe avec mon collègue le vice-président Timmermans et je travaillerai en harmonie avec les autres membres de la Commission.

Confirmé commissaire, je m'engage, avant tout, à servir ce qui nous unit.

Je m'engage ensuite à respecter scrupuleusement les valeurs de l'Union, la charte des droits fondamentaux et les principes d'une politique européenne transparente et démocratique.

Je m'engage aussi à être utile aux citoyens sans être "enfermé" dans des murailles bureaucratiques.

Je m'engage également à être dévoué à nos valeurs communes et, dans le même temps, à faire face aux nouveaux défis avec résolution et persévérance.

Je m'engage enfin à assurer qu'ensemble, nous allons mener jusqu'au bout, avec succès, le mandat que les citoyens européens nous ont donné et à faire de l'Europe un espace d'espoir, de progrès et de liberté au profit de tous les citoyens. C'est une obligation politique et morale pour nous.

(Applaudissements)

Roberta Metsola (PPE). – L-immigrazzjoni irregolari u l-a il huma issues Ewropej li min-natura tag hom je tie u risposta Ewropea. Sikwit ni u kkritikati dwar in-nuqqas ta' solidarjetà bejn l-Istati Membri minkejja l-pressjoni kollha li ssir mill-Parlament Ewropew. L-Italja bdiet l-operazzjoni Mare Nostrum u issa Operation Triton se tibda ti i implementata. I da s-su ess tag ha jiddeperi minn kemm il-pajji i ser jallokaw ri orsi.

X-se tag mel inti sabiex tiggarantixxi s-sorveljanza xierqa fil-Mediterran u ji u salvati eluf ta' ajjiet? Tista' tag tina l-impenn konkret tieg ek biex tindirizza x-xibka ta' kriminalità li tabbu a mill-batuti u l-vulnerabbi? Fuq l-a il, taqbel li ma sarx bi ejed u li hemm pi sproporzjonat li qed i orru pajji i b al Malta, l-Italja, il-Gre ja, Spanja u o rajn? Ta seb li Dublin g andu ji i analizzat mill-did? Lest li tiffa ilita sistema ta' distribuzzjoni u mekkani mu a jar g al tqassim aktar ust biex ir-responsabbiltà tin arr minn kull pajji ?

Birgit Sippel (S&D). – Herr Avramopoulos, Sie haben das Thema Vorratsdatenspeicherung bereits erwähnt. Der EuGH hat diese Richtlinie für nichtig erklärt und insbesondere ihre Notwendigkeit und Verhältnismäßigkeit in Frage gestellt. Damit sind natürlich auch andere europäische Instrumente, die auf massenhaften Datensammlungen beruhen, in Frage gestellt, wie etwa die Richtlinien und Abkommen zu Bank- und Fluggastdaten. Ich würde da gerne noch einmal zwei Fragen stellen.

Erstens: Verpflichten Sie sich zu einer umfassenden Überprüfung der Rechtmäßigkeit aller existierenden Instrumente, die auf Datensammlungen beruhen und an denen die EU beteiligt ist?

Zweitens: Wie wollen Sie sicherstellen, dass in allen zukünftigen Vorschlägen über den Informationsaustausch zu Strafverfolgungszwecken den Grundrechten, dem Datenschutz, dem Schutz der Privatsphäre und anderen Regelungen der Grundrechtecharta Rechnung getragen wird?

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2-010

Timothy Kirkhope (ECR). – I have two questions, Commissioner-elect. First of all, what does the Commission intend to do to address reports of failures in the proper processing of newly-arrived asylum seekers in some Member States, an issue raised many times here? How will the Commission address this in order to ensure the efficient running of the Dublin system and avoid undocumented and often vulnerable people – and children in particular – travelling around the EU?

My second question: the threat of ISIS is very real and very imminent to the security of the EU. Does the Commissioner-elect intend to make the fight against foreign fighters and the need for an EU PNR system, as supported by EU leaders in Council, a priority for the upcoming mandate?

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Cecilia Wikström (ALDE). – After the catastrophe near Lampedusa a year ago, where several hundred people lost their lives, Heads of State were very quick to condemn the tragedy, saying that more has to be done to save lives. These remain empty words. Since the start of this year, 3 000 people have already died in the Mediterranean, compared with 600 last year.

Since there are no legal ways to enter into the EU for asylum seekers, desperate people will continue to get on those boats in desperation. The smugglers will continue to make money, and people will continue to die. The only way is to create legal and safe routes to the EU for asylum seekers in order to prevent such tragedies. Firstly, would you – as the first ever Commissioner for Migration and Home Affairs – be ready to submit proposals to establish legal and safe routes for asylum seekers into the EU? Secondly, today only 14 Member States are implementing annual resettlement programmes. What concrete steps are you willing to take to strengthen the common resettlement policy and ensure that all Member States actually do participate?

Wikström,
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Lampedusa.

Cornelia Ernst (GUE/NGL). – Ich möchte noch einmal auf Datenschutz und Vorratsdatenspeicherung zurückkommen. Vor dem Hintergrund, dass sich der Bericht Moraes gegen die massenhafte Ausspähung der Bürgerinnen und Bürger in Europa ausgesprochen hat und angesichts der Vorratsdatenspeicherung lautet eine Forderung aus diesem Bericht, eine strenge Evaluation aller Antiterrorinstrumente hinsichtlich ihrer Übereinstimmung mit den Grundrechten vorzunehmen. Meine Fragen sind folgende:

Erstens: Werden Sie, wie in dem Bericht verlangt und von der Kommission gefordert wird, die bestehenden Antiterrorinstrumente der EU gründlich evaluieren und bis dahin das SWIFT-Abkommen suspendieren?

Zweitens: Werden Sie trotz des EuGH-Urteils weiterhin am Vorhaben eines PNR, also einer Fluggastdatenrichtlinie, festhalten oder wollen Sie dieses Vorhaben vorher gründlich prüfen, ob es im Hinblick auf die Grundrechte überhaupt akzeptabel ist?

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2-016

Judith Sargentini (Verts/ALE). – Mr Avramopoulos, in your written answers you state that we need legal pathways for all categories of workers seeking to reach the continent. We Greens are happy to hear that. We think it will save lives, as boats crossing the Mediterranean carry both refugees and migrant workers who fail to find other legal means of entry. Could you please elaborate on these plans?

Will you open the debate with the Council on the need to facilitate legal entry schemes for low-qualification and/or low-wage jobs that are not of a seasonal nature – like, for instance, work done by nannies from the Philippines? Will you tackle the issue of irregular olive pickers in Greece that come from as far away as Pakistan?

And then – with regard to family reunification – there are currently Syrian refugees with family ties in Europe knocking on the doors of our embassies in Lebanon and in Turkey, and they are being turned down. They are not being allowed to join their families in Europe. Can we count on you to make European family reunification regulations more accessible for migrants?

2-017

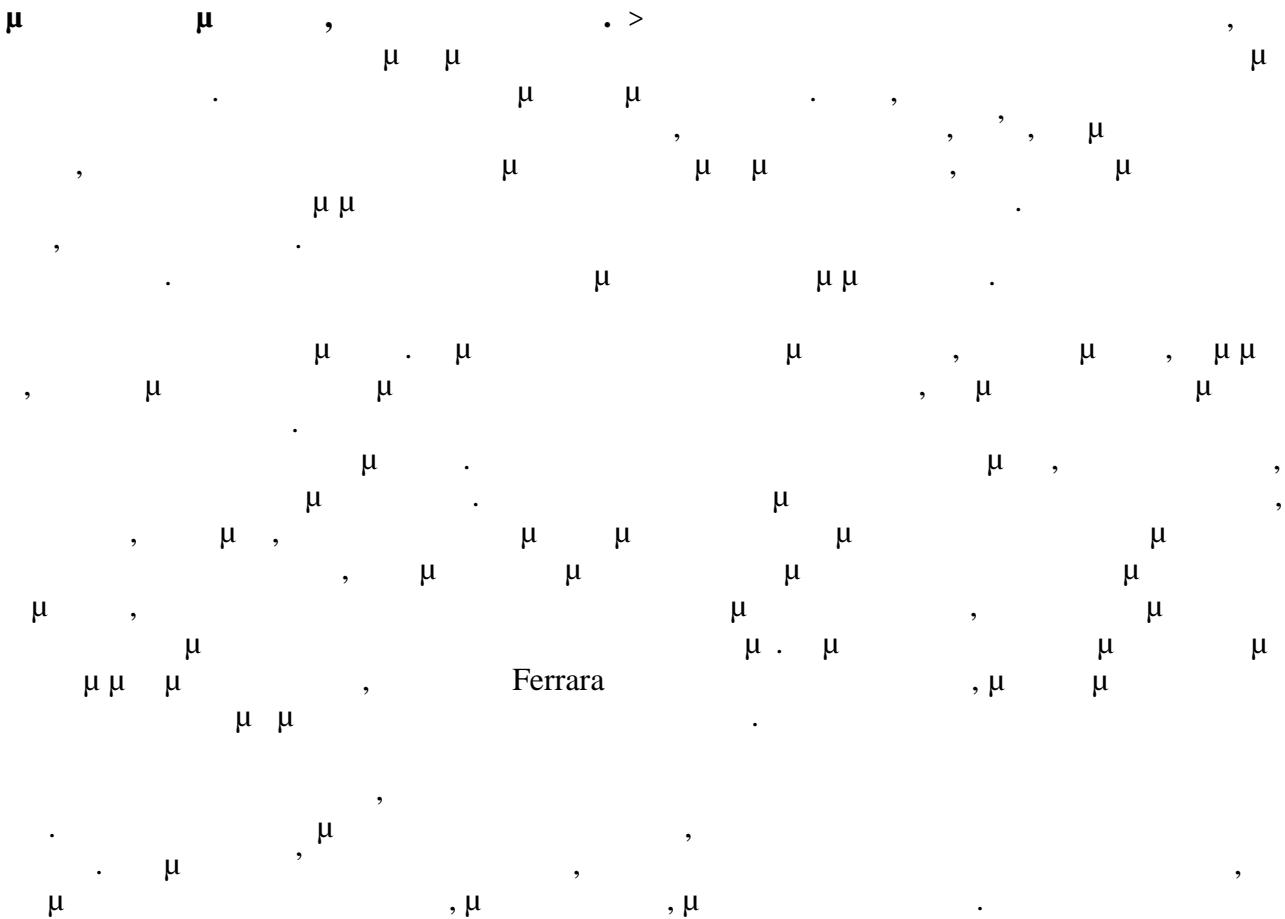
2-018

Laura Ferrara (EFDD). – Quando il governo Papandreu fece costruire una barriera di filo spinato sul confine greco con la Turchia, Lei elogiò l'iniziativa, sottolineando la necessità di proteggere la nostra società e i nostri confini dall'immigrazione irregolare. Leggendo il programma della Commissione Juncker, questo sembra anche il principio alla base delle azioni della nuova Commissione, che crede di risolvere la situazione incrementando i controlli alle frontiere e concentrandosi su quei migranti che possono portare un contributo all'economia europea. Questo –

abbiamo inteso bene – non risolve il problema di coloro che prendono la via del mare e vi perdono la vita.

Allora le chiedo, in termini di progetti concreti: quali sono le misure che pensa di prendere per far fronte a questa emergenza? Perché scaricare le responsabilità dei trafficanti di esseri umani, che sicuramente hanno una grossa responsabilità, può risultare una posizione di comodo. Le chiedo inoltre: qual è l'alternativa legale all'immigrazione irregolare? Cosa ne pensa dei corridoi umanitari? Qual è l'alternativa che si pone all'immigrazione irregolare per far in modo che non si continui a fare leva sulla disperazione dei migranti e si offra un'alternativa legale?

2-019



2-020

Lorenzo Fontana (NI). – Due domande: innanzitutto riguardo all'operazione "Mare Nostrum". Due settimane fa il Direttore di Frontex ha detto che, purtroppo, uno degli effetti di Mare Nostrum è stata la moltiplicazione degli sbarchi sulle coste italiane. Le chiedo: non crede che con questa operazione si siano favoriti i mercanti di esseri umani, invece di contrastarli, e che quindi l'operazione sia stata fondamentalmente più un danno? Anche perché poi abbiamo visto che, purtroppo, sono morte anche molte più persone degli altri anni.

Sempre in tema di immigrazione: come pensa di riuscire a suddividere quelle persone che hanno il diritto di rimanere qui, in quanto aventi diritto all'asilo, e quelle persone che invece vengono qui, magari anche malintenzionate, e che comunque non hanno il diritto di rimanere in Europa? Ed eventualmente, come fare poi a rimpatriarle?

Un'ultima domanda riguardo ai combattenti dell'Isis. Si dice che siano almeno 3 000 i cittadini europei che sono andati a combattere, alcuni dei quali sono anche rientrati. Concretamente, che cosa vogliamo fare di queste persone? Nel senso: ritiriamo loro la cittadinanza? Li espelliamo? Li consegniamo alla giustizia? Perché, ovviamente, non penso che siano persone che possano circolare liberamente sul territorio europeo.

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Agustín Díaz de Mera García Consuegra (PPE). – Vayamos al Tratado, artículo 77: «La Unión desarrollará una política que tendrá por objetivo garantizar los controles de las personas y la vigilancia eficaz de las fronteras exteriores». Señor Comisario propuesto, las amenazas están definidas. En resumen: los traficantes y los combatientes del Daesh. Pero hay que desarrollar legislativamente el artículo 77; cinco instrumentos: el paquete de fronteras inteligentes, el PNR, el SIS2, el VIS y una más que necesaria, muy necesaria, modificación del Reglamento Frontex.

¿Por qué? Porque Frontex, felizmente, salva vidas, pero no tiene la competencia de salvar vidas. ¿Por qué? Porque Frontex tiene un CRATE, un catálogo de instrumentos puestos a su disposición de manera verbal, pero nunca se cumplen. ¿Por qué? Porque Frontex tiene que entender y usted también, señor Comisario que, cuando se producen situaciones de mucha presión en tal o cual punto

de las fronteras exteriores, los Estados miembros por sí solos no pueden hacer frente a esa presión migratoria, ni marítima, ni terrestre, ni fluvial, ni aérea.

Señor Comisario, ¿podría responder por favor a estos comentarios?

2-023

2-024

Kashetu Kyenge (S&D). – La mia domanda verterà sulle politiche di immigrazione legale. Ho visto con piacere che la questione è stata sollevata più volte nel corso di questa discussione, cosa che intendo fare io stessa. Centinaia di migliaia di immigranti non sono altamente specializzati, né profughi. Non sono lavoratori stagionali, né studenti o ricercatori. Eppure sono ammessi ogni anno nel territorio dell'Unione.

Se vogliamo tutelare il principio cardine della libera circolazione delle persone, nella piena attuazione del rispetto dei diritti fondamentali, come Lei stesso ha potuto spiegare durante il suo discorso, le chiedo: come intende garantire un quadro legislativo organico al fine di offrire una prospettiva di immigrazione nel lungo termine per quei migranti illegali, cioè che non ho nominato o non sono compresi nelle categorie sopra elencate, che intendono ogni anno accedere nel territorio europeo?

2-025

2-026

Jussi Halla-aho (ECR). – Mr Avramopoulos, European countries already find it very difficult to successfully integrate vast numbers of mainly unskilled immigrants from the Third World. This will not get any easier in the future, given our domestic challenges and the ever-growing migratory pressure. Opening new legal channels to Europe, as many are proposing, does not really remove this basic problem. We thought very much about the right of people to come to Europe and our responsibilities towards migrants. But should we also pay more attention to the long-term cost and consequences of failed integration for European public funding, for European societies and their stability and safety? How do you see the balance between these conflicting interests?

2-027

2-028

Nathalie Griesbeck (ALDE). – Monsieur le Président, Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, j'ai lu vos réponses au questionnaire par écrit, et je vous écoute depuis près d'une heure. J'écoute votre passion et votre fine connaissance des dossiers pour répondre à nos collègues. Mais une chose me frappe: un mot n'est encore jamais apparu ni par écrit ni à l'instant, c'est le mot de "mineur", d'enfant en situation de

migration. Je voudrais savoir, Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, si vous vous engagerez personnellement pour le respect des droits fondamentaux de chacun de ces enfants en situation de migration, et ce que vous proposez pour garantir le respect de leurs droits et améliorer leur situation particulière, parce qu'étant jeunes mineurs, ils sont, par définition, plus vulnérables que les adultes.

Vous engagerez-vous à mettre en œuvre les recommandations du rapport sur les mineurs non accompagnés de novembre 2013? Comment, par quelles mesures et selon quel calendrier? Enfin, en particulier, quelle suite donnerez-vous au paragraphe qui réitère la question de l'impossibilité, normale dans nos démocraties, de mettre un enfant, un mineur, soit en détention, voire en rétention?

2-029

Dimitris Avramopoulos, commissaire désigné. > Madame Griesbeck, je dois d'abord vous dire que la protection des enfants est une obligation légale et politique, pour nous tous. Je suis père moi aussi et je suis très sensible au sujet. Si je n'en ai pas encore parlé, c'est parce que j'attendais la question d'une personne aussi sensible que moi.

Mais au-delà de cela, je dois vous dire qu'en ce qui concerne les plans d'action de 2014, on va les respecter. Et, avec votre soutien et vos idées, on va promouvoir la protection des enfants.

2-030

It is also my personal commitment and, as I said before, if we did not speak about it, it is not because it is outside the spectrum of our discussion, but it is the most sensitive part. I am confused now with the language, but anyway I will keep to English. We must not have these children retained with adults – that is very important – and we must take care of them. This will be one of the main characteristics of the policy we intend to adopt in the future. Children are the most sensitive part of our society and they need special – and also more sensitive – treatment.

So this is my answer. It is also a personal commitment beyond my duty as – eventually – a Commissioner tomorrow.

2-031

Malin Björk (GUE/NGL). – The EU has done important work in the area against trafficking in human beings. However, I am concerned that the focus has shifted away from human rights to focus only on the crime-fighting aspects, despite the fact that the role of the EU is also – and, in my view, primarily – to protect victims and their rights and also to fight against the demand for trafficked persons.

The large majority of trafficking in Europe is in women and girls for sexual exploitation, and therefore I think this must be the main focus in our work at EU level. So my question to you is: are you prepared to change the priorities in this area to primarily increasing the focus in fighting the trafficking of human beings for sexual exploitation; are you prepared to strengthen human rights and support for victims in this work; and do you see it as your work to strengthen the work against the demand for trafficked women and girls in the sex industry and the buyers that demand them in this industry?

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2-033

Ska Keller (Verts/ALE). – Mr Avramopoulos, you mentioned the death toll in the Mediterranean, which is indeed significant. Just today, Amnesty International launched this report saying that a big problem is the lack of coordination between the search and rescue operations within the institutions of EU Member States such as Italy, Malta and others. So what exactly are you planning to do, and how do you plan to work with Member States and EU institutions to strengthen search and rescue operations in order to end the deaths in the Mediterranean? And then secondly, to come back to Dublin, you mentioned that it is a big responsibility for Member States. Would it not also ease the situation if one would let refugees claim asylum in a country where they have family ties or speak the language so that they integrate better without Member States having to send them round? Do you not think that this would be a suitable solution?

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2-035

Kristina Winberg (EFDD). – Det är en viktig portfolio du har blivit anförtrodd och jag hoppas att du kommer att förvalta den väl.

Stora delar av EU:s gräns skydd är mycket bristfälligt, inte minst i ditt hemland och i flera länder i de södra delarna. Det borde vara uppenbart att Frontex och Eurozone inte räcker till. Vi har illegala flyktingar som slunker igenom och sedan stannar. Jihadister från Irak och Syrien som vi måste kontrollera ut- och inresan för. Ensamkommande som borde tas omhand i ankomstlandet.

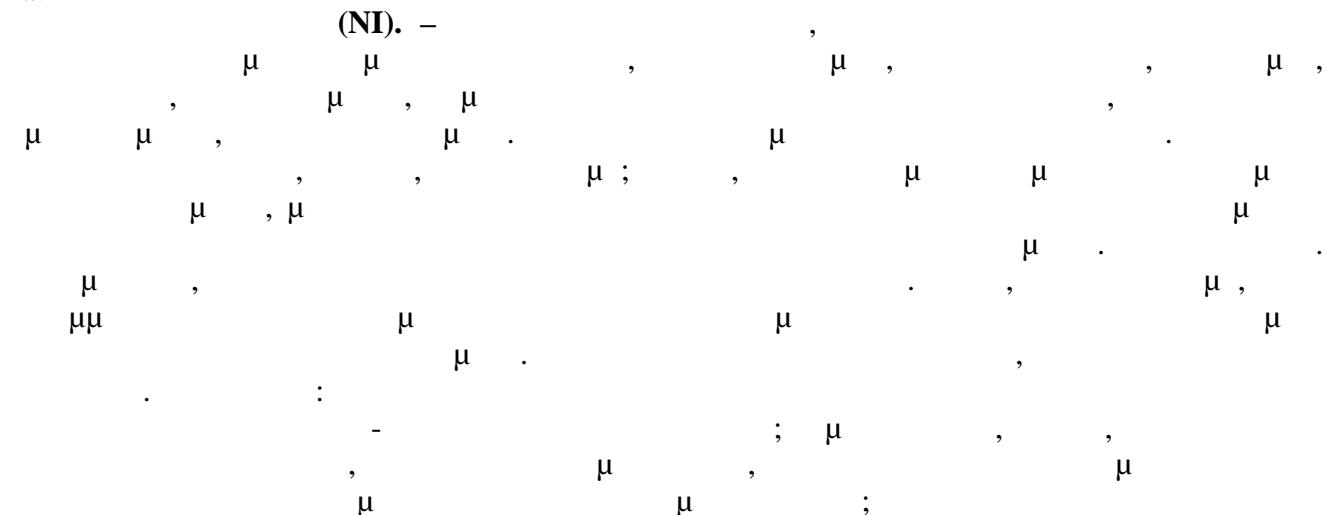
Som jag ser det behövs först ett riktigt gränsskydd. Sedan sanktioner mot länder som bara viftar igenom dem som tar sig över gränsen. För att stävja illegal invandring behövs också avskräckande straff för människosmugglare, jihadister från Syrien och Irak och arbetsgivare som utnyttjar illegala. Slutligen en bra återsändandepolitik. Till exempel: I dagsläget tar Sverige emot flest ensamkommande i hela EU. Den geografiska placeringen visar på att Sverige borde bli utsatt för det minsta antalet.

Kommer du att arbeta för att se till att länderna och EU stärker gränsskyddet, att Dublinförordningen fungerar och att EU som helhet minskar sin pullfaktor?

2-036



2-037



2-038



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2-039

Barbara Kudrycka (PPE). – Commissioner-designate, with the safety of EU citizens in mind and in view of the recent Data Retention Directive judgment of the European Court of Justice, could you explain what kind of steps you would take in order to ensure this judgment is implemented? Could you please explain what would be the possible timeframe for the Commission's actions to harmonise the rules on data retention in the EU, bearing in mind the need to keep a balance between our obligation to ensure adequate protection of our citizens' fundamental rights, on the one hand, and on the other the need for adequate access by the appropriate authorities to the data in question, for instance when fighting serious crime and terrorism?

2-040

2-041

2-042

2-043

Helga Stevens (ECR). – Kandidaat-commissaris, in het kader van het tegengaan en het ontmoedigen van illegale immigratie zou ik graag concreet willen vragen naar de stand van zaken van de onderhandelingen met Marokko, een land waarmee de EU recent nog een mobiliteitspartnerschap heeft afgesloten, waarin onder andere het belang van een omvattend terugnameakkoord is opgenomen. Verwacht u dat dit akkoord binnen afzienbare tijd zal worden afgerond? Wat de andere mogelijke akkoorden betreft, zou ik u willen vragen of u mogelijke sancties overweegt tegen landen die zich niet coöperatief opstellen tijdens de onderhandelingen over een terugnameakkoord. Kan er bijvoorbeeld een budget voor ontwikkelingssamenwerking aan gekoppeld worden? En, ten slotte, hoe staat u tegenover lidstaten die zelf akkoorden sluiten met landen van herkomst wanneer de EU in gebreke blijft?

2-044

2-045

(ALDE). – -, , , , ?

2-046

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Barbara Spinelli (GUE/NGL). – Lei ha vantato qui, oggi, di nuovo, il muro di filo spinato alla frontiera greco-turca. Il muro, Lei sa, ha dirottato le fughe dei migranti verso il Mediterraneo centrale e l'Italia. Coerentemente con questa posizione, Lei afferma che la sua priorità numero uno è la lotta contro il traffico di immigranti, non l'apertura di vie legali per chi fugge da zone di guerra e per forza è irregolare.

Chiedo in primo luogo se ribadisce questa priorità e, in secondo luogo, come pensa di dar seguito all'intenzione, comunicata dalla Commissione al Parlamento europeo a marzo, di introdurre regole sul mutuo riconoscimento dello status di rifugiato, perché nasca uno status uniforme in materia di asilo, valido per tutta l'Unione, come si legge nell'articolo 78 del trattato sul funzionamento dell'Unione europea.

2-049 **Jan Philipp Albrecht (Verts/ALE).** – Commissioner-designate, I recognised your very strong words on the judgment on the Data Retention Directive and especially the assessment that this is also

applicable to the processing of passenger name records. I completely agree with that, and I would support you in following up to that by reading point 59 of the judgment, where the Court requires clearly a link between the subject whose data is retained to a risk, to a certain group which is suspicious, or to a certain region or a time schedule in which a risk is turning up. So my question is: in how far you will assess this point and take back the proposal for a directive on the retention of passenger name records because such a link is not established in this proposal?

2-050

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2-051

Janice Atkinson (EFDD). – Commissioner-designate, due to the failure of my own government to visit Calais to see at first hand the extent of the migrant crisis, last week I visited and became the only British politician to be granted direct access to the Mayor’s office. Yet my government offers GBP 12 million of British taxpayers’ money to the Socialist Hollande. This money will go straight into the black hole deficit of Monsieur Hollande’s failed government, not to the migrant frontline of Calais. The Deputy Mayor, Philippe Mignonet, says he was not very impressed with David Cameron’s kind offer of ex-NATO barriers. He really does not know what to do with them.

Monsieur Mignonet and I had a meeting of minds and I have invited him to have lunch with UKIP's Stuart Wheeler. Who knows? We may have the next defection to UKIP. So could the Commissioner-designate tell me what practical measures are planned to clean up Calais, deport the migrants back to their countries of origin, stop them crossing Europe and halt the pernicious trade in human trafficking, which directly contributes 15.5 billion dollars a year to the terrorist funds? Of course, the free movement of people is the biggest problem.

2-052

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2-053

Carlos Coelho (PPE). – Mr Avramopoulos, I have three questions on Schengen. First, 62% of European citizens look at free movement as the most positive outcome of the 50 years of European integration. Nevertheless, the European project is under pressure and radical parties are opposing free movement in itself. In what manner will the preservation of free movement in the Schengen area be a priority in your mandate?

The second question is on evaluation. We now have a real European evaluation system that can detect security risks and which also helps to resolve them. How do we plan to implement the Schengen System, and what guarantees can you give us that corrective actions will take place? Finally, on the Schengen Information System, second generation (SIS II), how would you comment on the report of the Court of Auditors on SIS II, and what lessons do you take from a project that took six years more than it should have done and which cost eight times more than planned?

2-054

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2-055

Sylvie Guillaume (S&D). – Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, j'allais vous interroger, comme d'autres collègues, sur les voies d'immigration régulière, mais il y a manifestement des choses que vous ne pouvez ou ne voulez pas développer à ce stade et je vais donc m'y prendre autrement.

Dans vos réponses écrites, vous proposez d'entreprendre ce que vous appelez un "bilan qualité" de la législation existante en matière d'immigration légale. Qu'est-ce qu'un bilan qualité? Quels instruments spécifiques d'immigration légale seraient vérifiés? Et puis, comment comptez-vous évaluer la valeur

de la législation telle que, par exemple, les directives "travailleurs saisonniers" ou "permis unique", qui n'ont pas été partout transposées au plan national?

2-056

2-057

Beatrix von Storch (ECR). – Sehr geehrter Herr Avramopoulos! Was halten Sie von Botschaftsasylen?

Wenn wir uns in der EU darauf einigen würden, dass Asyl in der EU nur noch und ausschließlich in den Botschaften der Mitgliedstaaten und also vor Ort beantragt werden könnte, hätten wir folgendes Ergebnis: Kein Flüchtling ertrinkt mehr vor Lampedusa. Den kriminellen Schlepperbanden ist das Handwerk gelegt. Die Asylgründe sind vor Ort sehr viel besser und sehr viel schneller zu überprüfen. Und wer wegen Krieg unsere Botschaften nicht erreichen kann, der kann den Antrag in der Botschaft des nächsten sicheren Nachbarlandes stellen. Wir entziehen der Ausländerfeindlichkeit rund um die Asylantenheime den Boden. Die anerkannten Flüchtlinge können wir auf unsere Kosten in die EU bringen. Die Mitgliedstaaten verständigen sich darauf, welches Land den Flüchtling aufnimmt. Was halten Sie von dieser Idee des Botschaftsasyls?

Zweitens: Würden Sie die Mitgliedstaaten ermutigen, besonders die wegen ihres Glaubens Verfolgten aufzunehmen, zur Zeit also besonders die verfolgten Christen?

2-058

2-059

Louis Michel (ALDE). – Monsieur le Président, Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, vous voulez lutter contre le terrorisme en respectant scrupuleusement les droits de l'homme et vous voulez traiter le dossier des migrants d'une manière humaine, fondée sur le respect absolu des droits de l'homme. Voilà évidemment une belle éloquence pour affirmer avec force le respect de principes généraux. Je vous crois évidemment, mais pour être rassuré, j'aimerais vous poser deux questions.

Tout d'abord, accepteriez-vous de réaliser une étude relative à la lutte contre le terrorisme au regard de la conformité des législations nationales et européennes avec les droits fondamentaux? Le Parlement – je le rappelle – en a déjà formulé la demande, notamment dans le rapport que j'ai moi-même élaboré sur la situation des droits fondamentaux en 2013.

J'ai une deuxième question à vous poser, car la réponse que vous avez donnée à une collègue me laisse un peu sur ma faim. Comment comptez-vous assurer le respect strict, par les États membres, des droits fondamentaux des migrants et demandeurs d'asile dès leur entrée sur le territoire européen? Vous avez répondu de manière évasive à une question d'une collègue sur l'installation de grillages et de fils barbelés, en Espagne et en Grèce, qui infligent des blessures graves aux migrants. Jusqu'ici, j'étais assez rassuré par vos propos, mais la manière dont vous n'avez pas répondu à cette question qui a été évoquée m'a interpellé, parce que cela n'est pas l'Europe ouverte, cela n'est pas du tout l'Europe des valeurs. Je voudrais donc vous poser la question directement par rapport à cette installation de grillages et de fils barbelés en Espagne et en Grèce. J'aimerais être rassuré de votre part sur ce sujet.

2-060

(GUE/NGL). –

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Eva Joly (Verts/ALE). – Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, la complicité de la Pologne dans les opérations menées sur son territoire par la CIA vient d'être reconnue par la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme. Neuf autres États membres auraient collaboré au programme de la CIA. Il faut faire la lumière sur ce qui s'est passé et juger les responsables.

Comment entendez-vous contribuer à la lutte contre l'impunité et assurer que les États membres assument leurs responsabilités liées à leur participation au programme de restitution illégale, de détention et de torture de personnes soupçonnées de terrorisme par la CIA?

Envisagez-vous de faire un suivi des différents rapports et résolutions du Parlement européen sur la participation des États membres à ces programmes? Si oui, comment? Comment aideriez-vous les États membres à mener des enquêtes rapides, indépendantes et approfondies sur toutes les allégations de torture et de traitements inhumains et dégradants qui ont eu lieu avec leur complicité, sur leur territoire, dans le cadre de programmes de la CIA?

Ignazio Corrao (EFDD). – Ho ascoltato le domande che le hanno posto i miei colleghi con attenzione. Con altrettanta attenzione ho notato che lei però, nelle sue risposte, utilizza la sua esperienza, da politico di vecchia data, per girare intorno alle domande ed uscire con il *politically correct* e lo fa bene, devo dire. Io volevo chiederle, quindi, in modo diretto se, riguardo il regolamento di Dublino, ritiene che la distribuzione dei richiedenti asilo e degli immigrati in generale vada fatta utilizzando un metodo comunitario e di equa distribuzione tra Stati e se si impegnerà in tal senso.

Volevo inoltre farle una domanda più personale, che è una curiosità. Gira su Internet una foto che la ritrae con un mitra vicino al confine con la Turchia, vicino al famoso filo spinato di cui parlavano gli altri. Vorrei sapere se è vera. Perché, qualora fosse vera, secondo me sarebbe una cosa molto grave, come mettere una volpe a guardia di un pollaio. Mi stupirei se i colleghi avallassero.

Corrao,
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2-067

Rachida Dati (PPE). – Monsieur le Président, Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, nous avons parlé des partenariats pertinents de mobilité et de migration avec des pays tiers qui ont été conclus ces dernières années pour organiser la migration légale, certes, mais aussi en contrepartie d'un engagement de lutte claire contre la migration illégale et la criminalité conséquente.

La première question: comment allez-vous mieux veiller à la bonne exécution de ces accords, mais surtout – parce que nous n'avons jamais eu de réponse très claire avec l'ancienne Commission – à la bonne utilisation des financements qui ont été accordés dans le cadre de ces partenariats?

La deuxième question: cette mobilité légale et illégale entraîne aussi la mobilité et le développement du crime organisé sous toutes ses formes: la prostitution, la traite des êtres humains, les trafics de drogue. Quels seront les autres pays tiers avec lesquels nous allons conclure des accords, et surtout, comment allez-vous responsabiliser les pays tiers pour empêcher efficacement cette mobilité criminelle que vous avez vous-même qualifiée d'industrie? Cela vient en écho à la question de M^{me} Stevens qui n'a pas vraiment eu de réponse. Allez-vous mettre en place des sanctions contre ces pays tiers?

2-068

2-069

Miriam Dalli (S&D). – Smajnik kemm-il darba anki hawnhekk illum tg idilna kemm hu importanti u kemm inti tixtieq li ssa a Frontex. Fil-fatt, in minnhom g idtilna "appo jawni alli nkun nista' nsa a Frontex". Fl-istess in, b alissa, Frontex qieg da tipprepara biex tikkoordina operazzjoni dida fuq il-ba ar bl-isem ta' "Triton". U g idtilna wkoll inti li Triton se tkompli tg in lil Frontex fix-xog ol tag ha. Triton se tkun qieg da tiffoka, qieg da nifhem jiena, l-operazzjonijiet tag ha fuq il-kontroll tal-fruntieri esterni tal-Unjoni Ewropea. Imma g idtilna li Frontex hija kompetenti biex issa a il-fruntieri imma mhux g al missjonijiet ta' salvata . Allura nixtieq inkun naf, g ax g adha mhijiex ara, x'passi se tie u biex tassigura li nies li jkunu f'periklu fuq il-ba ar, dawk mag rufa b ala "people in distress" ikomplu ji u salvati meta jsibu ru hom f'dawn il-perikli.

Kazimierz Michał Ujazdowski (ECR). – Moje pytanie takie dotyczy handlu ludźmi, o którym mówił Pan bardzo ogólnie. Chciałbym Pana zapytać o ocenę dyrektywy z kwietnia 2011 roku, czy w Pana opinii ta dyrektywa została dobrze i skutecznie wdrożona przez państwa członkowskie, szczególnie w odniesieniu do wysokości kar i konfiskat narządzonych przestępstw? Czy – mówi krótko – dobrze Pan ocenia tę dyrektywę i rzeczą polegającą na jej wykonywaniu, czy też podejmie Pan jako komisarz odpowiedzialny za tą dziedzinę inicjatywy zmian w prawie? Chciałbym prosić o odpowiedź na to pytanie. Raz jeszcze proszę o konkretne oceny tej dyrektywy i o Pana ewentualne propozycje zmian w zakresie prawa.

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Petr Ježek (ALDE). – In your mission letter, the Commission President-designate says that Europe needs to manage migration better in all its aspects. Well, I am afraid that my constituents would agree. They often air concerns related to further immigrations to Europe. We must face it and justify our principles and values which you were also referring to.

Therefore I have two questions. What do you intend to do in cooperation with Member States to improve integration of immigrants for the benefit of all? How do you intend to enhance and influence the public debate on this issue? Because if parties which are fighting on the anti-immigration

platforms start to complicate formation of governments in EU Member States, or even be part of the governments, it will be far too late.

2-074

Ježek.

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2-075

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2-077

Tanja Fajon (S&D). – Omenili ste že pametne meje. Moje vprašanje pa je – evropske vlade so izrazile pri akovanje, da se bo razprava o svežnju o pametnih mejah konala sredi leta 2016.

Boste vi kot komisar razmislili o možnih spremembah predlaganega svežnja – upoštevaje zelo resne zadržke, ki smo jih imeli tu v Evropskem parlamentu v prejšnjem mandatu glede vprašanj, kot so varstvo osebnih podatkov, hramba osebnih podatkov, proporcionalnost, temeljne pravice in nenazadnje tudi vprašanje višine finančnih sredstev, ki bi jih predstavljala takšna kontrola za tujce z naj sodobnejšo tehnologijo avtomatiziranega mejnega nadzora?

Ko omenjam sredstva, imam v mislih tudi nedavne kritike na ra un vse bolj vrtoglavih stroškov pri ustanavljanju sistema SIS II, sredi oktobra pa bomo dobili tudi študijo s podrobno analizo razli nih možnosti za izvedbo pilotnega projekta. Kako boste reagirali?

2-078

2-079

Teresa Jiménez-Becerril Barrio (PPE). – Señor Presidente, señor Avramopoulos, el programa de Estocolmo garantiza una Europa abierta y segura, pero nuestros ciudadanos empiezan a dudar de que desde la Unión Europea seamos capaces de garantizar su seguridad frente a un ataque terrorista.

¿Qué medidas piensa adoptar la Comisión para evitar esos posibles atentados en un Estado miembro por parte de esos combatientes transnacionales en Irak y Siria, esos llamados «lobos solitarios» que regresan a Europa para atentar? ¿Y cómo piensa hacer frente la Comisión al reclutamiento de jóvenes europeos que utilizan Internet como instrumento para unirse a la Yihad?

Y, en relación con el terrorismo, querría saber cuál es su disposición, señor Comisario, hacia sus víctimas: si, como Comisario, tendrá la sensibilidad necesaria hacia ellas, impulsando la atención específica, el apoyo, la protección y el reconocimiento social que necesitan para normalizar sus vidas, y si va a ir más allá del «paquete de víctimas», elaborando un instrumento legislativo específico para víctimas del terrorismo.

2-080

2-081

Iliana Iotova (S&D). – Monsieur le Président, Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, deux questions concrètes: comment allez-vous faire en sorte que le code Schengen soit respecté après les propositions récentes visant à réintroduire le contrôle frontalier? Deuxième question: allez-vous faire pression sur le Conseil pour que la Roumanie et la Bulgarie adhèrent à l'espace Schengen? C'est une question que, je l'espère, vous connaissez très bien, une question qui circule entre les institutions européennes et les États membres depuis déjà quatre ans.

2-082

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2-083

Heinz K. Becker (PPE). – Herr designierter Kommissar, ich beziehe mich auf die zukünftige Visapolitik der Europäischen Union. Es ist bekannt, dass die EU bisher eine liberalisierte Visapolitik betrieben hat, und jede Visaliberalisierung steht immer im Spannungsverhältnis mit den zwingenden Anforderungen der inneren Sicherheit. So reist beispielsweise die Mehrzahl der illegal in Europa lebenden Personen zuerst legal ein, bleibt aber dann länger als erlaubt und führt das System damit ad absurdum. Daher meine drei Teilfragen.

Wie wollen Sie als Kommissar, der für Migration und für die Sicherheit der Bürgerinnen und Bürger zuständig sein soll, sicherstellen, dass die innere Sicherheit in der Europäischen Union nicht durch eine zu offene Politik der Visaliberalisierung ausgehöhlt wird?

Werden Sie eher eine aktive oder eine restriktive Politik vornehmen?

Wie sehen Sie den laufenden Visadialog mit der Türkei und den Druck der Türkei, hier ein Rücknahmeabkommen abzuschließen?

2-084

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2-085

Caterina Chinnici (S&D). – Si è parlato molto oggi dell'impegno che Lei intende portare avanti per intensificare e per rendere più incisiva la lotta contro le organizzazioni criminali che gestiscono l'immigrazione clandestina e la tratta degli esseri umani. Allora, in proposito e nel quadro delle attività di contrasto di tali fenomeni, le chiedo in particolare quale azioni più specifiche sul piano dell'iniziativa legislativa e sul piano operativo prevede che la Commissione possa adottare per proteggere e aiutare i numerosi minori non accompagnati che – forse credo non sia stato sottolineato abbastanza – sono stati e continueranno ad essere i soggetti più vulnerabili e bisognosi di tutela rispetto a tali attività illecite, considerato anche che spesso rischiano poi di essere ulteriormente utilizzati dalla criminalità organizzata nell'ambito di talune attività illecite, quali ad esempio lo sfruttamento della prostituzione minorile o il traffico di sostanze stupefacenti.

2-086

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and International Cooperation». , 2015,

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2-087

Frank Engel (PPE). – Monsieur le Président, Monsieur le Commissaire désigné, vous avez parlé en introduction de la nécessité d'éviter que l'Europe ne devienne une forteresse et je déduis également de tous les propos que vous venez de tenir sur l'espace Schengen que vous défendrez, à votre corps défendant pour ainsi dire, la libre circulation au sein de cet espace, qui est vraiment l'un des acquis majeurs de l'Europe unie.

Mais, si nous voulons sauvegarder tout cela, si nous voulons en même temps faire en sorte que les gens, que les habitants de toute cette vaste zone, aient l'impression que cela sert à quelque chose et que cela peut fonctionner, n'auriez-vous pas l'impression que nous devrions œuvrer ensemble à ce que les frontières extérieures deviennent véritablement nos frontières extérieures communes, c'est-à-dire à ce que nous parvenions, en fin de compte, à les gérer de façon – oserais-je dire – fédérale et de toute façon communautaire et de manière à ce que votre frontière, en Grèce, devienne, consciemment, également une frontière de mes compatriotes luxembourgeois à Schengen?

2-088

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2-089

Ana Gomes (S&D). – Mr Avramopoulos, having regard to the Commission's first anti-corruption report published earlier this year and to the new rules on anti-money laundering now about to go for trialogue negotiations, will you propose further measures to tackle the interlinked problems of money laundering, tax evasion, tax fraud and corruption? Will you join the Parliament in calling for a publicly accessible register of corporate beneficial owners for all corporate structures, including trusts, in the context of those trialogue negotiations? Do you have or do you plan to propose a strategy to fight corruption in the EU, in its Member States and its relations with other countries and with tax havens?

2-090

2-091

Monika Hohlmeier (PPE). – Nachdem wir schon sehr viel zum Thema Flüchtlinge diskutiert haben, möchte ich darauf hinweisen, dass die öffentliche Meinung nicht den tatsächlichen Zahlen entspricht. Die Länder, die je Bürger gerechnet am meisten aufnehmen, sind Schweden, Luxemburg, Malta, Deutschland und Belgien. In der öffentlichen Diskussion wird dies etwas anders dargestellt. Nach absoluten Zahlen kommen dann Frankreich, Italien und das Vereinigte Königreich hinzu. In der jetzigen Debatte haben wir eine ständige Auseinandersetzung zwischen den Mitgliedstaaten.

Erwägen Sie unter Umständen im Angesichte der heutigen Krise, den in der neuen Dublin-Verordnung vorgesehenen Mechanismus zur Frühwarnung, Vorsorge und Krisenbewältigung in Gang zu setzen, um dafür Sorge zu tragen, dass die Mitgliedstaaten endlich miteinander arbeiten und sich gegenseitig koordinieren und daher die Rolle der Europäischen Union gemeinsam mit EAD und allen Möglichkeiten, die wir haben, stärker zu nutzen, als wir das bisher tun?

2-092

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2-093

Péter Niedermüller (S&D). – Mr Commissioner-designate, as the European Union internal security strategy comes up for renewal for the next five-year period, there have been calls to better coordinate EU internal and external policies in cooperation with third states in matters of security. The European Council is calling for further initiatives in the area of fighting against serious crime and terrorism. What are your priority areas for the next period of the internal security strategy? Furthermore, can you commit first to full utilisation of all the existing EU instruments for fighting terrorism and serious crime, including the mutual legal assistance treaties on judicial and police cooperation, before creating new ones?

2-094

(PPE). —

2-096

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2-097

Chair. > Firstly, let me thank the members of this committee for this marathon session. You are described as experienced and knowledgeable Members. I think, Commissioner-designate, you would agree that, out of the five hearings that members of this committee will be involved in, this is our core area. I think you will agree that, from data retention to asylum, legal migration and so on, members really have alighted on the key core topics in a detailed way. So I think you have been subject to thorough questioning. So thank you to the members of this committee.

Secondly, thank you for your exchange and for your preparation. I am not going to prejudge what you have done because it is up to the coordinators and the members of this committee, through the coordinators, to make a judgment on what you have said today. They will do that at 17.00 today.

By way of conclusion, I want to take note of a couple of things that you have said today. You made a commitment to review legal migration instruments as well as draft horizontal legislation, plus an in-depth written analysis of the data retention judgment – Jan Albrecht mentioned this. If colleagues are listening, I think it was worthwhile that you did prepare. You talked about an updated PNR proposal, fully complying with the data protection package, and an initiative to strengthen Frontex. I think what you did today was respond to many, or some, of the key proposals made by Members. However, it will be up to us to assess what we think of that and it will be up to us to assess your competence and to assess what you said today. We will do that at 17.00.

There are many other questions of course which may be unanswered, but we will do all of that today and come back to you. So, colleagues, thank you for your attention today. What I am going to do now is ask the Commissioner-designate to make a final statement – perhaps three minutes? If you do five minutes, you might lose what support you gained earlier from your brevity. That is just my tip for the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs but, if you want to abuse that, it is up to you. That is a big hint. Maybe three minutes because we are all pretty exhausted. So, go for it – three minutes – and conclude.

Thank you again for your attention today, colleagues. Commissioner-designate, please make your concluding remarks.

2-098

Dimitris Avramopoulos, Commissioner-designate. > Honourable Members of the European Parliament, first of all I would like to thank you for this really very interesting and fruitful discussion that we all had today. You enlightened many of my thoughts on these very, very sensitive issues. I am leaving this room more inspired and more encouraged on my new duties – if I am confirmed. If I am approved as the first Commissioner of the European Union on Migration and Home Affairs, I pledge to focus my political leadership and experience into three pillars of action.

First to ensure that the European Union, as you suggested, adopts a holistic, global and effective migration policy based on the principles of solidarity and proportionality, and also on responsibility.

Secondly, to address critical security challenges in view of new threats and challenges, and always with respect to fundamental rights and our duty to ensure a safer environment for all our citizens.

Finally, to proceed in the development of the European policy on home affairs and migration in close partnership with the European Parliament and to be in an open, frank and continuous dialogue with you; to work closely with you on the basis of transparency and mutual trust.

(*Applause*)

2-099

Chair. > Thank you, Commissioner-designate. You took my advice and the hearing is now closed.

(*The hearing closed at 18.25*)