

Thank you chairman!

Allow me some briefs words in my mother tongue.

Apresento hoje o primeiro relatório do Parlamento Europeu sobre o Estado de Schengen. Schengen é sinónimo de liberdade de circulação e o maior valor da Europa dos cidadãos. Mas há também uma dimensão económica, há um custo enorme para não-Schengen. Levantar de novo fronteiras teria um impacto superior a 50 mil milhões de euros, com graves consequências para a economia e o emprego.

De nada servem respostas e visões simplistas. Precisamos de discutir os verdadeiros problemas, com base em factos. É isso que este relatório tenta fazer.

E Schengen tem de voltar à agenda dos líderes europeus. Sabemos o que a Comissão Europeia pretende mas ignoramos o que quer o Conselho. Neste preciso momento, os ministros da Administração Interna estão reunidos uma vez mais. Por isso, escrevi ontem à Presidência Búlgara exigindo que expliquem a este Parlamento qual é o seu plano para que Schengen volte ao normal.

Através deste relatório, espero que o Parlamento adote a sua visão sobre Schengen.

I will continue in English.

Let me take a step back and explain how we arrived to this report.

As you know, last term, this Parliament started a process of making Schengen more European. We approved the New Schengen Evaluation mechanism, giving the Commission a stronger role and enhancing powers of this Parliament.

As a consequence, this committee has decided to set up a working group, which I chair, in order to review and control the specific results of the Schengen evaluations of the different fields. Through the presentation of this report, we hope to consolidate further the role of Parliament representing citizens. Indeed, it was not long ago when Schengen was considered a secretive and exclusive domain of the Member States despite its huge impact on people's lives.

This is all the more important when the past three years have been very difficult, with Schengen under enormous pressure. In the past three years, we have had more internal border controls than the 10 years before.

However, in this regard I am very clear in the report I present to you today: Schengen has been under pressure because the Common European Asylum System is broken and because Member States do not apply correctly the *acquis*.

During the discussions of our Working group we have come across several problems in the various fields of evaluation: ranging from external border controls to police and judicial cooperation in criminal matter, including EUROSUR or exchange of information. All detailed in the report.

It is even more worrying when Parliament has been approving several new security measures, such as new information systems to the introduction of mandatory systematic checks against EU citizens. We have recognized there are new and diffuse threats but we cannot accept that member states do not use existing tools. And clearly point that out in the report.

We also make clear that the Council must follow the European Parliament in adopting a mandate for negotiations on asylum files and that it is not acceptable that the new European Asylum Agency remains blocked when political agreement was reached nine months ago!

All these matters have contributed to put Schengen under pressure. For some, it is easier to blame free movement than to address the real problems. The consequence of such populist approach was to reintroduce internal border controls. In this regard, Member States have been playing with fire. No coordination with neighbour countries, no data to allow any proper assessment and, now, even a blunt disrespect of Schengen rules in the last prolongations, which I believe to be unlawful.

That is why the proposal of the commission to amend the Schengen borders code with respect to internal border controls must be treated carefully. Such changes should only reflect the new challenges and diffuse threats to internal security and should not be a further avenue for prolongation controls.

It is your rapporteur's belief that we can and must bring Schengen back to the citizens. We must support the Commission in this objective and remind firmly that Member States are, ultimately, the ones holding that back.

Mr. Chairman,

Two final, important, points.

First, to thank the European Commission for its very constructive cooperation, namely Mr. Seiffarth and Mr. de Ceuster. My thanks naturally to our very own secretariat: Antoine, Katrin, Jani, Michael and all that have supported this Working group

Finally, to highlight that this report aims to reflect the discussions in the Schengen Working group. I must thank all its Members for their work and contributions. I very much look forward to work with the shadow rapporteurs in order to reach a broad consensus. I believe we must send a strong and united signal from this parliament when it comes to Schengen.