

PRESIDENZA DELL'ON. GABRIELE ALBERTINI

(La riunione è aperta alle 13.03)

Presidente. – Colleghi, per favore, volete prendere posto, il Commissario designato è stato puntualissimo e dobbiamo economizzare il nostro tempo: tassativamente entro le ore 16.00 dobbiamo chiudere il nostro lavoro e ci sono decine di colleghi che hanno chiesto di intervenire.

Vorrei dare il benvenuto a questa audizione al Commissario designato Füle e mi auguro che questo incontro, oltre a conoscerci meglio, possa anche essere una sede significativa di scambio di opinioni su un tema così delicato come quello dell'allargamento e della politica di vicinato. La politica di vicinato è un aspetto chiave della politica estera europea e quindi è molto appropriato – direi necessario – il coordinamento tra il suo portafoglio e le responsabilità dell'Alto rappresentante per la PESC.

Per questa commissione, per il Parlamento nel suo complesso, è molto importante sapere quali misure sono state prese per garantire tale coordinamento e per essere rassicurati che l'allargamento e la politica di vicinato si integreranno nel perseguimento degli obiettivi e della politica estera europea.

Vi chiederei un attimo di attenzione perché quello che sto per dire ora vi riguarda direttamente: sono le modalità entro cui dovrà svolgersi, come è accaduto ieri, il nostro lavoro di oggi. Le regole sono le stesse, i tempi sono rigidamente contingentati, come dicevo all'inizio dobbiamo chiudere i nostri lavori entro le 16.00.

La struttura dell'audizione prevede un primo *round* nel quale potranno esprimere il loro pensiero e porre le domande i coordinatori, ai quali è stata offerta la possibilità, dopo il minuto iniziale e la replica del Commissario designato, di riproporre la domanda o di commentare la risposta per un altro minuto. Dopo di che chiuderà il dialogo il Commissario designato, con un ulteriore e definitivo commento sulla dialettica con il coordinatore che è intervenuto.

MARTEDI' 12 GENNAIO 2010

BRUXELLES

COMMISSIONE AFFARI ESTERI

AUDIZIONE DI ŠTEFAN FÜLE

COMMISSARIO DESIGNATO

ALLARGAMENTO E POLITICA DI VICINATO

Per tutti vale la regola, che abbiamo condiviso con i coordinatori in sede di ufficio di presidenza e che ribadisco devo necessariamente applicare con rigore: avete un solo minuto a vostra disposizione per porre, ribadisco, una sola domanda, proprio per consentire al Commissario designato, nel poco tempo che anche a lui viene affidato, di poter replicare adeguatamente alle domande. Se nel vostro minuto ne ponete troppe, è impossibile per il Commissario dare un'adeguata risposta.

Detto questo e senza ulteriore indugio, do volentieri la parola al Commissario designato, pregandolo di stare nei dieci minuti che gli sono affidati, prego Commissario.

Štefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – Distinguished Chair, distinguished Members of Parliament, ladies and gentlemen. As I was walking here this afternoon. I could not help thinking how far both my country and I have come in only two decades: from a life behind the Iron Curtain, geographically in the centre of Europe, to standing in front of the representatives of 500 million citizens and far closer to the true heart of Europe. Who would have imagined that 20 years ago?

I am honoured by today's opportunity to engage in a discussion with you on two of the Union's most ambitious policies, which are also very close to my heart: enlargement and neighbourhood.

To me, enlargement is more than a policy portfolio. It has transformed my country and my own life. It has transformed Europe as a whole. It has restored hope and dignity to millions of people. This is why I am a strong believer in further reunification. The most recent enlargement showed clearly that this is a policy which has brought huge benefits for citizens across the Union: increased trade and investment, with all their impact on economic growth and job creation, more mobility for citizens, reduced unemployment and higher living standards.

But, most importantly, enlargement reunified a divided continent and helped consolidate democracy, stability and security in Europe. The Iron Curtain that separated Europe during the Cold War came down in 1989, but its shadow only vanished through enlargement. I want to work closely with you, the European Parliament, not only because the Treaties ask us to, but because the

European Parliament has traditionally been the champion of enlargement, and only by working together can we achieve the same benefits from future enlargements.

With each and every new accession we have to make sure that Europe becomes not only larger, but also stronger. New enlargements have strengthened the fabric of Europe. This has been the experience so far. I see it as my duty to make it so for the accession to come.

The rules are clear – there are not, and there should not be, shortcuts to membership: the conditions are the same for everyone. The pace of reforms determines progress towards membership. Being a European Union member is a demanding task for which one must be properly prepared. I believe strongly that it is my duty to assist these countries in pursuing their reform agenda, and I will make maximum use of all instruments and resources at my disposal to do so. It is important, as my job will be to make sure that accession is proposed only to countries that can make full benefit from it and can bring their positive contribution to Europe.

Ladies and gentlemen, all of our neighbours are important for the European Union and all are important for me. I am committed to devoting equal attention to our neighbours in the east and in the south. Our neighbours are diverse, and so are individual EU Member States' relations with them. I believe strongly that our neighbourhood policy should provide us with a coherent approach that ensures that the whole of the European Union is committed to deeper relations with all our neighbours, while at the same time allowing us to develop tailor-made relations with each country. I will cooperate closely with High Representative Ashton in coordinating our political and policy responses towards our neighbours. Our cooperation with our partners can only go as far as they are ready to take it.

I intend to engage in the closest dialogue possible with our neighbours and to listen to their needs in a spirit of partnership. I will do this bilaterally as well as at a regional level through both the Union for Mediterranean and the Eastern Partnership, and I will encourage the active involvement of the pan-parliamentary dimension in this dialogue.

I will promote a policy of progressive engagement with those countries which are not as yet full participants in our neighbourhood policy. If we want our partners to engage more deeply we must offer the right incentives. Democratic and market-oriented reforms in our neighbourhood should be complemented by increased market access and mobility. I will work together with the Trade Commissioner towards deep and comprehensive trade agreements, where possible, and with the Home Affairs Commissioner on easing the visa regime of those partners who address successfully the issues of security and illegal migration.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Europe I believe in is built on shared values. A clear commitment to democracy,

diversity and the rule of law; an economy which should provide opportunities and prosperity for all; and the general respect for the fundamental rights of its citizens – these are conditions for lasting peace and stability. Stability at our borders is Europe's stability. These are the basic values which all current members of the Union share and respect every day. I will work with all partner countries willing and able to fully implement these values and to promote them actively.

The Lisbon Treaty has given the Union the tools we need for a more efficient, democratic and coherent Europe. The European Union's credibility as a global actor depends on our capacity to shape our own borders and our immediate neighbourhood. This is a major challenge for us all, which I believe we can meet if we work all and well together.

(Applause)

2-005

José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra (PPE). – Señor Presidente, en nombre del Grupo del Partido Popular Europeo quisiera darle la bienvenida al señor Füle y recordarle que, para nuestro Grupo, la Comisión no es una Europa de burócratas apátridas, sino que es una institución clave en el proceso de construcción europea. Por eso, esperamos de usted y de todos los Comisarios que se comporten como hombres políticos: esperamos lealtad institucional, cooperación con este Parlamento en el ámbito de las prerrogativas que nos conceden los Tratados, compromiso y convicción europeísta, ambición y visión.

Y sobre este punto, señor Füle, le hice una pregunta ayer a la señora Ashton y me gustaría saber, más allá de lo inmediato del presente y de la inercia del presente, cuál es, en el ámbito de las responsabilidades que le ha asignado el Presidente Durão Barroso, su visión de Europa en los próximos diez o quince años, teniendo en cuenta sus responsabilidades, y qué papel les debería corresponder a las Asambleas Parlamentarias Euromed y Euronex y a las comisiones parlamentarias mixtas.

2-006

Štefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – A very important question. Let me focus on enlargement as you mentioned Europe. I will be responsible for both enlargement and neighbourhood policy. Actually I think it is a good idea. It is not about taking away the importance of the neighbourhood policy, it is not about lack of coordination with Lady Ashton and the High Representatives.

On the contrary, we had a number of meetings, and I am sure that throughout the process we will show you how good a team we can be to engage even the smaller countries to make sure that the capacities of the High Representatives of the External Service work well with the Commission's capacities and instruments.

Enlargement was a success. It made Europe stronger, it made Europe more relevant and also served as an inspiration for the countries of Central and Eastern

Europe. We now have conditions to continue the enlargement, the Lisbon Treaty. We have a renewed commitment to enlargement from 2006 to which I am very much committed. I would like that commitment to bring some results during the next five years. I would very much like to invite new members to our family within these five years.

I would like to focus on the political side of the process. Within these five years I am sure we will involve other candidate countries and potential countries more in the integration process. Beyond the five years, I would very much like the European Union to be outward looking and not inward looking. I hope very much that we will stick with Article 49 and the prospect it gives to those who would seek membership.

I hope very much that the European Union will find the way to support the stability and reform in the eastern neighbourhood.

2-007

José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra (PPE). – Señor Füle, ayer, cuando la diputada Oomen-Ruijten le preguntó a la señora Ashton dónde se situaría su primera lealtad, ella, con gran habilidad, nos dijo que trataría de evitar de ponerse en esa situación y que le correspondería de alguna manera la coordinación de la Política Europea de Vecindad.

Usted, señor Füle, está en una situación distinta; usted tiene que prestar, como miembro del Colegio de Comisarios, un juramento ante el Tribunal de Justicia diciendo que va a actuar de forma independiente de los Estados miembros.

He leído atentamente las respuestas al cuestionario por escrito y sus respuestas son bastante satisfactorias, pero me gustaría que quedase hoy meridianamente claro que usted asume una responsabilidad política ante este Parlamento y no ante el Consejo de Ministros y, en caso de una discrepancia con la Sra. Ashton, le pregunto lo que le preguntó ayer la Sra. Oomen-Ruijten a la Sra. Ashton: ¿dónde se situaría, señor Füle, su primera lealtad?

2-008

Štefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – I wish to make myself as clear as I can. I am politically accountable to the European Parliament on both issues: enlargement and neighbourhood policy. It will be the overall responsibility of the High Representative to make sure that our External Service is represented by one voice, but within that framework I will be responsible for neighbourhood policy. While the desk officers dealing with these issues will be part of the External Service, I will be able to draw upon their capabilities and use their services.

I will be working together with the High Representative on programming issues, and together we will present these programming issues to the College of Commissioners, but on both issues I will work actively with the European Parliament.

2-009

Hannes Swoboda (S&D). – Herr Vorsitzender! Herr Füle, ich darf Sie im Namen der Sozialdemokraten und Demokraten in diesem Haus begrüßen. Wir glauben, dass es sehr gut ist, dass Erweiterungs- und Nachbarschaftspolitik zusammen in einem Ressort sind, und wünschen Ihnen viel Erfolg, sollten Sie bestätigt werden selbstverständlich.

Zwei Fragen: Wir haben eine gewisse Erweiterungsmüdigkeit in unserer Bevölkerung zu verzeichnen. Auf der anderen Seite gibt es die Notwendigkeit, gut vorbereitete Erweiterungsschritte vorzunehmen. Werden Sie Initiativen ergreifen, um auch gerade in der Bevölkerung die Erweiterung als ein wichtiges Konzept der Europäischen Union zu vertreten? Und im Konkreten, was den Balkan betrifft: Wie sehen Sie den Erweiterungs- oder Integrationsprozess der Balkanregion, insbesondere Kroatiens, aber auch der anderen Länder? Ist das auf einem guten Weg, oder sehen Sie hier große Probleme?

2-010

Štefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – I think we all recognise that the countries of the Western Balkans have huge historical and political baggage. That is why we need to help them as much as we can, to use all of our instruments to proceed with the necessary reforms, to make it possible for them to implement all the necessary reforms and to be able to assume not only the rights but also the obligations stemming from the European Union membership. This is my priority that I shall be focusing on in the years to come: the Balkans.

I am also making sure that we do not leave any country from the Western Balkans behind and in the cold. I think that we now have a tremendous opportunity with the Lisbon Treaty being adopted to make this enlargement process more political. I hope to negotiate and I expect to engage politicians all around Europe in this process. I also expect to mobilise all the instruments on the Commission side to make sure that we explain to our citizens the benefit of enlargement because one thing is absolutely clear: unless we persuade our citizens that what we are doing is good, not only for Europe and the politicians but also for them, we fail.

2-011

Hannes Swoboda (S&D). – Was nun die Nachbarschaftspolitik betrifft, so gibt es eine Reihe von Ländern – wie zum Beispiel die Ukraine –, die näher an die Europäische Union herankommen wollen, denen wir aber jetzt noch keine klaren Zusagen für ihre Mitgliedschaft machen können. Sind Sie bereit, Herr Füle, neue Initiativen zu setzen, um gerade diesen Ländern eine positive Antwort geben zu können, dass sie in dem gesamten weiteren Integrationsprozess doch eine große Rolle spielen, insbesondere im Rahmen der Schwarzmeerregion? Sind Sie da bereit, neue Initiativen zu setzen?

2-012

Štefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – We should appreciate that the Ukrainians want to be closer to the European Union, because we want the same. We want

Ukraine and the other eastern Europe countries to get closer to the European Union. We now have an excellent instrument – the Eastern Partnership – which we started in Prague in May last year. There are many important instruments we can engage and they are all on offer to the Ukrainians.

They concern not only more intensive political dialogue, but also comprehensive free trade agreements as well as steps on the mobility issue. We are engaged in a discussion on an association agreement with the Ukrainians, so we have the full menu to offer these countries, to meet their ambitions of getting closer to the European Union.

2-013

Johannes Cornelis van Baalen (ALDE). – On behalf of the ALDE Group, we have always said that the enlargement process was successful, both for the original Member States and the new ones. But we have to stick to the Copenhagen criteria and should not mention timetables. Could you refer to that?

Secondly, in your written answers you talk about Turkey, and you want to take the process with Turkey forward. However, Turkey's Foreign Minister has said that it will not ratify or implement the Ankara Protocol, which is to me a breach of good trust because it is an obligation on them. How will you act? Business as usual, which is not my favourite, or putting strict criteria to the Turks to keep to their commitments? I would like to have your answer.

2-014

Štefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – My first point concerns the Copenhagen criteria. They are the key requirements, and through the reporting process and daily work with the candidate countries – by which I mean those participating in the accession talks – I will not only make sure that we know what stage they have reached in fulfilling them but I will also assist them to meet these criteria. The Commission does not work on the basis of an artificial timetable; the Commission bases its work on the merits of the preparations made by each and every candidate, and will continue to do so. It is up to the candidate countries to set their own ambitious goals. But it is up to us to work with them on a daily basis on their own merits.

Concerning Turkey, yes, I intend to go ahead with the accession talks with that country. But as far as the Ankara Protocol is concerned, it will not be 'business as usual' because I will do everything I can, when talking to my counterpart on the Turkish side, to make it absolutely clear to them that they need to implement that Protocol, and I will report back to you at the end of this year.

2-015

Johannes Cornelis van Baalen (ALDE). – But, Commissioner-designate, the present Commission has also said time and again: you should ratify and implement. But Turkey does not want to do so, and it has stated it does not want to do so. So you can go to

Ankara and say 'please ratify and implement' but this will have no effect. So you have to have a vision and strategy under which you cannot go on with the talks, opening new chapters, until they come and ratify and implement. This is a real condition, otherwise they will not listen.

2-016

Štefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – Firstly, I think we have already made it absolutely clear on eight particular chapters of the accession talks how serious we are and how serious we could be.

Secondly, I think we all realise the connection between this issue and the peace talks on Cyprus, between the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots.

What I am asking is to give me time to work this issue through in my context, and I promise to do exactly as the Heads of the Member States decided in December – reporting to you and to them on the progress of such an important issue as the implementation of the Ankara Protocol.

2-017

Ulrike Lunacek (Verts/ALE). – Sehr geehrter Herr Füle! Im Namen der Fraktion der Grünen/EFA auch hier ein herzliches Willkommen im Europaparlament. Sie haben selbst in Ihren ersten Ausführungen die positiven Auswirkungen der letzten Erweiterung und dieser Wiedervereinigung Europas dargestellt, auch aus Ihrer eigenen Lebensgeschichte heraus, und haben richtigerweise gesagt: Das Europaparlament ist sozusagen der Champion der Erweiterung. Wir – dieses Parlament hier – sind es gewesen, die das auch immer weiter gefordert haben. In der letzten Entschließung, die wir im Herbst verabschiedet haben, haben wir uns klar gegen Erweiterungsmüdigkeit und für ein starkes Engagement für die Erweiterung mit dem Ziel des Beitritts für den Westbalkan und auch für die Türkei ausgesprochen. Wir haben auch klar gesagt, dass es die Visaliberalisierung für Bosnien und Herzegowina und Albanien bis Mitte 2010 geben muss und dass der Visadialog mit Kosovo sofort aufgenommen werden muss. Sind das alles Punkte – das Ziel des Beitritts des Westbalkans und der Türkei, die Visaliberalisierung für Bosnien und Herzegowina und Albanien sowie der sofortige Beginn des Dialogs mit Kosovo –, die Sie auch teilen?

2-018

Štefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – I had a little bit of a problem with the translation at the end of your question, but if the question was about Kosovo and Albania, and whether I recognise them...

(The Chair cut off the speaker.)

2-019

Ulrike Lunacek (Verts/ALE). – May I repeat the question – it was whether you agree with the European Parliament on the objective of accession for the Western Balkans and Turkey, on visa liberalisation for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania by mid-2010, and on starting the visa dialogue with Kosovo right now.

2-020

Štefan Füle, *Commissioner-designate*. – Yes, I agree with that. Visa liberalisation was an important step in the relationship between the European Union and the Western Balkans.

I am very glad that on 19 December we were able to provide three countries with visa-free access to us. Coming from the Czech Republic, I know the importance of being able to take your passport and not having to ask for a visa to go into the Schengen territory and to travel freely within the Schengen area.

I will be working very hard to be able to recommend, by the middle of next year, that the two remaining countries, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania, also be added to this list – but of course that very much depends on their homework.

Finally, I am also committed to starting a structured dialogue with Kosovo to come closer to a long-term perspective of also having a visa-free regime with Kosovo.

Bearing all of that in mind, my first priority will always be the security of the EU citizens.

2-021

Ulrike Lunacek (Verts/ALE). – Meine zweite Frage bezieht sich auf die Europäische Nachbarschaftspolitik. Es gibt ja Bestrebungen, die Beziehungen mit einigen dieser Länder aufzuwerten. Diese Beziehungen basieren auf der Verpflichtung zu gemeinsamen Werten: gute Regierungsführung, Rechtsstaatlichkeit und auch Respektierung von Menschenrechten – und zwar von allen Menschenrechten, sei es von ethnischen Minderheiten, sei es von sexuellen Minderheiten – Lesben, Schwulen, Bisexuellen, Transgenderpersonen –, von Menschen mit Behinderung. Wird, wenn es um die Aufwertung der Beziehungen zu einigen der Nachbarschaftsländer geht, für Sie der Respekt für die Menschenrechte von allen Menschen eine Basis, eine Grundbedingung für die Aufwertung dieser Beziehungen sein?

2-022

Štefan Füle, *Commissioner-designate*. – Yes, I will. I strongly believe that our neighbourhood policy is not only about our interests, but also about our values. Our interest in the neighbourhood policy should not be at the expense of our values. Indeed, I see respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms at the core of our relationship.

This may be a little bit easier in the east, and it may be more difficult in the south, where we have various arrangements with individual countries. However, as part of each and every action plan we have with these countries, and as part of each and every dialogue with these countries, human rights and fundamental freedoms have played an important role, and this will also be so in the years to come.

2-023

Charles Tannock (ECR). – Commissioner-designate Füle, first of all a very warm welcome on behalf of the ECR Group, whom you have already addressed. You have a distinguished CV and career, including Ambassador to my country and to NATO, and you have also, to your credit, clearly repudiated and recognised the error of your membership and activities within the Communist Party which imposed dictatorship on former Czechoslovakia for four decades.

I am the permanent rapporteur of Parliament for Montenegro, which Olli Rehn, your predecessor, described as a ‘good-news story’ in terms of EU accession. Are you prepared to repeat these words again? Furthermore, I would like you to confirm your help in convincing Croatia to release their available translation of the *acquis* so that tiny Montenegro with limited resources does not have to reinvent the wheel and can coordinate its transposition of the *acquis* with similar jurisdictions like Serbia. Lastly, can you also explain how you would intend to resolve the almost comical FYROM/Macedonia name question?

2-024

Štefan Füle, *Commissioner-designate*. – On Bosnia and Herzegovina, I will not hide from you that we are concerned about the current pace of reform in the country.

You asked about Bosnia and Herzegovina?

(Charles Tannock replied that he had asked about Montenegro.)

My mistake; I am extremely sorry.

On Montenegro: while there are some issues I am going to raise with my colleagues from Montenegro, I see that country as actually being on the right path concerning integration into the European Union. We are now working on the opinion – the *avis* – and of course we will share it with the European Parliament.

On Croatia: my understanding is that the Croatian authorities have already agreed to share the translation. I think it is obvious, and I will work with them to make sure that they are as helpful as possible towards their neighbours in their joint quest; I will attribute a lot of attention to the regional aspect of the cooperation.

On FYROM, you know that a difficult discussion is going on under the auspices of the United Nations. The European Union fully supports the UN offices and Mr Nimic. I hope very much that both sides will use the window of the opportunity. You know about the Commission’s determination to propose that we start the accession talks with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and I hope it will happen soon.

2-025

Charles Tannock (ECR). – I am a strong friend of Ukraine, everyone knows that. Speaking entirely personally – that is, you personally – whilst you accept fully of course that not all Member States would agree

with this position, can you confirm that you have an open mind on eventual EU membership for Ukraine, under Article 49 of the Treaties, if that is its sovereign will? We have a presidential election there this weekend. That seems to be the thrust of both of the front-runner candidates: they both want to join the EU. Can you say that you personally have an open mind on this issue?

Also the ENP, which is your brief, includes a southern dimension, which will include Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Will you be at all involved in the efforts to establish a two-state solution and peaceful dialogue, or will this be entirely left in the hands of the High Representative?

2-026

Presidente. – Commissario, lei ha un minuto per replicare, ma siccome sono state formulate due domande, lei può scegliere a quale delle due rispondere, perché la regola è che va presentata una sola domanda in un minuto, prego.

2-027

Stefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – I have an open mind concerning Article 49 of our Treaty. I think it does not need any further interpretation: it states very clearly who has the right to apply to become an EU member.

Is Ukraine there? No, it is not. Is the Eastern Partnership the right tool to bring Ukraine closer? Yes, it is, and that is why I will devote most of my attention to this particular issue.

2-028

Willy Meyer (GUE/NGL). – Bienvenido señor Füle, en nombre de mi Grupo, el de la Izquierda Unitaria Europea/Izquierda Verde Nórdica. Queríamos conocer su opinión referente a aquellos Estados con los que tenemos acuerdos de asociación, que, como bien sabe usted, en su artículo 2 establecen una cláusula democrática de obligado cumplimiento. Me refiero concretamente al Estado de Israel y al Reino de Marruecos, que incumplen sistemáticamente el Derecho internacional y el Derecho humanitario.

No hay reacción por parte de la Unión Europea respecto a estos continuos incumplimientos, es decir, Israel con las continuas agresiones, incluso condenadas por Naciones Unidas, o el caso de Marruecos, con un proceso de descolonización en el que se niega sistemáticamente a cumplir las resoluciones del Consejo de Seguridad de las Naciones Unidas.

Hasta ahora, la doctrina del Parlamento Europeo o de la Unión Europea ha sido no exigir el cumplimiento de ese artículo 2, de la cláusula democrática.

2-029

Stefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you for the question. Firstly it provides me with the opportunity to make it absolutely clear that, while Baroness Ashton as the High Representative will be focusing on the Middle East process, I will be helping her with the bilateral relationship between the European Union and the countries concerned – Israel, the Palestinian

Authorities and other countries in the region – in the framework of the neighbourhood policy.

I share your concern regarding the state of human rights in some of the countries. I share your concern with some particular issues concerning Israel and Morocco. It is important that we keep open the dialogue which is provided through the Association Agreements, which is provided through the various instruments within the Association Agreements and action plans. It is important to be engaged with these countries on these issues. To stop talking to them, to stop using these instruments, will not help us to promote this agenda. I will be working very actively with you on this issue to make sure that we are sending the right messages to them.

2-030

Willy Meyer (GUE/NGL). – Señor Füle, el problema es que, en el caso del Reino de Marruecos, hemos dado un paso más: se le ha otorgado un estatus avanzado. Es prácticamente un Estado miembro de la Unión sin serlo. Y, sin embargo, en los territorios ocupados del Sáhara occidental continuamente se violan los derechos humanos. Lo pudimos ver en el caso de Aminatou Haidar, lo vemos con detenciones arbitrarias, con gente torturada y, sin embargo, ese estatus avanzado se mantiene.

Por lo tanto, le emplazo a usted a mantener un discurso vivo del cumplimiento de la legalidad internacional. No se puede sostener en el siglo XXI una Unión Europea en donde, ante un proceso de descolonización –tal vez el único que quede pendiente en el mundo–, Europa mire para otro lado o aplauda al Estado que impide al pueblo saharauí ejercer su derecho a la autodeterminación. Éste es un requerimiento que le hacemos desde nuestro Grupo para que nos dé una respuesta concreta.

2-031

Stefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – I am concerned about the violation of human rights, particularly in connection with Western Sahara, but let me make one thing absolutely clear on an advanced status with some of these countries. While I basically welcome their interest in having our relationship upgraded, my position would be that enhancement of this framework also brings an enhancement of their responsibilities and commitments. So I will be making a clear link between the enhancing of our relationship and enhancement of the commitment of these countries to implementing the values which are dear to us.

2-032

Bastiaan Belder (EFD). – Geachte kandidaat-commissaris, allereerst hartelijk dank voor het constructief overleg dat we al met elkaar mochten hebben, vorig jaar, in december, meen ik, en ik zie het als een goede basis voor een verdere samenwerking op het gebied van uw portefeuille.

Ik wil me bij deze hoorzitting beperken tot Turkije. Dit land, dat van zichzelf beweert een seculiere staat te zijn, bevoordeelt op alle denkbare manieren de soennitische islam. Denk aan het presidium voor religieuze

aangelegenheden of het coördinerende ministerie. De keerzijde hiervan is een schrijnend gebrek aan gelijkberechtiging van alle religieuze gemeenschappen in Turkije. Deelt u deze analyse en op welke manieren bent u van plan zich in te zetten voor een nieuwe Turkse grondwet? Een grondwet waarin alle religieuze gemeenschappen in het land daadwerkelijk rechtspersoonlijkheid krijgen, want dat is het punt. Pas met rechtspersoonlijkheid kunnen kerken ook kerkgebouwen hebben en hebben niet meer die omweg nodig van andere instellingen om die lacune te vullen.

2-033

Štefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – Based on the translation, I was not able to specifically detect a question. However, I understand the source of your concern – which I share to a large extent – the freedom of religion in Turkey.

This is one of the Copenhagen criteria I will be pursuing attentively in our discussion with Turkey. There has been a lot of progress in Turkey and many issues which have been taboo in the past are now being debated in society. We must ensure that there is a legal framework which guarantees freedom to religious minorities and we need to establish a record of the Turkish authorities' implementation of such a framework.

2-034

Bastiaan Belder (EFD). – Mijn vervolgvraag gaat expliciet over de positie van de christelijke minderheid in Turkije. Het komt maar al te vaak voor dat wanneer zij openlijk voor hun geloof uitkomen of erover praten, ze als staatsgevaarlijk worden beschouwd, met alle juridische gevolgen vandien. Daar vraag ik vooral uw aandacht voor. Het is ook terug te vinden in het laatste rapport van de Commissie, over de zaak Tastan. Wat is hier aan de hand? Het gaat om een christen die voor zijn geloof uitkwam, en die op 28 januari voor de zestiende keer voor de rechter moet verschijnen. Het lijkt er veel op dat de Turkse autoriteiten hoe dan ook een veroordeling wensen. Waarom zeg ik dat? Reeds zes verschillende aanklagers die allen voor vrijspraak van Tastan hebben gepleit, zijn van de zaak gehaald. Kandidaat-commissaris, echt, het is niet alleen een vraag, het is een dringend verzoek: ik roep u op deze onverkwikkelijke zaak bij de bevoegde Turkse autoriteiten onder de aandacht te brengen.

Verder zou ik van u willen weten, dat is echt een vraag, hoe urgent de terreinen van godsdienstvrijheid en het functioneren van de rechterlijke macht in verband daarmee voor u zijn? Waar het absoluut om gaat is om op deze terreinen wezenlijke progressie te boeken, want er is geen progressie.

2-035

Štefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – As I have already indicated, religious freedom will be among the key requirements that I will be focusing on in my discussions with Turkey as we proceed through the accession negotiations. I will be addressing this issue in general terms but, in contacts with you and based on interventions like this one, I shall also raise concrete

issues to be resolved by the Turkish authorities, and I shall report to you.

I indeed welcome your being in touch with me on all these issues, not only on Turkey but also on other countries – as I take very seriously the general issue of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of religion – in order to raise with the authorities of all partners concrete issues of rights being violated.

2-036

Andreas Mölzer (NI). – Herr Füle, auch ich möchte mit einer Frage zur Türkei anschließen. Wir haben ja diese unbefriedigenden Zustände im Hinblick auf die Menschenrechte: Es gibt die bereits angesprochene Diskriminierung von Christen, es gibt nach wie vor die Relativierung des Armenier-Genozids, und es gibt das große Problem mit der Behandlung des kurdischen Volkes, wo ja unlängst erst die Kurdenpartei DTP verboten wurde, es gibt das Problem des Ilisu-Staudamms, der ja auch nicht zuletzt zur Kurdendiskriminierung dienen soll.

Sie selbst haben in Ihrer schriftlichen Antwort auf die Fragen des Europäischen Parlaments angemerkt, dass eine Voraussetzung für weitere Fortschritte in den Verhandlungen mit der Türkei verstärkte Bemühungen derselben um die Erfüllung der festgelegten Bedingungen sind, wozu unter anderem auch die nichtdiskriminierende Anwendung des Zusatzprotokolls zum Assoziierungsabkommen gehört. Die Türkei ist aber offenbar nicht gewillt, dieses Verhandlungsergebnis umzusetzen. Sind Sie nicht auch der Meinung, dass man eigentlich die Verhandlungen mit der Türkei aussetzen bzw. einfrieren sollte, bis sie alle Bedingungen erfüllt?

2-037

Štefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – Let me say at this point that I respect the achievements of Turkey and the reform process to get it closer to the Europe Union, as well as the strong commitment of the Turkish authorities to the European Union.

Turkey is an important country. It is an important partner in the dialogue of civilisations and in the energy sector. That is why we are engaging with Turkey, and that is why we are very keen to engage with Turkey through accession talks, because this is the best leverage we have to help Turkey modernise. In the accession talks we will make clear what the conditions are and assess Turkey in its reform process, including the one to which you refer.

I was encouraged by the Turkish position on Kurdistan, on openness. It was a setback when the Kurdish party was banned, and I do not think this tallies with a democratic opening to find a solution to this issue.

2-038

Andreas Mölzer (NI). – Herr Füle, eine weitere Frage zur Nachbarschaftspolitik, die Sie ja auch betreuen sollen, und zwar im Hinblick auf Osteuropa: Es geht ja auch um ein gedeihliches Verhältnis der Europäischen

Union zu Russland, das durch die Nachbarschaftspolitik in Osteuropa mehr oder weniger direkt tangiert ist. Sie kennen ja nicht zuletzt seit Ihren langen Jahren als Student, als junger Kommunist in Moskau die Sensibilitäten und die Belange der russischen geostrategischen und geopolitischen Positionen. Wie glauben Sie denn, dass die Europäische Union in Weißrussland, in der Ukraine, auch in den Kaukasusstaaten agieren sollte, um hier einerseits positive Nachbarschaftspolitik und Heranführung an Europa zu bewerkstelligen, andererseits aber russische Sensibilitäten nicht zu gefährden und ein gedeihliches Verhältnis zu Moskau herzustellen, nicht zuletzt in der Energiefrage?

2-039

Štefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – The future of Eastern Europe, as I see it, is a future where each and every country of Eastern Europe is in charge of steering its own future closer to the European Union and closer to Russia. I do not see any problem or any contradiction there. I do not think it is for those countries to choose between a better relationship with the European Union or a better relationship with Russia.

Russia should be our constructive partner and be engaged on many issues, including the Eastern Partnership. It is important at the same time to be absolutely clear when dealing with our Russian partners that the time of zero-sum games is over, and that what we are looking for is a win-win situation for everyone, but first of all for the countries of Eastern Europe.

2-040

Andrzej Grzyb (PPE), wiceprzewodniczący podkomisji DROI. – Panie Komisarzu! Chciałbym poruszyć sprawę - „partnerstwo wschodnie a prawa człowieka”. Czy zamierza Pan rozwinąć szczególne instrumenty na rzecz wspierania demokracji i praw człowieka w ramach partnerstwa wschodniego? Przykład Białorusi: białoruscy opozycjoniści podkreślają pozytywny wpływ polityki zachęty - mówimy niekiedy „marchewki”, prowadzonej przez Unię Europejską, ale także ostrzegają nas przed możliwym fiaskiem takiej polityki, jeżeli nie będą spełnione odpowiednie warunki przez np. Białoruś. Jakie powinny być priorytety we współpracy np. z Białorusią? Jakie metody powinny być stosowane, aby z jednej strony osiągnąć to, co powinno być naszym celem, a więc standardy praw i wolności obywatelskich, przestrzegania praw człowieka, a z drugiej strony jednocześnie wypełnić założenia związane z partnerstwem wschodnim?

2-041

Štefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – I think I have already made it clear that it is important within the Eastern Partnership to involve all our partners in dialogue, and not to leave any one of them in the cold. This is also relevant to Belarus. But Belarus has a long way to go to become fully involved in the activities we are pursuing there.

As you know, the Belarusians are as yet invited only to the thematic platform of the Eastern Partnership. What

the policy should be is a gradual approach. I think there is a lot we can offer to Belarus, in terms of visa facilitation, full participation in the Eastern Partnership and helping them with reform. While we are doing that, it is important that we work on the civil society and that we make sure that, while we prepare ourselves to help the Belarusians, we are also very clear about what kind of conditions Belarus has to fulfil. Political persecution should stop. This is one of the five or six basic conditions we have. As the Belarusians implement these conditions, so we should gradually open ourselves and use the instruments we have within the Eastern Partnership to involve this country not only in dialogue but in a very deep cooperation with us.

2-042

Arnaud Danjean (PPE) Président de la sous-commission SEDE. – Merci Monsieur le Président.

M. Füle, les pays des Balkans occidentaux ont naturellement vocation à rejoindre l'Union européenne. J'espère que vous pourrez conclure rapidement les négociations avec la Croatie et que l'on pourra ensuite progresser avec l'ancienne République yougoslave de Macédoine. La vocation naturelle et évidente de ces pays n'est pas pour autant synonyme de fuite en avant inconditionnelle, et j'espère aussi que vous saurez leur rappeler le respect des critères de Copenhague et, en particulier, le respect de la coopération avec le tribunal pénal international pour l'ex-Yougoslavie.

Ma question précise concerne la Serbie, qui vient de poser sa candidature, ce dont nous pouvons nous réjouir puisque cette candidature vient sanctionner des progrès tout à fait remarquables. Cependant, nous savons aussi que le contentieux lourd et durable avec le Kosovo pèsera sur les relations bilatérales et également sur toute la stabilité régionale.

Ainsi, il est inconcevable que la Serbie et le Kosovo rejoignent un jour l'Union européenne sans qu'une forme de normalisation ait été atteinte. Quelles sont les pistes qui pourraient être explorées dans cette voie? Merci.

2-043

Štefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – As you know, the International Court of Justice in The Hague is now dealing with this issue. While we recognise that we do not have ideal unity and consensus on the status of Kosovo in the European Union, I would like very much to use the unity we have within the European Union. It is a unity on engaging Kosovo and not leaving Kosovo out of the integration framework. That is why the Commission proposed, at the end of last year, a number of initiatives which are 'status neutral' to help Kosovo get closer to the European Union.

I very much hope that the discussion between the EU and Serbia – and I welcome all the progress in Serbia and their application – will not be distracted by this issue. I am sure that sooner or later we will be able to have a constructive dialogue with Serbia within the accession framework on their preparations for EU membership.

2-044

Zuzana Roithová (PPE). – Budete mít na starost také politiku Východního partnerství, projektu Unie, který byl započat právě za českého předsednictví. Budete prohlubovat vztahy Evropské unie s bývalými zeměmi Sovětského svazu, a to někdy i proti vůli Ruska. Ptám se tedy konkrétně, zda budete nekompromisně podporovat znovuoobnovení územní celistvosti Gruzie a jejího práva na vlastní demokratický vývoj, a to i proti vůli Ruska. Očekávám, že Váš postoj bude diplomatický, ale suverénní. Na jaký stupeň bezpečnosti jste byl prověřen při své misi v NATO?

2-045

Libor Rouček (S&D). – Commissioner-designate, in your opening remarks you mentioned the big enlargement of 2004. I fully agree with you that in spite of some difficulties it has been a great success. However, there is one country – Cyprus – where not all the people, where not all the communities, enjoy the fruits of enlargement.

As Commissioner responsible for enlargement and neighbourhood policy, what do you intend to do to help the reunification process in Cyprus? In your view, what can the EU do to help bring the ongoing talks between the two communities to a successful end?

What can we do to increase people-to-people relations, trade, business, cultural contacts – in other words to fulfil the aims and the goals of the negotiations and talks to have a bi-communal, bi-zonal solution?

2-046

Cristian Dan Preda (PPE). – Ca raportor pentru Islanda, aş vrea să ştiu care este opinia dumneavoastră despre aderarea acestei ţări la Uniune şi, mai ales, aş vrea să ştiu dacă, în viziunea dumneavoastră, consideraţi că soluţionarea disputei legate de legislaţia Icesave este o condiţie pentru integrarea Islandei în Uniune. Dacă vă rămân câteva secunde şi, bineînţeles, dacă domnul preşedinte Albertini o permite, aş vrea, de asemenea, să spuneti o vorbă despre felul în care vedeţi aderarea Moldovei la Uniunea Europeană.

2-047

Štefan Füle, Commissaire désigné. – Pokud jde o Východní partnerství, dovoluji vám, abych potvrdil, že tam, kde budeme mít stejné zájmy, budeme aktivně spolupracovat s Ruskem. Tam, kde ale budeme mít rozdílné názory – a pokud jde o Gruzii, tam máme rozdílné názory, ať už se jedná o přístup mise EU na území obou provincií nebo o stažení ruských vojáků z části tohoto území – tak tam budeme samozřejmě postupovat zásadně a principiálně. Gruzie je přesně tou ukázkou, kde se nabízí velmi aktivní spolupráce mezi vysokou představitelkou paní Ashton a mezi komisařem pro Východní partnerství, kde můžeme dát dohromady krizový management, který bude mít na starosti vysoká představitelka, resp. služba vnější akce, a politiku EU ze strany Komise.

Můj stupeň prověření je prověření na nejvyšší stupeň, tj. přísně tajné, ATOMAL, takovýto stupeň prověření má jen několik málo lidí v České republice.

2-048

As regards Cyprus, some time ago the Commission proposed two things. The first was an aid package, and the second was a series of trade measures to make sure that the northern part of the island was not isolated. The aid package has been agreed by the European Council; the rest is still on the table at the European Council.

We support the discussions under the auspices of the UN. President Barroso has created a steering group and sent his Special Representative to assist the process.

Thirdly, we are fully ready to assist both sides to implement that agreement which, I hope, will be achieved soon, as I see that there has been an intensification of the contacts between both leaders. It is a very important issue.

Turning to Iceland – thank you, Mr Chair, for being so gracious – we have received answers from Iceland in response to our questionnaire. We are now working on the matter. What we are looking at is to what extent Iceland has fulfilled all the obligations resulting from its membership of the European Economic Area and to what extent it has the capacity to deliver on this issue. It will be a part of our ‘acquis’, but at the same time let me tell you that the Icesave question is an issue between Iceland on the one side, and the UK and the Netherlands on the other.

2-049

Μαρία-Ελένη Κοτπά (S&D). – Κύριε Πρόεδρε, κύριε Füle, θα ήθελα να επιστρέψω στο ζήτημα της Σερβίας. Η απόφαση του Δεκεμβρίου για την εφαρμογή της ενδιάμεσης εμπορικής συμφωνίας αποτελεί αναμφίβολα ένα βήμα μπροστά. Παράλληλα, η πρόσφατη έκθεση του Γενικού Εισαγγελέα, του κ. Brammertz, η οποία τονίζει ότι η Σερβία κάνει ό, τι είναι δυνατόν για τη σύλληψη των Μλάντιτς και Χάτζιτς δίνει ένα ισχυρό μήνυμα για την επιτάχυνση της προσέγγισης της χώρας με την Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση και επέτρεψε έτσι ουσιαστικά την υποβολή αίτησης ένταξης από πλευράς του Βελιγραδίου. Σήμερα η σημασία της Σερβίας για όλη την περιοχή, αλλά και η καλή διοικητική της κατάσταση, είναι αναμφισβήτητη. Δεδομένου ότι το Συμβούλιο σκοπεύει να επανέλθει στο ζήτημα της επικύρωσης της Συμφωνίας Σύνδεσης και Σταθεροποίησης το προσεχές εξάμηνο, μπορείτε να μας δώσετε ένα χρονικό πλαίσιο για τα επόμενα βήματα της Επιτροπής σε σχέση με τη Σερβία;

2-050

Ioannis Kasoulides (PPE). – The enlargement Commissioners have often in the past, linked their own personal political success to the final accession of the candidate countries they were negotiating with. You will be dealing with the countries in the Western Balkans and Iceland, but by far the biggest dossier for you is Turkey. Apart from the Copenhagen criteria, many in the European Union attach great importance to the capacity of the Union to absorb a new member at a given time, for the sake of the citizens of the Union but also for the sake of the candidate country itself. You are also aware

of what is called enlargement fatigue among European public opinion.

I heard you being very enthusiastic when speaking about enlargement and I want to ask you: what is more important in your personal opinion in the sense of priority, the capacity to absorb a given enlargement or the enlargement itself?

2-051

Sarah Ludford (ALDE). – Mr Füle, I am now going to give you the chance to talk specifically about Bosnia that Mr Tannock denied you. Last year a US academic charged the EU with lacking a viable policy towards Bosnia, and indeed you omitted any mention of Bosnia in your list of policy priorities in your written answers. Meanwhile, Bosnia and Herzegovina is a dysfunctional state sliding towards disintegration. It was judged unfit, sadly, to get visa liberalisation on 19 December, while Serbian citizens among others did.

How are you going to change the perception that Brussels is either indifferent or paralysed by dithering and division about what to do about the impending or actual crisis in Bosnia? Will you insist, for instance, that Serbia actively supports Bosnia's territorial integrity? How can the EU combine an insistence on standards and conditionality with incentives like visa liberalisation to get the necessary reforms?

2-052

Štefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – It is a question of conditionality in the framework of the visa liberalisation we are applying in Bosnia-Herzegovina and making sure that there is a list of benchmarks that the authorities have to fulfil before we can grant them such status. It is not only about the results, it is also for us an instrument to accelerate reforms in the particular country: A, B.

We have already had a discussion with Lady Ashton. She referred yesterday to ways of helping Bosnia-Herzegovina not to lose momentum and we are worried about the current situation. We hope very much that the politicians in Bosnia-Herzegovina will soon find the last remaining condition for closing the office of the High Representative, which would then allow us to be even more active. I think we need to use the prospect of Bosnian membership of the EU to the maximum extent.

As regards capacity on enlargement: both are important. I cannot imagine one without the other. Concerning the renewed commitment to enlargement, 2006, it is important to make it absolutely clear that, as we pursue the negotiations with various candidates, at the same time we are informing the European Parliament and European Council about the eventual impact on EU policy of the eventual accession of these countries to the European Union. This is something we will follow in the years to come because, if we fail on this one, we will never be able to persuade our citizens that we are following the right course.

As regards ratification and Serbia, I very much welcomed that Serbia unilaterally implemented the interim trade and trade-related agreement, before it entered into force. This established a very good record, which is to be welcomed. I very much hope that in six months' time, when the European Union members come back to the issue of the ratification of the association and stabilisation agreement, we will be in a position, on the positive report from ICTY, to go ahead and unfreeze this ratification.

2-053

Jacek Saryusz-Wolski (PPE). – The Eastern Partnership is a huge challenge of your portfolio, and your country has the political ownership of this great well-designed project. But this project needs to be filled with content. For the moment it is merely politically agreed and on paper. My question is: How do you intend to make it dynamic in the present situation – which is not easy with new institutions and a financial economic crisis ahead of us?

My question, a very concrete one, is: how do you foresee cooperating with an interparliamentary assembly of our House and six partner parliaments, called Euronest – the European Neighbourhood East? An assembly, which is now starting its work and has an ambition to be a kind of parliamentary political umbrella or an instrument of political and parliamentary scrutiny over the Eastern Partnership project?

2-054

Raimon Obiols (S&D). – Señor Füle, pasado mañana comienzan en Estambul las celebraciones por la elección de la ciudad como Capital Europea de la Cultura en el año 2010. Tenemos que contentarnos con buenas noticias en el ámbito cultural, porque, en las relaciones con Turquía en el ámbito político, las buenas noticias no abundan y es lo menos que se puede decir.

En Turquía se reduce el apoyo mayoritario a la adhesión a la Unión, prosiguen las dificultades políticas mientras se mantienen en muchos países de la Unión las reticencias frente a una eventual adhesión de Turquía a la Unión Europea.

Es una situación inquietante; puede derivar hacia un círculo vicioso en el cual se alimenten las frustraciones y esté en juego la propia credibilidad de la Unión Europea.

En este contexto, creo, señor Füle, que sería bueno que usted fuera al fondo de la cuestión. ¿Qué medidas concretas piensa que deben tomarse para crear una nueva dinámica positiva en un sentido favorable a los intereses de ambas partes en esta negociación?

2-055

Hélène Flautre (Verts/ALE). – Effectivement, vous avez - et moi aussi je m'en réjouis - marqué votre volonté d'aller de l'avant dans les processus d'adhésion, de les mener à bien, autant que faire se peut, sous votre mandat. Vous avez dit: "Les pays candidats ont des droits et des obligations, mais également l'Union européenne".

De ce point de vue, je voudrais insister à la fois sur ce que vous comptez prendre comme initiatives politiques, et sur les instruments que vous souhaitez, vous pouvez et vous comptez mobiliser pour que, par exemple, de grandes politiques communautaires comme celle de la politique agricole commune ou celle des Fonds de cohésion soient préparées ainsi d'ailleurs – et c'est une condition que posent nos opinions publiques – à l'adhésion d'un grand pays comme la Turquie à l'Union européenne.

2-056

Štefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – Let me start with the last question; the enlargement and negotiating process, or accession talks. While this is the responsibility of the Commissioner for Enlargement, it also involves other Commissioners and their related services. I will make sure that they are involved in that process from the very beginning. I will make sure that they are involved while we assess this integration capacity we were talking about before, and I will make sure that in assessing that, I inform you and the European Council about the state of play and whether we could adopt certain measures or policies if needed at the right time, rather than their being pushed into one corner at the end of the process. I take your point very seriously.

Concerning a vicious circle and Turkey, I agree on the need to introduce the element of credibility, on both sides: credibility on the side of Turkey to implement what it has committed to, and credibility on our side, because when we have unanimously adopted a negotiating framework, and when we have so many times repeated a European perspective for Turkey, our credibility means being serious over the negotiation process.

It is going to be difficult. There are still many big issues to solve. However, as I said at the beginning, we have no better form of relationship or better leverage to help Turkey modernise its state and reform its society than accession and the accession process.

On the Eastern Partnership, I would like this to be a dynamic framework, and I would like to introduce a political steer into that process. I think that cooperation with Euronest is one of the ways to introduce that political steer. I do not think it is an empty shell. I think we have to work very hard to make use of everything that is being offered. If you look, for example, at the deep and comprehensive free trade agreement, it is not only about trade, but also about convergence to sectoral policies, and it actually offers these countries most of the acquis, which would get them closer to their Europe aim for sure.

2-057

Geoffrey Van Orden (ECR). – Mr Füle, can I first of all extend a hearty welcome to you. I have to say that broadly speaking I am always in favour of enlargement as one of the useful policies of the European Union.

The trouble is the accession process is often somewhat artificial. We have a lengthy period of negotiations and then a subjective political decision is taken, often as a matter of political whim, with little regard, I have to say, to lessons from previous enlargements. I am thinking, in particular, of the question of Croatia at the moment. Regardless of the effectiveness of Croatia's policies in dealing with rights to private property, dealing with organised crime, dealing with corruption, the decision seems to have been taken that Croatia is going to accede anyway.

How are you going to guarantee that Croatia lives up to her obligations?

2-058

Ria Oomen-Ruijten (PPE). – In one of your answers you referred to Article 49 of the Treaty, on enlargement. I would like to know, because you are also responsible for neighbourhood policy, does Europe have borders and where are the borders? Could you be crystal clear on that? That is first question.

The second, which has a connection to it: Mr Sarkozy spoke about privileged partnership. I do not want to mention it in connection with Turkey, but how do you envisage privileged partnership?

2-059

Zoran Thaler (S&D). – Gospod Füle, lepo vas pozdravljam. Želim vam uspeha in sreče, ki jo boste tudi potrebovali. V uvodnem nastopu danes ste omenili svojo željo, da v petih letih dosežete pozitivni rezultat pri širitvi Evropske unije. To podpiram. Ker kandidatki ni veliko, bo rezultat lahko merljiv. Hrvaška je več ali manj izvršeno dejstvo. Tudi na nedeljskih volitvah so prepričljivo izvolili proevropskega predsednika Josipovića.

S Turčijo gre počasi, končni rezultat z Islandijo je negotov. Ali se strinjate, da je članstvo Makedonije plus napredek Srbije, Črne gore, Bosne vaša glavna šansa, vaša glavna možnost za uspeh v petih letih? Ali se strinjate, da je blokiranje Makedonije tveganje za mir, stabilnost in varnost v regiji južnega Balkana? Ali nosijo po vašem mnenju države članice EU v regiji posebno odgovornost za to? Kdaj se boste prvič podali v Atene in Skopje? Hvala.

2-060

Štefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – In response to the first question – lessons from previous enlargement – no decision has been taken, I mean on Croatia.

We have a process with Croatia. We have certain commitments on both sides, and we are of course negotiating with goodwill, because we want to achieve a certain result. However, it will be up to this House, and up to the Members of the European Union, to make that decision at the end of the day.

Are we following the lessons learned? Yes we are, if you look at the decision of the European Council on renewal of the commitment to enlargement. You will see that

there are also a number of steps, which we have already adopted and included in the accession process; we have to make sure the candidates are better prepared at the end.

We have a new Chapter – Chapter 23 – on the judiciary and fundamental rights; we have a bigger use of benchmarks before opening a chapter and before closing a chapter. All of that is to make sure that it is not only a bureaucratic process – something the end of which has already been decided. No. It is a very serious process. A number of my potential colleagues are working very hard everyday to fulfil this.

On the EU borders, are you talking about geographical borders, political borders or historical borders? If one looks at Article 49 of the Lisbon Treaty one does not see any indication of this concept. When one looks at Article 49 one sees interesting words like ‘diversity’.

What is the format of our contractual relationship with Turkey? It is an accession negotiation. Turkey is a candidate country. This is in accordance with the decision of the new Member States five years ago. Privileged partnership is not on the table.

All the countries you mentioned, Mr Thaler, are very important to me: the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania. I will be paying first-class attention to them. Athens and Skopje have already mentioned that there are ongoing discussions under the auspices of the UN. I also stand ready to offer my good offices and will be debating this question with Lady Ashton.

2-061

Bernd Posselt (PPE). – Herr Kandidat, ich frage noch einmal nach dem Zeitplan für Südosteuropa. Die alte Kommission hat klar gesagt, sie will die Verhandlungen mit Kroatien in diesem Jahr abschließen, sie will die Verhandlungen mit Mazedonien in diesem Jahr beginnen. Bleiben Sie in dieser Kontinuität, oder wollen Sie hier einen anderen Ansatz wählen? Und werden Sie noch dieses Jahr versuchen, auch Kosovo in die Visumsverhandlungen einzubeziehen? Das gehört zum Zeitplan. Sonst haben wir ein von der EU verwaltetes kleines Gefängnis auf einem freien Balkan.

2-062

Ivo Vajgl (ALDE). – Spoštovani gospod kandidat, z zadovoljstvom spremljam vaše odgovore in želel bi si pravzaprav, da bi na takšen način potekalo tudi zaslišanje kandidata za visokega predstavnika za zunanjo politiko. Vaš predhodnik se je izkazal s tem, ko je uspešno posegel v reševanje bilateralnega problema meje med Hrvaško in Slovenijo. Takšnih vprašanj bo v okviru vašega delokroga še precej.

Ali se mislite tudi vi angažirati na tem, da se mejna vprašanja rešujejo pred vstopom novih kandidatov v Evropsko unijo? In drugo vprašanje je, ali in kako se nameravate v okviru sosedske politike odpreti pritiskom in obljubam, ki jih posamezne države dajejo ne iz

skupnega interesa evropskih držav in Evropske unije, ampak iz svojih bilateralnih interesov. Hvala lepa.

2-063

Νικόλαος Χουντής (GUE/NGL). – Κύριε Πρόεδρε, κύριε Füle, όπως γνωρίζετε, τον επόμενο μήνα οι πολίτες της Ισλανδίας θα συμμετάσχουν σε ένα δημοψήφισμα σχετικά με το χρέος που έχει δημιουργηθεί από μια ιδιωτική τράπεζα απέναντι σε Βρετανούς και Ολλανδούς επενδυτές. Επειδή θεωρώ απαράδεκτα τα μέσα και τα επιχειρήματα με τα οποία η αγγλική και η ολλανδική κυβέρνηση απειλούν να καταστρέψουν την ήδη κατεστραμμένη οικονομία μέσω αρνητικών αξιολογήσεων και απειλής για διακοπή των ενταξιακών διαπραγματεύσεων της Ισλανδίας με την Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση, επειδή θεωρώ απαράδεκτο το μέτρο που πήρε η βρετανική κυβέρνηση για πάγωμα των περιουσιακών στοιχείων των Ισλανδών στη Μεγάλη Βρετανία, θέλω να σας ρωτήσω κ. Füle: πρώτον, θεωρείτε ότι οι Ισλανδοί πολίτες είναι υποχρεωμένοι να πληρώσουν τα χρέη της ιδιωτικής τράπεζας και, δεύτερον και κυριότερο, πώς σχολιάζετε την απόφαση της βρετανικής κυβέρνησης να παγώσει τα περιουσιακά στοιχεία των Ισλανδών και να απειλεί για μπλοκάρισμα των ενταξιακών διαπραγματεύσεων της χώρας με την Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση;

2-064

Štefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – Concerning finalisation of the negotiations with Croatia, the start with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and some other timetables, I have already made the point that my priority would not be to create an artificial time framework that is politically driven, but that I would rather stick to the substance and the issue of whether this particular country is ready either to start negotiations or whether it is ready to finish with the negotiations. It is up to these candidate countries to establish their ambition and goals; it is up to the Commission to help them to reach these goals and to make sure they fulfil all the criteria and inform this House.

Kosovo will be included in a discussion on visa liberalisation. I have already made the point, and let me repeat it, that I am looking for a structured dialogue with Kosovo with a long-term perspective, including it also in visa liberalisation, but the road is long as Kosovo has a lot of homework to do.

Another question concerned the excellent work of my predecessor – and I absolutely agree – in helping iron out the issue between Slovenia and Croatia. I am a strong believer that any neighbourhood issue is better solved before a particular country joins the European Union, although there is no condition for that. For some countries the prospect itself might be an excellent framework for solving a volatile issue. But I think we need to address this issue as much as we can before the accession itself and, in line with my predecessor, I will be also offering my best services.

And the last question on Iceland: it is not up to me to comment on the volatile issue between Iceland on the one side and the UK and the Netherlands on the other

side. I have already made clear what the Commission is looking for when preparing its opinion on Iceland. I will inform this House and the European Council of our findings, which are to be based on the answers that Iceland gave us and on further consultations we are pursuing with that country.

2-065

Eduard Kukan (PPE). – Moja otázka smeruje k západnému Balkánu, ktorého strategický význam pre budúcnosť Európy je nesporný. O tom svedčí aj dnešná diskusia, keďže sa o tom veľa hovorí. Chcel by som vám dať ešte príležitosť alebo čas, aby ste sa pokúsili zosumarizovať Vaše priority voči regiónu a voči jeho jednotlivým krajinám a špecifikovať, akú spoluprácu Vy osobne očakávate od barónky Ashtonovej. A len jedna drobná otázka na vysvetlenie – ide o zaradenie Albánska a Bosny a Hercegoviny do bezvízového styku. Vy ste povedali, že očakávate, že sa tak stane v lete budúceho roku. Je to len drobná nepozornosť alebo *slip of tongue*? Aby sme zamedzili politickým šumom, lebo my všetci očakávame, že to bude v lete alebo v júli tohto roku.

2-066

Emine Bozkurt (S&D). – The progress made by Bosnia and Herzegovina during recent years has been very little. Most of the achievement seems to have been reached by the stimulation of Europe. What really is needed in this country is a way of avoiding the political stalemate that Bosnia-Herzegovina is constantly faced with. Therefore a package of reforms for a new constitution, acceptable to all the parties concerned, should come into place as soon as possible. The role of the OHR is very important for transformation to a functioning state on the road to qualifying for application for EU membership.

My questions: what are you going to do to accommodate these reforms? Will the reforms of the constitution be a priority for you and how will the EU contribute to these reforms? And how do you see the role of a reinforced EU office? Will you ensure that Bosnia and Herzegovina do not fall behind their neighbours in the enlargement process?

2-067

Anna Ibrisagic (PPE). – Herr Füle, under en längre tid har vi kunnat se att acceptansen i EU:s medlemsstater för den fortsatta utvidgningen har blivit mer och mer begränsad. Samtidigt ser vi att i de länder som står närmast på tur när vi pratar om utvidgning spelar EU-perspektivet en central roll för säkerheten. Jag behöver väl knappast betona att fred och säkerhet på Balkan står i nära relation till regionens integration i EU.

Därför är min fråga till er: Vad tänker ni göra för att öka acceptansen för utvidgningen och för att förklara att den fortsatta utvidgningen är bra för säkerheten, inte bara för utvidgningsländerna, utan för hela EU?

En bra politiker och kommissionsledamot är den som inte bara lyssnar på opinionen, utan en som även har förmåga att skapa opinion. Hur tänker ni göra det rent konkret?

2-068

Štefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – Let me start with the first question and let me also acknowledge the correction of the time – yes, I was talking about mid-2010 and not next year. I am sorry about that.

I was talking about my priorities in my opening statements. I was also talking about the priorities with this region, answering Mr Salafranca's very important question about the vision of enlargement, not only in the next five years but also 10 or 15 years. I very much hope that while we stick closely to the rules we will treat each country on its merit; that we will also be able to take into account a regional component and the importance of leaving no country in the cold. It is of course up to the local politicians, but the Commission of the European Union has a number of instruments to help these politicians to proceed swiftly with the reform packages, to make sure that they are part of the mainstream aiming at joining the European Union.

On Bosnia and Herzegovina my immediate priority is to reflect on the constitution of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the findings of the Strasbourg Court of Human Rights concerning elections and the possibility of participation in the next election. For the rest of constitutional changes I am looking for evolution rather than revolution, and the Commission stands ready to help the political leaders to find the best way to achieve a consensus on a better functioning state in Bosnia-Herzegovina, because sooner or later we will need a better functioning state to start eventual negotiations with Bosnia-Herzegovina. I will be in close contact with Lady Ashton because this is a clear example of us both going to work and reinforcing each other's policies concerning this particular country.

The prospect of joining the European Union: I will be part of creating this more favourable public opinion. I have already made a point of introducing some a political steer into the enlargement process. I intend to involve more politicians on both sides: enlargement or candidate countries and the EU countries.

2-069

Eva Joly (Verts/ALE) Présidente de la commission DEVE. – Je voudrais poser une question au commissaire désigné. Dès lors que tous les pays du voisinage sauf deux – Israël et la Russie – sont des pays en développement, comment allez-vous, dans votre travail concernant le règlement sur l'instrument européen de partenariat et de voisinage, garantir que les objectifs de la politique de développement de l'Union, en particulier la réduction de la pauvreté, seront pleinement atteints?

2-070

Štefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – On Russia, let me start by saying that Russia itself, when we were, so to speak, 'inventing' the neighbourhood policy, opted not to be part of that neighbourhood policy. Russia is our strategic partner, so we are now using the four common spaces and we are in negotiations with Russia on a new contractual agreement. I will be available to assist a better equipped colleague of mine on development, and

Lady Ashton, with the instruments at my disposal, to help them to reach that objective.

In the case of Israel the situation is a little bit different. We have an association agreement where we have an action plan, and actually have the prospect of enhancing the relationship between Israel and the European Union.

What I will do is to make sure that we sit together with a colleague of mine, the Commissioner for Development, and make sure that we have the developing aspect there already and, if not, that we introduce that developing aspect into this relationship between us and the state of Israel.

2-071

Metin Kazak (ALDE), *on behalf of the Committee on International Trade*. – Commissioner-designate, as is well known, there has been a customs union between the EU and Turkey since 1996. The negotiation process with Turkey makes step-by-step progress. Nevertheless many of the chapters – 19 – have been blocked by the Commission or by some of the member countries for political reasons and that fact has some negative ramifications on the functioning of the customs union, and especially on the free movement of goods, in the agricultural field, on external relations, on the opening or conclusion of the negotiation of free trade agreements with third countries, etc.

In that context, is there any solution, Mr Commissioner-designate, on how to solve the problems stemming from the customs union obligations and from the negotiation process and how could these problems be settled?

My second question is: how do you see the continuation of the Euromed roadmap in the transformation of existing association agreements into deep and comprehensive free trade agreements?

2-072

Štefan Füle, *Commissioner-designate*. – Thank you very much for this question on the Euronet roadmap. What I would like to offer is to come back to this issue with you, with better ideas and me sort of looking deeper into this issue and the role you have referred to.

I am aware of the problems we face in implementation of customs union between Turkey and the European Union and in our dialogue with Turkey we repeatedly underlined this issue as not acceptable. At the same time, I think this distinguished auditorium also accepts that many issues are interconnected here: the implementation of the Ankara Protocol, the peaceful settlement of the situation in Cyprus, the number of chapters which are being blocked either by the European Union or by Member States, and the state of the customs union or customs treaty we have with Turkey.

While I will be working on some particular issues on this customs union treaty at the same time I will do my best to be helpful in establishing a better environment so that we unblock the whole situation, because at the end of that process I do not think we would need to worry

much about the state of affairs in this very important aspect of the relationship between us and Turkey.

2-073

Justas Vincas Paleckis (S&D). – Speaking on EU-Belarus relations, you mentioned that the EU could offer visa facilitation if certain conditions are fulfilled. However, the EUR 60 Schengen visa fee, which is approximately half the monthly salary of the average Belarusian citizen, practically excludes socially weaker Belarusians from the possibility of visiting a neighbouring EU country. Even the EUR 35 Schengen visa fee for other eastern neighbours is too expensive.

I can assure you that for many years many colleagues in this House have put pressure on the Commission to achieve some progress in the facilitation of people-to-people contacts, but without any success. What is your opinion on this ‘mini-Berlin Wall’, which this time is a financial and bureaucratic one?

2-074

Inese Vaidere (PPE). – Godātais *Štefan Füle* kungs! Kā konkrēti jūs plānojat veicināt cilvēktiesību ieviešanas prioritāti kaimiņattiecību politikā pār ekonomiskajām interesēm? Respektīvi, kāds būtu jūsu risinājums joprojām okupēto Gruzijas teritoriju jautājumā, kurās desmitiem tūkstošu iedzīvotāju nevar atgriezties savās dzīvesvietās? Cik lielā mērā jums būs svarīgs Krievijas viedoklis par to, kā šie jautājumi attiecībā uz Gruziju būtu risināmi? Vai jūs atbalstītu Eiropas Savienības misijas Gruzijā iespēju palielināšanu, nodrošinot tai arī tiesības iekļūt okupētajos valsts reģionos, un vai jūs redzat iespēju tuvākajā laikā noslēgt brīvās tirdzniecības un vīzu atvieglojumu līgumus starp Eiropas Savienību un Gruziju? Paldies!

2-075

Renate Weber (ALDE). – Mr Füle, many of the countries in the Eastern Partnership are facing unsolved secessionist conflicts, the so-called frozen conflict which unfortunately may defrost very easily.

My question is: are you planning to address this issue within the Eastern Partnership and, if so, how do you plan to do it, particularly bearing in mind that Russia expressed its strong opposition to the Eastern Partnership? Or do you consider that this issue is not part of your mandate and it should be addressed by the High Representative?

2-076

Štefan Füle, *Commissioner-designate*. – Concerning the first question, I am very much interested in opening the contacts between the representatives of civil society and non-state actors from Belarus and the European Union. For that, I think it is important for Belarus to participate in the thematic platform. As you know, the fourth thematic platform is about contacts between people. While I will be ready when the time is ripe to enter into the discussion about visa facilitation, a readmission agreement and all of that, I shall also be supporting any idea – whether on a bilateral or multilateral basis – to facilitate these contacts. Euronest also has a role to play here.

How can we make sure there is no contradiction between respect for human rights and economic interests? I do not believe that you could have only the one and not both. It is also the experience of my country that, whenever you start to make compromises here and try to pit these principles and interests against each other, you sooner or later end up with difficulties.

I support fully the European Union mission to Georgia. I think it is important that the EU plays a stabilising role, a very important role in Georgia. It is very important to proceed with a policy of non-recognition of these two breakaway republics. I think it is important again and again to repeat our adherence to the territorial integrity of Georgia. We have established a visa facilitation regime with Georgia and I hope very soon to be able to enter into a discussion about visa liberalisation between Georgia and the European Union.

Frozen conflicts and unsolved issues: we did not invent or establish the Eastern Partnership primarily to address these conflicts. But through the implementation of initiatives like the Eastern Partnership we can develop a better atmosphere by bringing these countries closer to the European Union. With acceptance of our norms we could create a better environment for these issues to be solved. The Commission has a certain role. I will be working very closely with Lady Ashton, the High Representative, to address these issues. I see a neighbourhood role for the Commission also on these issues.

2-077

Frieda Brepoels (Verts/ALE). – Mijnheer Füle, mevrouw Ashton vertelde ons gisteren dat zij bevoegd zal zijn voor de strategische doelstellingen van het nabuurschapsbeleid en dat u zich vooral met de implementatie zult mogen bezighouden, maar wat dat nu concreet betekent voor Israël en de bezette Palestijnse gebieden, is mij eigenlijk volkomen onduidelijk na de hoorzitting gisteren. Hopelijk kunt u ons zeggen hoe u het vredesproces in het Midden-Oosten nieuw leven zult inblazen. Gaat u wachten tot Ashton met haar strategie op de proppen komt of gaat u zelf concrete stappen zetten, en hoe ziet een definitieve oplossing voor u er dan uit? Bent u bereid om de vraag van Israël tot opwaardering van de relaties met de EU te gebruiken als pressiemiddel? Hoe zult u een einde maken aan de humanitaire crisis in Gaza en hoe kijkt u aan tegen de houding van Egypte in dat conflict?

2-078

Tomasz Piotr Poreba (ECR). – I would like to go back to Ukraine. The association agreement with Ukraine is a key factor in the context of mutual relations between the European Union and Kiev. The negotiations should have been completed at the end of last year. Unfortunately it has not happened.

In 2008 Ukraine became a member of the WTO. As we know, it is currently negotiating a different comprehensive free trade area. I think that we should keep in mind that mutual economic relations, trade

relations, with Ukraine are in our common interest. So I have two questions concerning these issues.

Firstly, I would like to ask you: in what way are you going to implement a deep and comprehensive dialogue with Ukraine, especially in the context of a new association agreement? Secondly, do you believe that the European Union could give Ukraine a clear European perspective and, as a Commissioner, what step would you like to take in order to bring Ukraine closer to European Union membership?

2-079

Andrey Kovatchev (PPE). – As you very correctly said at the beginning of the hearing, you are going to use all the instruments of the Commission to convince our European citizens of the benefits of the enlargement. But can you please tell us some of the concrete measures, such as media campaigns or orders which you intend to implement in this matter? I consider this amongst the biggest of the challenges which you will face. This is also directly related to increasing the integration capacity of our Union. Finally do you consider the integration capacity criteria to be equal in importance to the Copenhagen criteria?

2-080

Stefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – Concerning the first question, at the beginning I tried to make it clear what the interaction between High Representative and Vice-President Ashton and the Commissioner on Neighbourhood Policy is going to be.

It is up to her to make sure that we have a coherent external policy. Within that framework, I will be helping her with the neighbourhood part of the policy, drawing up the relevant resources of external services, and it will be up to the two of us to present the programming document to you at the European Council. President Barroso specifically entrusted me to present an attractive and coherent policy on neighbourhood policy to those who will not be in a position to become a European Union member.

Let me also make it clear what the division of labour, if you like, is going to be in the Middle East. Lady Ashton will be in charge of the EU role in the Middle East process, while I will be in charge of our bilateral relationship with the state of Israel, the Palestinian Authority and other countries in the region. I think that, while working together on these issues, we could at the same time create the necessary synergy, which was not always there before the Lisbon Treaty entered into force.

On Ukraine. I think there is much to offer Ukraine: through the Eastern Partnership, through the association agreement, through a deep and comprehensive free trade agreement, through the mobility issue, through visa facilitation – in fact we have started a visa liberalisation process with Ukraine. It is not up to the Enlargement Commissioner to push Ukraine closer to the Ukrainian perspective. But it is up to the Commissioner on Neighbourhood Policy to help Ukrainians to get as close as possible to the European Union, to be able to adopt as

much of the acquis as possible, to be in the best position if we have a decision about the Ukraine perspective in the European Union.

Briefly, on the media campaign, there are Copenhagen criteria which are extremely important and there is this integration capacity. I would not like to compare these two, but trust me that, on basis of the decision we made in 2006, this integration capacity is close to my heart. I will report to you on an annual basis on this issue.

2-081

Luis Yáñez-Barnuevo García (S&D). – Señor Comisario designado, volvemos al sur. Durante la Presidencia española se celebrará la primera Cumbre Unión Europea/Marruecos, en Granada.

Ante esa perspectiva, ¿cuáles son sus consideraciones sobre el respeto de los derechos humanos en Marruecos y también en Túnez, donde hay una situación aún más grave? Por extensión, le preguntaría si la Unión Europea –usted o la señora Ashton– puede hacer algo en el enconado enfrentamiento entre Marruecos y Argelia, que dura ya treinta años y que está en el origen de muchos conflictos –como el saharauí– que se producen en la región.

2-082

Doris Pack (PPE). – Herr Füle, ich komme noch einmal auf das Thema Bosnien und Herzegowina zurück. Wie Sie gesagt haben, ist die Dayton-Verfassung alles andere als rechtsstaatlich, und sie muss geändert werden. Sie haben aber gesagt, das könne nicht in Revolution geschehen, das müsse in Evolution geschehen. Nun sind wir 13 Jahre nach Dayton – wo bleibt denn da die Evolution? Inzwischen haben sich die Gräben zwischen den Ethnien vertieft, sodass sie kaum überbrückbar sind. Und es gibt einen Premierminister in Bosnien und Herzegowina, der Sie alle an der Nase herumführt, mit dem Nasenring werden wir durch die Arena gezogen! Geben wir ein kleines bisschen nach, wird uns die ganze Hand abgehackt. Das kann doch nicht so weitergehen!

Sind Sie als zukünftiger Kommissar am Gesamtstaat Bosnien und Herzegowina interessiert? Und können Sie die Gerüchte widerlegen, die da sagen, Sie hätten Bosnien und Herzegowina schon Ihre Erfahrungen mit dem Auseinandergehen der Tschechoslowakei angeboten. Stimmt etwas daran, oder ist das nur ein Gerücht?

2-083

Alojz Peterle (PPE). – Zelo cenim vašo zavezanost procesu združevanja Evrope. Moje vprašanje se je nanašalo na podcenjeno mejno vprašanje med državami v regiji zahodnega Balkana in na prioritete vašega sodelovanja z gospo Ashton. Glede na to, da ste na to pravzaprav že večkrat odgovorili, bi vam postavil vprašanje, ki ga ne vidim popolnoma kot kviz vprašanje. Moje vprašanje se glasi: koliko novih uradnih jezikov bomo govorili v Evropski zvezi, ko bo razširjena s šestimi državami z območja bivše Jugoslavije in Albanijo. Hvala lepa.

2-084

Presidente. – Commissario, toccherebbe a lei la risposta, però, se non ha capito la domanda dell'on. Pack, vediamo di riproporla. Mi era sembrato che avesse un dubbio sul suo quesito o le è chiaro?

2-085

Doris Pack (PPE). – Herr Füle, ich glaube, Sie haben nicht verstanden. Ich wollte von Ihnen unter anderem gerne wissen, ob das Gerücht, das umhergeht, dass Sie am Gesamtstaat Bosnien gar nicht interessiert sind, sondern schon Ihre Erfahrungen aus dem Auseinandergehen der Tschechoslowakei angeboten haben, stimmt oder nicht.

2-086

Štefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – Concerning the south, I think it is very important that we have the first summit between the EU and Morocco. It is very important that we are trying to fulfil the context of the enhanced relationship between that partner and the European Union. I have already said that in my eyes the enhanced partnership comes with an enhanced commitment. That would be my point, not only with reference to this forthcoming summit but in general, and I will be pursuing that, if I have your confidence, in the five years.

As for the Morocco-Algerian conflict, we will continue to support the UN efforts to solve this. We will stand ready to be helpful with our assistance and the instrument. We will be discussing with Lady Ashton the possibilities of combining the options available to her and the options available to the Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy.

On Bosnia and Herzegovina: I have not heard that rumour, and I can categorically deny that rumour absolutely. There is absolutely no intention, based on the experience of Czechoslovakia, to imply that there might be some other countries like this – I do not even want to speculate which might be in this case – not at all. The international community has a commitment. I have already referred to our three-hour discussion with Lady Ashton. We will continue to give a lot of attention to this country. The bottom line is that we very much want this country to be on the track of integration efforts. I very much hope that in a couple of months I will be ready to make a proposal for a visa-free regime for this country. It will be a big contribution.

We will have as many languages as we agree through the accession process with these new countries.

2-087

Evgeni Kirilov (S&D). – As the rapporteur on South Caucasus I would like to ask how you see your contribution to ensuring an enhanced EU political role and economic role in the region of South Caucasus which, among other things, would also contribute to the peaceful resolution of the frozen conflicts in the region. I say frozen conflicts because so far our colleagues have mentioned just the Georgia-Russia phenomenon and, generally speaking, in this region of the South Caucasus

the European Union has been a sleeping beauty for a long time.

The conflict in Georgia brought some waking up, but the other conflict with Nagorno-Karabakh is still there and so far no one has spoken about it. I would like to hear your comments, although there should of course be cooperation here with Lady Ashton. What is really important is having your expertise both in the field of foreign policy and as Deputy Defence Minister, and I think such cooperation could be welcome.

2-088

Andrzej Grzyb (PPE). – Panie Komisarzu! Chciałbym zapytać o taki aspekt: traktat z Lizbony wprowadza nową jakość: wzmacnia rolę Parlamentu Europejskiego, ale również i parlamentów narodowych. W dotychczasowych przesłuchaniach nie słyszałem ze strony kandydatów na komisarzy, aby poświęcili tej kwestii jakkolwiek większą uwagę. Chciałbym zapytać Pana, czy nie uważa Pan, że sukces Pańskich złożań związanych z prowadzoną polityką rozszerzenia, tudzież realizacją założeń partnerstwa wschodniego, w dużej mierze zależy od tego, w jaki sposób będzie Pan współpracował z parlamentami narodowymi, które mają istotną rolę w wyrażaniu opinii nie tylko w stosunku do inicjatyw europejskich, ale również mają istotną rolę w tworzeniu dobrego kontekstu społecznego i akceptacji dla procesu rozszerzenia, co jak sądzę jest naszym wspólnym interesem? Chciałbym zapytać o to, jak Pan sobie to wyobraża?

2-089

Marietje Schaake (ALDE). – When you were my age you were part of a society where free speech had the highest price: losing freedom and life. We are all happy to no longer speak of the Eastern Bloc, but of Eastern Europe. European values are what unite us and we deem them universal. Free speech and political debate require independent, pluralist media as essential pillars of democratic free societies. Both within Europe and its neighbourhood, we have to be vigilant in defending those values. The development of new media and the Internet add an important extra dimension to free speech and democratisation, including threats and opportunities – we need only recall Iran last summer.

What will you do concretely to prioritise free expression, including on the Internet, in relation to candidate states and neighbouring states – let us take Turkey, for example?

2-090

Stefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – Let me start with Nagorno-Karabakh. There should be no doubts about our support for the Minsk Group's efforts to solve this issue.

That does not mean that we are a sleeping beauty on the ground there. We are already working on some confidence-building measures and we are in touch both with Azerbaijan and with Armenia, offering concrete projects. If they agree we could start with their implementation even before a solution to this conflict is

being finalised. I have been encouraged by the intensification of the high-level talks between these two countries to solve this issue.

The third element is, of course, that the Commission stands ready to help with the reconstruction and rehabilitation of that region.

More generally, what we are trying to establish through the Eastern Partnership in the South Caucasus is a big menu, starting from the mobility of the people, through economic integration – and I have already referred to what a deep and comprehensive free trade area could bring in terms of convergence, including to EU sectoral policies and deeper political dialogue with these countries. We started only a couple of months ago with this project and there is much more to be done, together with you and Euronest. I am confident that we will create better, more suitable conditions for solving issues such as Nagorno-Karabakh.

Concerning national parliaments, you are absolutely right. Not only does the Lisbon Treaty foresee a bigger role for national parliaments, but in many EU countries there was specific legislation to make sure that the executive branch has to consult its parliament before committing, within the European Council, to certain policies. You are absolutely right that the role of the parliaments has increased and you are absolutely right that we need to involve national parliaments in the communication policy. It falls within what I described earlier, which was to give a bigger political steer to enlargement and also to our communication campaign, where I would like very much also to use a civil society dialogue.

Concerning free speech and the role of media: we have, through the pre-accession instruments, a number of possibilities to help candidate countries to promote their media market. I will stop there and come back to this issue at the end.

2-091

Liisa Jaakonsaari (S&D). – Mr Füle, you already have the whole world in your hands, but may I add one region still. My question concerns the Arctic area, and I am sure that you know that the Arctic is changing faster and more dramatically than any other region or environment on the planet.

What will your approach be as EU Commissioner, given the many problems with the rapid melting of the ice, with five countries encircling the Arctic, with Russia saying that they are going to have an expedition next year to plant a plaque on the North Pole and with Canada saying, no, you had better not? What concrete measures do you suggest that the European Union should take in addressing these problems? I hope that you can put the Arctic issue on your agenda.

2-092

György Schöpflin (PPE). – In an earlier response in the context of Russia which you know well, you refer to games theory. The time of zero-sum games is over. This

is a very European position, but it is not necessarily true outside Europe. In your strategic thinking, what is to be done when one's interlocutor resolutely refuses to accept games theory, and insists that its values, its interests and only its interests have validity?

2-093

Tunne Kelam (PPE). – Mr Füle, I welcome your statement that you will be uncompromising if EU principles and interests happen to diverge from those of Russia in the area of the Eastern Partnership. I think your experience of your Moscow studies will become an asset to you in dealing with these issues.

You said that Georgia offers a high degree of cooperation and the need for a much stronger presence there has been stressed. I am wondering: would you agree that the first step to be taken is to insist that the EU observers there can freely enter the territories of Russian-controlled separatist entities? Would you also agree that evacuation of the Turkish troops from Cyprus – we do not speak about it very much – would greatly help a solution of the Cyprus problem?

2-094

Stefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – Firstly, on the subject of the Arctic, I am interested in that region and Lady Ashton and I intend to discuss it and what our future strategic policy will be and how we will develop it. You are absolutely right that the changes there present us with many opportunities but also many challenges, and I am glad that we have already started thinking about how to approach this very important region. So far we have established two basic aims, firstly to promote the development of the region in line with the interests of the population and secondly to use its natural resources in a sustainable way. Much more needs to be done, which of course will also involve dialogue between the countries which have established a framework for discussing and promoting an Arctic policy.

When it comes to Russia I think the key lies in our unity. I think the key point is to be clear that while pursuing our interests we should not make any compromises on our values. If we stick to these two principles, then I am confident that in the end we will obtain an outcome which we will be pleased with. If we show a lack of unity or do not place enough emphasis on our values, we place ourselves at a disadvantage.

On the subject of Georgia, I absolutely agree that, as a first step, our monitors' access to the territory controlled by Russia needs to be assured. I am also confident that any comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus issue will include the provision that there will be no Turkish troops on the island.

2-095

Jacek Protasiewicz (PPE). – I am aware that there have been several questions concerning Belarus raised here during the debate, but the country is our closest neighbour and the human rights situation there is far from European standards, so it is no surprise that we are

interested in that. As Chair of the Delegation for relations with Belarus here in Parliament, I have no doubt that the recent readiness of the Belarusian authorities to cooperate with Europe is caused by the economic crisis in the country and the desperate need for European money.

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the European Investment Bank are about to consider extending their mandate as far as investment in Belarus is concerned. Can you see any chance for you as a future Commissioner to influence both banks' policy towards Belarus in order to connect their decisions about lending or investing money in that country with real positive changes in areas of human rights, freedom of speech and democracy there?

2-096

Wolfgang Kreissl-Dörfler (S&D). – Herr Füle! Die Aufnahmefähigkeit der Europäischen Union und die Erweiterung gehen ja Hand in Hand, und Sie haben da auch ein Schlüsselressort. Es heißt immer, die Bevölkerung sei erweiterungsmüde. Die Frage ist immer, ob der Rat müde ist oder ob die Bevölkerung müde ist.

Sie haben einmal gesagt, es gelte eine Vision zur Europäischen Union zu entwickeln, wie sie denn aussehen sollte, und anhand derer könnte dann auch die Nachbarschaftspolitik mitbestimmt werden. Stimmen Sie mir zu, dass die Finalität der Europäischen Union nie vernünftig diskutiert worden ist, dass in den letzten Jahren keine Visionen mehr entwickelt worden sind, was wiederum zu Müdigkeit in der Bevölkerung führen muss? Sind Sie bereit, diese Debatte mit Ihrem Schlüsselressort in Rat, Kommission und Gesellschaft mit anzuschieben, weil es bisher der Rat nicht geleistet hat und die Kommission es mit diesem Präsidenten auch nicht getan hat? Und sehen Sie sich in der Lage, diese Debatte offen zu führen und nicht je nachdem, wie man gerade aufgelegt ist, wie es manche im Haus auch tun – mal passt es mir, mal passt es mir nicht? Das wäre eine der Visionen und Schlüsselpositionen, um die EU zu stärken und unsere Gesamtpolitik nach außen besser darzustellen. Wie sehen Sie das?

2-097

Barry Madlener (NI). – Het communisme heeft veel slachtoffers gemaakt in Europa en veel ellende veroorzaakt. Ik denk dat het goed is dat er geen enkel misverstand over bestaat dat u het communisme heeft afgezworen. U heeft er in uw jonge jaren immers voor gekozen het communisme in uw land actief te steunen door lid te worden van de Communistische Partij, en ik heb uit de pers in uw land begrepen dat u daar openlijk afstand van heeft genomen, uw excuses heeft aangeboden voor uw communistische verleden. Ik denk dat het goed is om de start te maken met ook hier, ten overstaan van de Europese volksvertegenwoordiging, dat te herhalen en nogmaals uw excuses te maken voor uw verleden. Ik denk dat dat een goed begin zou zijn voor uw mandaat.

2-098

Štefan Füle, *Commissioner-designate*. – I think we might debate the reasons for the Belarusian authorities' interest in widening our relationship. I think what is really important is that there is an interest and through the graduated engagement we need to use this opportunity and to engage the Belarusian authorities.

I am also confident, and I indicated throughout my answers, that there needs to be a balance between opening up the discussion with Belarus and their reform road, particularly on a number of the issues I referred to. And I think we need to use all instruments in our hands, including the one you referred to, so the answer is 'yes'.

On the second question: if I may refer to the Czech Republic and the debate on the Lisbon Treaty – and you know that it was about the last country to ratify – throughout that debate it was obvious to us that the European Union has spent too much valuable time on these issues of institutional frameworks, that it is about time, instead of focusing on processes, to focus on substance. I will be bringing to the European Parliament – and not only when you ask me, but also when I think there is an issue to discuss with you – a wide range of issues, because the debate has shown that there is no consensual opinion on a number of these issues, and we are debating a number of sensitive and important issues. Without starting the debate here, I could hardly successfully then persuade the national parliaments and other politicians and citizens of our countries, so I am for that debate.

On the last question: everybody has a personal history, and mine is of the time and place I grew up in, but what is important is that at the time I was free and mature enough to make a choice; I made the choice to offer my experience and my capacities to Czechoslovakia, and then to the Czech Republic. My record in the last 20 years is clear, and it is in this spirit that I am offering my capacities also to the European Commission, if you agree.

(Applause)

2-099

Fiorello Provera (EFD). – Signor Commissario, non la pugnalerò alle spalle. Partenariato orientale: sono noti gli interessi e la collaborazione suscitati nei sei paesi dell'area, un'iniziativa chiave non solo per questi sei paesi, per la loro democratizzazione e il loro sviluppo, ma anche per garantire la stabilità e la sicurezza dei nostri confini orientali. Un'iniziativa che potrebbe servire per altre *partnership* di altre zone e anche per preparare alla *membership*, eventualmente altri paesi.

Si tratta quindi di una scelta politica strategica, nella quale potrebbero o dovrebbero essere coinvolti i parlamenti nazionali e potrebbe avere un grande valore la relazione bilaterale che si potrebbe innescare tra questi 6 paesi e alcuni dei paesi membri dell'Europa.

Vorrei ritornasse un attimo sul ruolo dei parlamenti nazionali, grazie.

2-100

Štefan Füle, *Commissioner-designate*. – I think in general that the parliamentary dimension of the Eastern Partnership is very important. We have already debated the issue related to Euronest and its role. Let me stress once again that I will not only be at the disposal of that parliamentary group but also that I would like, through a kind of brainstorming, to discuss not only practical but also conceptual issues related to the Eastern Partnership.

The Eastern Partnership and its implementation will bring a number of challenges and will bring a number of issues to solve. This is also one of the ways to make sure that we have that political steering, that we combine the best the European Commission offers with political steering. There is also a role for national parliaments here and I hope very much that those countries who were active enough to put this initiative together will lead the way and, with the help of the Commission and in close contact with Euronest of course, establish a certain programme that will enlarge this parliamentary dimension.

Let me also say one important thing. I think it is very important that the southern dimension of our neighbourhood is not only in the interest of the southern flank of the European Union, and that the Eastern Partnership is not only in the interest of a couple of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe. I think we need to understand that unless it is a common endeavour we will fail in our backyard, whether in the south or east.

2-101

Τάκης Χατζηγεωργίου (GUE/NGL). – Κύριε Επίτροπε, στα συμπεράσματα του Συμβουλίου, τον περασμένο Δεκέμβριο, γίνεται αναφορά στην υποχρέωση της Τουρκίας να συμβάλει ενεργά στη λύση του Κυπριακού και εκφράζεται ταυτόχρονα η βαθιά θλίψη της Ένωσης για το ότι η Τουρκία δεν εφαρμόζει το πρωτόκολλο.

Στις απαντήσεις σας στο ερωτηματολόγιο του Ευρωπαϊκού Κοινοβουλίου και αναφερόμενος στη διεύρυνση προς την κατεύθυνση της Τουρκίας, σε συνάρτηση με το Κυπριακό, λέτε τα εξής: Είναι ιδιαίτερα σημαντική η παροχή εκ μέρους της Τουρκίας συγκεκριμένης στήριξης στις διαπραγματεύσεις υπό την αιγίδα του ΟΗΕ, που αποβλέπουν στη δίκαιη, συνολική και βιώσιμη λύση του προβλήματος. Θα χρησιμοποιήσω - λέτε - όλα τα μέσα που διαθέτει η Επιτροπή για να στηρίξω αυτές τις διαπραγματεύσεις. Κύριε Επίτροπε, λυπούμαι ειλικρινά, αλλά θέλω να σας πω ότι το Κυπριακό δεν θα λυθεί. Δεν θα λυθεί εάν η Τουρκία δεν αισθανθεί πίεση. Τι συγκεκριμένο, λοιπόν, σκοπεύετε να κάνετε προς αυτήν την κατεύθυνση και τι συγκεκριμένο σκοπεύετε να κάνετε που να είναι σύμφωνο με τον Χάρτη των Ηνωμένων Εθνών και τις αποφάσεις του Συμβουλίου Ασφαλείας;

2-102

Štefan Füle, *Commission-designate*. – I am very sorry; I did not get the last question about the UN. I am sorry; it was the translation.

2-103

Τάκης Χατζηγεωργίου (GUE/NGL). – Κύριε Επίτροπε, ερώτησα, λοιπόν, τι συγκεκριμένο σκοπεύετε να κάνετε για να αισθανθεί η Τουρκία την πίεση και εάν αυτό το συγκεκριμένο που σκοπεύετε να κάνετε θα είναι σύμφωνο με τις αποφάσεις των Ηνωμένων Εθνών και του Συμβουλίου Ασφαλείας.

2-104

Štefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – I think it is important that we stick with what the European Union Member States agreed on the negotiating framework. They very explicitly underlined a role for Turkey to support the negotiating process in Cyprus. It is an issue which we follow very closely, on which we also report to you and to the European Council. In these negotiations the European Union is playing a growing role. I have already referred to the President of the European Commission, Mr Barroso, appointing a steering group to deal with this issue. The Commissioner on enlargement is also a member and there is a Special Representative on the ground so the UN framework process and the UN representatives are involved with the negotiations.

So far I see a positive reaction from Turkey concerning support of that peace process. You know that the peace process is now in a very delicate phase, that representatives of the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots have agreed to intensify their contacts. We are about to start a readmission agreement with Turkey, which is a small part of trying to solve one of the issues on Cyprus. So we will be working with Turkey and with other EU members on Turkey to bring the solution we all are looking forward to.

2-105

Mirosław Piotrowski (ECR). – Christianity was, and still is, a fundamental value of the European Union. Based on this value, the European Union was built by Christian democrats. In the context of accession negotiations with Turkey, it is worth asking a question about the significance of this value in view of accepting such a large country which is culturally different from the European Union.

The question is: do you believe that Turkey has a chance to become a fully-fledged member of the European Union and, if so, what do you think is the realistic date for the Turkish accession? Concerning this question: do you intend to initiate a pan-European debate on the role and significance of Christianity in constructing the European Union?

2-106

Štefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – Let me be very clear on Turkey and the accession process in replying to the question whether I can imagine Turkey becoming a new member. Yes I can.

(Applause)

It is about the credibility of the European Union, but it is also first of all about Turkey fulfilling all the criteria. I am confident that at the end of the process it will be a

new, modern and reformed Turkey whose accession to the European Union will be to the benefit of both the European Union and Turkey.

I understand and respect that in this House there are diverging views on this issue in general and on various aspects, and I am ready to discuss any of these issues with you in whatever format you prefer.

2-107

Franziska Katharina Brantner (Verts/ALE). – Ich möchte Ihnen für Ihre klaren Positionen danken, über die man natürlich immer argumentieren kann. Aber auf jeden Fall haben Sie uns klare Positionen geliefert, die wir auch in den nächsten Jahren bestimmt noch debattieren werden. Dankeschön dafür!

Ich möchte auf zwei, drei Punkte ganz kurz eingehen, wo wir vielleicht eine andere Meinung haben, und zwar noch einmal zu den Menschenrechten und dem Upgrading von Verträgen. Sie haben geantwortet, das sollte Teil des Dialogs und der Aktionspläne sein. Für uns ist die Frage, ob die Menschenrechtsfrage eine Vorbedingung für das Upgrading ist und nicht nur, ob sie hinterher in Aktionsplänen verhandelt wird.

Zweitens sagten Sie, dass die Kosovo-Frage die Verhandlungen mit Serbien nicht verhindern sollte. Das ist für uns als Antwort noch etwas schwach, denn im Endeffekt gehören die beiden ja wirklich zusammen. Da würden wir von Ihnen gerne etwas klarere Visionen hören.

Letzte kurze Frage zu Lady Ashton: Wenn Sie mit ihr nicht der gleichen Meinung sind, was werden Sie dann tun? Denn offiziell untersteht das Personal des Auswärtigen Dienstes Frau Ashton. Wie werden Sie damit umgehen, wenn Sie anderer Meinung sind?

2-108

Presidente. – Commissario, ci sono più di una domanda, se riesce, risponda; però abbiamo definito una sola domanda per intervento, quindi può scegliere, nel caso, quale delle domande le interessa di più. A lei la parola.

2-109

Štefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – Thank you, Mr Chair, you are very kind to me, as you have been throughout the whole hearing.

Yes, in a number of the cases I might not agree with Lady Ashton during the process of achieving a common view. But at the end of the process it will be her responsibility to ensure that there is coherence in the External Service of the European Union and I will always be a constructive and loyal part of that coherent voice.

2-110

Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck (ALDE). – On behalf of my colleagues from my group I can say that we are in general very satisfied with the answers you gave us. We had written a letter to Commission President Barroso to ask for clarification of the division between enlargement

on the one hand and neighbourhood policy on the other. And Commission President Barroso has answered as follows: 'There is clearly an important connection between enlargement policy and neighbourhood policy. Many similar challenges are faced in the two groups of countries, some pass from one category to the other', etc. Then he goes on to say: 'The appointment letter I sent to Commissioner Füle makes clear that I see him developing a credible and attractive alternative to membership for those neighbouring countries', etc.

So my first question is: I understand that neighbouring countries can later on qualify and desire to become candidate countries and Member States. Do you envisage the possibility of passing from membership to neighbourhood, of being declassified, if I may say so?

(Interjection from the floor: 'Do you mean the United Kingdom, by any chance?')

That might depend on yourself and your colleagues, and the wisdom of the British electorate!

But, Commissioner-designate, I believe my question was sufficiently clear. Thank you for clarifying the position.

2-111

Stefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – You are absolutely right that there have been some concerns as to what extent putting these two very important policies under one portfolio might mix the message and might send a wrong message. Let me make a clear point on this: putting this together does not mean that we would like to move one country from one basket and put it in another basket.

I have already, very informally of course, been in touch with some partner countries making exactly that point: that it is not a free ticket, a free ride for them. It is not how to create a short cut. And I also made a point to another important country that there is no hidden agenda, that no one is planning to move the country out of the basket of enlargement into the basket of neighbourhood policy. There is a clear line between these two policies. Putting these two policies under one portfolio does not mean that we make it thicker or thinner or move it to the right or left.

2-112

Ioan Mircea Pașcu (S&D). – First, I am glad that finally I managed to speak before Elmar Brok, because he is the last one to conclude our discussion. My question is: as we know, Russia's reaction to the Eastern Partnership has not been entirely positive. Consequently some countries are favourable to consulting Russia in the implementation of this initiative. How do you feel about this? And in this context, as there was a question before on Moldova, what could Moldova expect from the EU?

I would conclude by offering a little information to those who have implied that you opted for communism when you were young: in our neck of the woods communism was not optional.

2-113

Stefan Füle, Commissioner-designate. – I have already made the point and let me repeat it because it is important. Russia is our strategic partner and I am interested in a strategic partnership with Russia. I am interested in working together, not only to the benefit of our bilateral relationship but also to the benefit of our joint and common neighbours.

The Eastern Partnership is not an anti-Russian policy; the Eastern Partnership does not make countries choose between Brussels and Moscow. I feel strongly about it. I also made it clear that the vision of Eastern Europe, as I see it, is one where countries are in charge of their own destiny without any external pressure and that destiny would hopefully bring them closer to Brussels, however not only to Brussels but also to their important eastern neighbour.

Russia also has the possibility of taking part in the Eastern Partnership. There is a possibility for such participation on an ad hoc basis: ad hoc projects, ad hoc events that bring value added to the Eastern Partnership. I am looking forward sooner or later to seeing such Russian participation. Of course there might be some more difficult issues to solve with Russia. One of them is connected to many of these projected conflicts and you indicated we have one of them in Transnistria.

By the way, on Moldova: let me use this opportunity to say that I welcome the current pro-European orientation of the Moldovan Government. There is today a very important delegation from the Commission in Moldova debating how to make the best use of the Eastern Partnership to bring Moldova closer to the European Union.

2-114

Elmar Brok (PPE). – Der Kollege Pașcu hat eine Bemerkung gemacht, die mich auch zu einer Bemerkung veranlasst, die ich aber nicht in die Beurteilung von Herrn Füle mit einbeziehe. Ich glaube schon, dass man eine Option hatte, nicht der Kommunistischen Partei beizutreten, allerdings unter Bedingungen, die ich nicht mitmachen musste, die aber eine Reihe von Kollegen, die aus solchen Ländern kommen, mitgemacht haben und die dafür auch manche Beschwerden in Kauf genommen haben. Das wollte ich doch zur Klarheit hier feststellen.

Ich glaube, Herr Füle, Sie haben heute bewiesen, dass Sie ein hohes Maß an Bereitschaft haben, mit dem Europäischen Parlament zu kooperieren, und dass wir darauf aufbauen können. Wir müssen auch feststellen, dass Sie bezüglich der Sachkenntnisse – man kann nicht alles in diesen Fragen beantworten – hier einen guten Eindruck hinterlassen haben, so dass von daher aus meiner Sicht und der Sicht meiner Fraktion zwei wichtige Bedingungen für Ihre Arbeit erfüllt sind.

Aber ich hätte noch eine Frage: Sie haben sich zur Erweiterungsfähigkeit der Europäischen Union und den Kopenhagen-Kriterien geäußert. In Artikel 49 heißt es, wenn ein Land europäisch ist, kann es einen Antrag

stellen. Halten Sie das für einen Automatismus? Oder muss dazu auch gehören, dass ein politischer Wille vorhanden ist, und dass wir hier in Brüssel nicht gegen den Willen der Bevölkerung entscheiden können, dass wir auch deutlich machen, dass die Integrationsfähigkeit, die nicht nur eine finanzielle ist, bei solchen Beurteilungen berücksichtigt wird?

Zweitens: Da Sie diese Bereitschaft zur Zusammenarbeit zum Ausdruck gebracht haben, müssen wir hier sehen, dass wir eine Reihe sensibler Fragen haben, sowohl in der Erweiterungspolitik als auch in der Nachbarschaftspolitik. Wären Sie bereit, in solchen Fällen wie der Türkei, oder wenn Bosnien und Herzegowina Erweiterungsland wird, aber auch bei Ländern wie Syrien, Libyen oder Georgien speziell vor Entscheidungen – beispielsweise auch vor der Eröffnung von neuen Kapiteln oder der Schließung von Kapiteln – zum Europäischen Parlament zu kommen und die Sache mit uns zu erörtern?

2-115

Stefan Füle, *Commissioner-designate*. Concerning a very important question – and may I say that Mr Brok's indication of the position of his particular political family means a lot to me – I agree that Article 49 is about applicability and not about automaticity. The same goes for NATO, and this is one of the issues I am ready to discuss with you. You are absolutely right, being accountable to you means not only informing you about what has happened but also coming to you and seeking your advice on upcoming issues and obtaining the widest possible support.

I am a strong believer in the Lisbon Treaty and the opportunity it offers us to work more efficiently on external matters. But beyond the Lisbon Treaty I am not just accountable to you as a committee; I am also available to individual rapporteurs, chairs of interparliamentary committees and so on. There is a tremendous wealth of experience in this room and I am looking forward to being able to draw on it over the coming five years if I am confirmed in office.

Mr Chair, it is my fault and my problem that I did not use my time more efficiently so as to have time to share with you some remarks I had prepared in advance. Thank you very much for being so very kind and gracious as to allow me more time throughout these hearings when I was a little bit over the time limit. I appreciate this very open, very frank but at the same time very fair debate. I hope I can look forward to a continuation of that spirit over the coming years. Thank you very much.

(Applause).

2-116

Presidente. – Non mi resta che concludere con i saluti e i ringraziamenti che faccio non solo al Commissario designato, ma anche a tutti voi che avete così validamente contribuito a una serie di interventi ordinati e disciplinati e che ci ha permesso di rispettare i tempi.

Ci ritroveremo con l'ufficio di presidenza e i coordinatori alle 18.00, circostanza nella quale esamineremo insieme una bozza di lettera da inviare alla Conferenza dei presidenti, che prevede anche naturalmente come argomento precipuo il commento dell'audizione che oggi ha avuto luogo e di cui ancora la ringraziamo. Grazie e alle 16.00.

La riunione è chiusa alle 16.00.