



Provisional edition

Wednesday 2 October 2019, afternoon

Official report of debates

Opening of the sitting Nr 32

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): The meeting is open.

My dear colleagues,

I remind you that we are currently electing a judge to the European Court of Human Rights in respect of Portugal.

The list of candidates, their biographical sketch and the opinion of the Commission are contained in documents 14954 and 14968, addendum 2.

The vote was suspended at 1 p.m. and it will resume in the rotunda behind the presidency. It will be closed at 5 p.m.

I invite those of you who have not yet done so to go to vote. The counting will take place immediately after, under the usual conditions, under the control of the four tellers whom we have designated by lot this morning. These are Mr Yunus EMRE, Mr Bertrand BOUYX, Mr Vladimir KOZHIN and Mr Konstantin KUHLE. I remind them that they will have to be in the rotunda behind the presidency at 5 p.m.

The results of the ballot will be announced, if possible, before the adjournment of this afternoon's session.

The vote is again open and we continue our work during this time.

The next point in the agenda is the presentation of the discussion of the report by Ms Nicole TRISSE on behalf of the Social Affairs Committee on Health and Sustainable Development on "The Council of Europe Development Bank, to contribute to the construction of 'a more inclusive society'". After listening to the rapporteur, we will have the pleasure of hearing Mr Rolf WENZEL, Governor of the Council of Europe Development Bank.

Madam Rapporteur, you have a total of 13 minutes, which you can distribute as you wish between the presentation of the report and the response to the speakers.

It's your turn to speak.

In this report:

1. Speeches in English, French, German and Italian are reported in full in English.
2. Speeches in other languages are summarised from the interpretation and indicated by an asterisk (*).
3. Speeches in German and Italian are available in full on the Assembly's website.
4. The text of the amendments is available at the document centre and on the Assembly's website. Only oral amendments or oral sub-amendments are reproduced in the report of debates.
5. Corrections should be handed in at Room 1081 not later than 24 hours after the report has been published.

Debate: The Council of Europe Development Bank: contributing to building a more inclusive society

Ms Nicole TRISSE (France, ALDE, Rapporteur): Thank you, Madame President.

Madame President,

Mr Chairman of the Committee on Social Issues, Health and Sustainable Development,

Governor of the CEB,

Dear colleagues,

It is both an honor and a pleasure for me to present to you my report on a subject that affects, indirectly but very concretely, the Council of Europe's actions in favor of the populations of our continent.

The Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) is a discreet institution, linked to the Council of Europe by a partial agreement of 1956. Today, 41 countries are members.

For many years, the CEB focused on helping refugees and displaced persons, as well as on emergency assistance in case of natural disasters. In the 1990s, when new member States joined the bank, especially from Central and Eastern Europe, it was more about meeting an urgent need for development aid from these countries. Then the financial crisis of 2009 completely changed the situation and encouraged the CEB to expand its action in support of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged populations.

My report reviews the work of the Bank over the past five years, reviews the follow-up given to previous PACE recommendations and makes proposals to further strengthen the utility, visibility and strength of the CEB to Member States.

What is the CEB, what does it do? The CEB is an original bank in its field of intervention. It co-finances social projects with its member states by making available its own resources and funds raised on the financial markets, under conditions reflecting the quality of its rating (from AA + to AAA according to the rating agencies). As an illustration, in 2018, it raised 5 billion euros in the markets. Similarly, it may grant loans to financial institutions and local authorities in its Member States for social and sustainable development projects.

The number of countries actively borrowing from the CEB increased from 20 in 2014 to 32 in 2018. Currently eight countries, eight Council of Europe member states, are not members of the Bank, namely Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Monaco, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the United Kingdom, as they remain on the sidelines of the Partial Agreement on the CEB. They do not contribute to this tool of social investment and solidarity but, above all, what is unfortunate is that they do not benefit from it.

The financial crisis of 2009 has profoundly transformed the European economic landscape. While the economic slowdown reduced overall lending activity to the Bank's target countries around 2012-2013, this activity picked up again, especially in the volume of projects approved. Today, there are 194 projects in progress and there has not been any default or late payment on the corresponding loans.

In mid-2015, another challenge emerged: emergency aid and the long-term integration of migrants and refugees. In response, the Bank has put in place a new grant-based funding tool: the Migrant and Refugee Fund, which aims to support national efforts to secure basic Human Rights, primarily through the financing of reception and transit. By the end of 2018, the 21 million euros allocated to the fund had enabled the Bank to support 24 projects in 14 countries; half of these projects are still in progress and should be completed by April 2021.

To illustrate the added value of the CEB's actions, and to show our fellow citizens its concrete utility for concerns that speak to them, I mentioned in my report three examples of co-financed projects that focus on areas that are both representative of the values promoted by the Council of Europe and the expectations of our people.

These three examples reveal the range of possibilities offered by the Bank to its Member States. In fact, co-financing for the member state can be done at national level, or at regional or local level, as long as the project is in line with the political and social objectives of the organization, and sticks to the European Social Charter, dear to the Council of Europe.

The first example concerns France and the project CYCLHAD, which is in fact the Archade center of Caen. The project is called CYCLHAD: it is an upstream research on cancer –certain cancers– on carbon ions, on the basis of joint funding with the company CYCLHAD and the CEB. The Bank has granted two loans worth a total of 92 million euros to this project, which is part of the plan to fight cancer that was launched in France in 2002.

As a reminder, 355,000 new cases of cancer are diagnosed each year in France, only half of which can be cured with conventional methods of treatment. The interest of this project CYCLHAD is that it is indeed an innovative method by hadrontherapy, which is capable of destroying cancerous cells that are radioresistant and inoperable by irradiating them with a beam of protons or carbon ions. This is a real solution for the future, particularly useful for treating very young patients.

The second concrete achievement of which I refer in my report is the support for improving the quality of life and health services in the Podkarpackie region of Poland. In 2018, the CEB granted a public infrastructure financing facility for this Polish region in the form of a €43 million loan. The aim is to improve transport accessibility and connectivity with neighbouring regions and countries, to make investments, to support the capacity of municipalities to provide public services.

In short, this support from the CEB should contribute to improving the quality of life of the two million inhabitants of the region and produce positive effects on sustainable development. In addition, it echoes the recommendations of our Assembly, which is to fight any social inequality, including in rural areas.

Finally, the last example to illustrate my point is the CEB's support for Bosnia and Herzegovina's very small and small businesses, especially those owned by women, who generally do not have stable incomes and do not have access to credit, through the Microcredit Foundation, affiliated with the Women's World Banking network.

CEB financing under this project remains limited to €5,100 per loan, but will nevertheless enable at least 800 households and very small businesses to benefit from it. So, even if this value is modest compared to what I mentioned before, this aid will contribute to the economic emancipation and the inclusion of women, allowing at the same time to improve the living conditions.

All of these examples are part of the Bank's current strategy, built in a context of persistently low interest rates. Despite its cautious stance, the Bank is likely to soon reach the ceiling of funding it can offer to its member states. It currently has a long-term loan authorization of 5 billion euros for the year 2019. And to increase its lending activity, the states present in its capital will have to consider an increase of this same capital, the last occurred in 2011.

Today, the CEB's main lines of action are three: sustainable and inclusive growth; integration of refugees, displaced persons and migrants; and, finally, climate action. As rapporteur, I believe that these three orientations remain valid for the years to come. However, it would be useful to link them more explicitly to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, in the light of the Bank's thematic review and recent reports from our Assembly.

As regards governance bodies now: while it is undeniable that the Bank's work has been modernized and streamlined through, inter alia, internal restructuring, I have noted that, despite the recommendations of the 2014 PACE, there has still been no progress towards simplifying the decision-making structures and the voting system in the Governing Board. That is why the current draft resolution, which I submit to you, calls for governance reform to continue, particularly with the timely review of the competencies, functions and number of vice-governors.

The draft resolution, colleagues, also calls on the eight Council of Europe member states that are not yet members of the CEB to seriously reconsider their position.

The amounts to be mobilized to join the CEB can be perceived as important in absolute value but, in reality, they represent however only an initial investment which then makes it possible to borrow much higher amounts on very advantageous conditions. I want to give the example of Poland in 2018, its share in the capital was about 14 million euros and its contribution to reserves was three to four times higher, but the total funds made available by the Bank reached 2.8 billion euros.

It is clear enough, I believe, that joining the CEB has a considerable multiplier effect on the ability of its shareholders to carry out socially relevant projects.

To conclude, this report finds that, despite the complex economic and regulatory constraints, despite its size and certain structural rigidities, the CEB shows a remarkable ability to manage risks and support social investments, while generating added value in its Member States. Moreover, it is the only Bank, to my knowledge, which finances the construction of prisons, to finish with the detention centers that are known in some parts of the greater Europe, which are old and unworthy.

In the context of its future priorities, I believe that this Bank can and must, on the one hand, better integrate the promotion of sustainable development and the achievement of the SDGs and, on the other hand, strengthen through its actions the fight against the causes and the effects of growing inequality, whether in rural or urban areas, including greater reliance on local and regional authorities.

Finally, it would benefit from strengthening its partnership with the Council of Europe for better visibility.

In this regard, I reiterate my request to the eight non-member countries to encourage them to join this bank. With this in mind, and following the suggestion of Mr. SCHENNACH, I intend to send this report and its resolution, which I hope you will validate, to the eight States not yet convinced of the merits of the Bank.

Colleagues, that is what the draft resolution submitted to your vote today provides. I call you to vote and thank you for your attention.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you Ms TRISSE,

You will have two minutes to respond to the various interventions that will be made during the debate.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is our privilege and pleasure to be able to count this afternoon on the presence of Mr Rolf WENZEL, Governor of the Council of Europe Development Bank, who is on our side.

Mr Governor,

I sincerely welcome your presence here today in our hemicycle. As you know, the Assembly has always considered the Council of Europe Development Bank as a major player in the progress towards a more inclusive society and in promoting sustainable growth.

As an example, I would like to pay tribute to the emergency assistance that the Bank has provided in recent years to the countries most affected by the migration crisis.

More recently, the establishment of a long-term strategy focusing on the integration of migrant people, as well as a strengthened assistance program for all those who are in a vulnerable situation, should also be welcomed.

Likewise, we are pleased that the current discussions on the CEB's next development plan for the period 2020-2022 address a greater focus on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, as the rapporteur has pointed out, including reducing inequalities, ensuring access to sustainable energy services, and ensuring access for all to quality education.

The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals is also one of the main priorities of our Assembly, where we are all delighted to have close cooperation with the Bank on this topic, as well as other common interests.

Thank you again for being with us today and I give you the floor, Governor.

Mr Rolf WENZEL (Gouverneur of the Council of Europe Development Bank): Madame President,

Members of the Parliamentary Assembly,

I would first of all like to thank you, Madame President, for inviting me to address the Parliamentary Assembly. It is an honour to be here and to respond to the rapporteurs report. And I thank you very much for your introduction and for reminding the Members of the Parliamentary Assembly about the role of the bank.

Over the past few months, I have had the opportunity to exchange views with the rapporteur of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, Ms Nicole TRISSE. All our meetings were held in a spirit of constructive and frank dialogue, which I very much appreciated.

We, at the Bank, welcome the report very much. There is no lack of reports about the Bank's financial activities, but this report provides a useful external view of the role of the Bank and its links with the Council of Europe.

It also informs Assembly members from CEB Member countries, as well as from non-Members, about recent CEB activities, achievements and challenges ahead, which I assume Assembly Members will report back to their national parliaments.

So I thank the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development for its ongoing interest in, and support for, the CEB and its work. My special thanks go to the rapporteur and her team from the Secretariat for all the time and effort they have put into producing a rich and clear report.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am heartened to see that the report acknowledges the diversity of projects and the range of social areas in which the CEB is active; the variety of financial instruments employed by the Bank in order to maximise the impact of its activity; and the concrete efforts by CEB staff and management since the last report in 2014 to increase CEB lending activity, relevance and visibility, and to keep the Bank financially sound. I was pleased to see that, by means of examples of CEB activities, the report presents specific CEB-financed projects.

I do share the view expressed both in the draft resolution and in the explanatory memorandum of the report that Council of Europe Member countries who are not CEB members should consider joining the Bank. I see some of you smiling, so I don't have to name those countries which are not yet members of the Bank. I would simply say that the Bank is not only an instrument of European solidarity for the most vulnerable; it is also –in financial and political terms– a good and sound investment. Hence, I welcome and join the rapporteur's open encouragement to non-CEB members to consider coming onboard with us.

I also take good note of the recommendations regarding the internal structure and governance of the Bank. In recent months, I have personally sensed a renewed momentum in that direction. I do hope that further progress can be made and look forward to seeing the decisions our shareholders will make over the next few months.

Let me go now to the strategic vision and planning of the CEB for the coming years, on which the President of the Assembly kindly asked me to express my thoughts and ideas.

I believe that the CEB Development Plan for the period 2020-2022, which we are in the process of finalising at the moment, will enable us to take important steps towards consolidating and continuing the work that we have been undertaking in recent years. By that I do not only mean keeping up our current lending activity, but also maintaining our relevance and strong performance in a changing and ever-challenging economic and social environment. The rapporteur just reminded us of the changing environment in terms of low interest rates which will continue to be low, and even lower perhaps. Finally, all the social problems we have... President Macron yesterday mentioned some of the challenges that the Council of Europe and all European governments have at the current juncture.

While we will be focusing on activities on our mandate to promote social cohesion, the proposed direction for the CEB's course of action over the next three-year period also takes into account other key factors, notably: our increased operational activity with local and regional authorities as well as national governments; and the need to mainstream Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into our work, combined with our wish to place greater emphasis on environmental and "greening" aspects in our projects and our activity in general.

Our proposed strategic plan for the coming years, that is for the years 2020-2022, is guided by the following three priority lines of action:

First, inclusive growth. We take this to cover all activities aimed at guaranteeing access to equal opportunities in a range of areas, in order to offer opportunities and a prosperous future for all.

In the post-crisis era, social and economic inequalities are dangerously on the rise and pose a serious threat to the social fabric of our societies. Socio-economic exclusion and marginalisation often cause sentiments of social injustice and resentment towards the political status quo. That, in turn, may lead to radicalisation and extremism.

I hardly need to mention any examples, Europe has had its fair share of manifestations of extremism in recent years with tragic consequences. What I would like to stress, however, is this: people, especially young people, need to have a perspective in life if they are going to be part of society, a society which offers opportunities for all. This is why this CEB line of action –inclusive growth– encompasses a range of areas that are vital for creating inclusive communities: housing and social care; education and training; healthcare; employment and entrepreneurship, including support for micro, small and medium-sized businesses.

As a means of maximising the impact of our work, our approach is focused on stepping up cooperation with local communities, such as municipalities and regional authorities, since it is at the local level where social services are delivered. This does not mean however, that we are going to neglect our long-standing cooperation with national governments.

The second priority line of action under our Development Plan 2020-2022 is support for vulnerable groups. This is closely linked to the first priority which I just talked about, since the integration of vulnerable groups into society and the labour market involves action in areas such as housing, health, education and employment. The groups concerned are minorities and segments of the population that face discrimination or experience serious difficulties when it comes to accessing services or having opportunities in life. This category includes, but is not limited to, migrants and refugees or persons of migrant background, persons with disabilities, the elderly, the homeless, the unemployed, single parents, young people, and members of ethnic groups.

Support for vulnerable population groups is the CEB's focus since its establishment and its *raison d'être*; an area which received new impetus at the Bank with the outbreak of the recent refugee crisis and the prompt establishment of the CEB Migrant and Refugee Fund in 2015. The rapporteur just referred to that report and that instrument (the Migrant and Refugee Fund). I would like to take the opportunity here today to thank all countries who donated to support this important facility that helped the Bank to react promptly, quickly and supporting countries that were receiving huge numbers of refugees and migrants from Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria.

By its targeted actions through the grant-based MRF –Migrant and Refugee Plan– the CEB proved its ability to deal with the emergency situation at hand, providing basic necessities for newly arrived migrants and refugees on European soil. Since then, efforts continue unabated to ensure –through a variety of lending instruments– that CEB members can tackle related medium and long-term challenges.

In her recent statutory declaration and presentation of her strategic vision, the new Secretary General of the Council of Europe underlined the importance of the promotion and protection of Human Rights. Indeed, we have a duty to ensure the fulfilment of Human Rights by all, without discrimination. I believe that coordinated action in addressing social disparities is key for the CEB to be able to support the most vulnerable population groups on the continent. We are determined to continue working with our partners at all levels to ensure that investments are channelled towards integration policies benefiting those in need.

The third priority set out in our proposed strategic planning for the medium-term is environmental sustainability.

Environmental issues and climate action are high on the list of policy agendas and debates around the planet. We must not forget that the most vulnerable are those most exposed to the effects of climate change. So we, too, as a multilateral development bank, need to step up our response to global warming and continue to make our own contribution to concerted action on climate change. Environmental sustainability is important to us since we provide financing for infrastructure projects, so there is a responsibility to ensure that high standards for climate mitigation are met.

We are also enhancing the integration of climate action components in all our project proposals, including the potential for reducing greenhouse gas emissions or opportunities for improving climate change resilience.

Moreover, we are reinforcing our screening process to ensure that projects which are not aligned with the Paris Climate Agreement are identified as early as possible in the project cycle so we can take appropriate action. But don't get me wrong, we are a unique institution in the sense that we have a social mandate. We were set up in 1956 to promote social cohesion in our Member countries and more broadly in Europe. We are the oldest multilateral institution. Any other institution that you might think of now came later. We were the first with a very clear mandate, and this mandate continues to be our guiding principle. We obviously and clearly have to adapt to a changing environment to make sure that we need the challenges as they come together with the expectations of our shareholders, our Member countries.

Let me now turn to our cooperation with the Council of Europe. Cooperation with the Council of Europe has been and remains of importance to the CEB. Over the past few years, efforts for increased and tighter cooperation between the Bank and various committees, bodies and agencies of the Council of Europe have intensified.

I myself regularly participate in the meetings of the Committee of Ministers to brief members on the Bank's activities. I also participate in the meetings of the Venice Commission and inform the Commission about CEB developments. Democracy, Human Rights, and the Rule of Law are important for any public institution, and in particular one with an explicit social mandate such as the CEB, so it is vital to keep up with developments in these policy areas.

The CEB will continue to play its role in helping to materialise the objectives and decisions of the Council of Europe through the provision of financing and technical assistance. For example, the CEB is committed to keeping up the financial and technical support to countries for the rehabilitation of their public judicial services and detention facilities. We will help them to implement the European Prison Rules. Yes, we are the only multilateral financial institution who is providing that service: the financing and the needed technical expertise. We will continue to liaise with the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in that respect.

Moreover, we are looking at how can we best support the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. In a similar vein, we are also exploring ways in which we can develop a closer cooperation with the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human beings.

Of course, the success of our work depends on the willingness and the commitment of our Member countries requesting our support. Here I count also on your support when you report back, I hope, to your national parliaments. To provide an additional opportunity for information on the CEB and its work, next month at the end of November we are organising here in Strasbourg a presentation on the Bank and its activities. I thank France for having taken the initiative to invite us to come to Strasbourg to inform not only Ambassadors about the activities of the Bank, but also the services of the Council of Europe so we can really present when they discuss in their different Committees what and who can support the implementation of their policies.

At this point, I would like to underline the excellent cooperation that we have with the administration of the Council of Europe: first and foremost with the Secretariat of the Partial Agreement on the CEB, which acts as a liaison between our two institutions, and also with the various services and colleagues at the Council of Europe such as the Directorate of Democracy, Human Resources and Budget.

Last but not least, it would be an oversight not to mention that Mr Tomáš Boček recently joined the Bank as a Vice-Governor. As many of you know, Mr Boček was formerly the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on Migration and Refugees, so he has a deep knowledge of the Council and we have no doubt that he will contribute to further cementing the ties and ongoing cooperation between the Council of Europe and the CEB.

Madame President.

Members of the Parliamentary Assembly,

Promoting social cohesion and solidarity in Europe is a challenging task. The recent financial crisis and its consequences for European governments and citizens have made this task all the more challenging. As the only international financial institution with an exclusively social mandate, the CEB has a major role to play in social development. Indeed, through its activities for more than six decades, the Bank has established itself as the social development bank in Europe. In the current context, the challenge is for the CEB to remain focused on its goals and continue to deliver good results, while maintaining its financial soundness as a self-funded institution. And let me say it again, as a self-funded institution. I believe that is good news for those who are still not members of the Bank because it means that when you join the Bank and you pay in the capital, you get a big bang for your dollar, or I should say euro or whatever currency you prefer.

In my view, this is the way forward: working closely with our Member countries and in coordination with the Council of Europe in order to encourage public investment in social development, protect vulnerable groups and the environment, and build a more inclusive society.

And as ever, in this endeavor, I hope I can count on the continued support of this Assembly.

Thank you very much.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Governor.

As you have shown, the very name of your organization, the Development Bank, clearly defines your mandate, which is to contribute to development. As you said, this mandate can only be fulfilled by strengthening social cohesion and solidarity. The priorities of the CEB's next program, which you have presented to us, perfectly demonstrate the importance of taking into consideration all categories of the population. The latter must all be able to benefit from the economic and social rights that form part of fundamental rights. Thank you very much.

You will have the possibility, if you wish, at the end of the debate, to intervene again, of course also to react to the speakers' interventions.

In the general debate, I give the floor to Ms de COURSON for the Liberal Group.

Ms Yolaine de COURSON (France, ALDE, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, Madame President.

Dear colleagues,

The Council of Europe Development Bank supports social investments in 41 of the Member States.

As this report brilliantly underlines, the Development Bank successfully manages the risks of natural disasters and supports social projects with high added value.

It is important to remember also, as recalled by the rapporteur, that as a development bank, it defends an inclusive and sustainable growth, the integration of refugees and migrants, and pays attention to any future-oriented investments that are "green" investments.

We see through this issues with which it is concerned that the Council of Europe Development Bank is really a bank of today.

As demonstrated in the report, the CEB's development plan for the period 2020-2022 is an opportunity to highlight its role in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, by, inter alia, focusing on the needs of the most disadvantaged populations and territories, in both urban and rural areas.

I pay particular attention to the rural environment, because –as we know– it is in these rural areas that there is the most sense of injustice, relegation, institutional abandonment, drying up of public services, closing schools or health centers. The examples in our different countries are not lacking and we all remember them when I speak to you. That's why I noticed in particular the example presented to us by Nicole TRISSE about improving the quality of life and health services in urban and rural areas in the Subcarpathian region, which is really emblematic of the work of this bank.

We support this report because this bank is an extension of the work of the Council of Europe and its Parliamentary Assembly.

New tools have been made available, such as multi-sector loans for local governments, which are loans that can finance very different sectors and themes for the same community. An emergency fund for migration, therefore, has been put in place as well, proof that this development bank is modernizing and is gaining in efficiency.

The facts do not deceive. Countries using the bank increased from 20 in 2014 to 32 in 2018, encouraging states that are not yet contributors to become so. They really have everything to gain.

The ALDE Group fully supports this report and congratulates Nicole TRISSE for her work.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Mr PRINGLE has the floor for the UEL Group.

Mr Thomas PRINGLE (Ireland, UEL, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you Madame Chairperson.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the rapporteur Madame TRISSE for her report and recommendations, and also to congratulate the Governor of the bank on behalf of the United Left Group.

Madame Chairperson, the Council of Europe Development Bank, or CEB as I will call it from now on is a very important institution of the Council. I feel the ability to lend money to member states that support the aims of the Council as an important part of supporting them in a very tangible way. As it is stated in the resolution before us, the CEB has also shown a remarkable capacity to manage risks and support social investments with a high added value.

The Bank has accumulated unique know-how and comprehensive experience in handling projects across countries with very different levels of development, institutional capacity and social needs. It is refreshing that it is a bank that does not have the receipt of profit as its primary aim, which is a new experience for us in Ireland anyway. I think that should be expanded on more often. The aims of the Bank are creating jobs, housing and development and public infrastructure, and recently the development of migration and adaptation to climate action which I feel will become more and more important. Of course all these developments have the protection of migrants at their heart.

Particularly, I feel that climate change is at the heart of a lot of migrant issues as well, and I think that will be important in the future. Ireland has not been shy when accessing the funds of CEB as well. Although I feel that perhaps the CEB could perhaps be more forceful in announcing its involvement in Ireland and not leave it up to the European Investment Bank only to publicise its involvement. I think that is very important that the CEB should publicise and notify its involvement in the country. In Ireland we have benefited in recent years to the tune of 118 million euros, which is not an insignificant amount.

With social housing projects, in the last few days alone 130 million euro have been approved for social housing, and also recently the regeneration of Limerick benefiting. Limerick is Ireland's third city and had a severe lack of investment and the fund had been able to help out. I am interested particularly in the ability of the CEB to invest in local authorities directly in member states. This could be very useful in Ireland's terms. Although it is possible that local authorities in Ireland might not be developed enough to benefit directly through the use of the funds in our case. In Ireland we have a very underdeveloped local authority structure and the purse strings on funding are very tightly controlled at a national level. The addition of a focus on climate action is what I am thinking about in the context of local authority funding. Particularly I represent the very North-West of Ireland, that is a very rural and underdeveloped part of Ireland, and we are looking to get up to date road development, nevermind public transport or the railways that would be climate efficient. Perhaps this could be the type of project the development bank could look at in partnership with a local authority.

Anyway, that is a job for another day. In the context of the motion that we are discussing today, I have to say that I agree totally with the motion and have no problems in supporting it. I think point 10.2 in the motion, on how the remit could expand is very important and I look with interest to the Bank's response.

Thank you.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

I call Mr NICK for the EPP Group.

Mr Andreas NICK (Germany, EPP/CD, Spokesperson for the group): Madam President,

Mr Governor Wenzel,

Dear colleagues,

With a balance sheet total of approximately €24 billion and almost 8,000 ongoing projects, the Council of Europe Development Bank is a comparatively small player compared to other European and international development banks. Even within our Parliamentary Assembly and in our member states, its visibility can certainly still be enhanced. It has been said that not all member states of the Council of Europe are members of the Bank, and I feel they should be.

My heartfelt thanks, therefore, to Ms Nicole Trisse for the present report, which has brought the Bank and its activities more into focus, thank you bringing them to our attention, and thus also the question of future priorities in the work of this institution. Because as a relatively small actor, the Council of Europe Development Bank needs a specific profile. Of course, this should continue to be closely linked to the work and image of the Council of Europe.

With its projects in the least favored regions of Europe, the Bank has become a central instrument for strengthening social cohesion on our continent, helping the most disenfranchised. It thus makes an important contribution to ensuring inclusive, economic progress and strengthening the principles of the rule of law and pluralist democracy. But it is true: in the future, the bank must proactively take on new challenges.

I therefore warmly welcome the fact that the 2020-2022 Development Plan aims to align its activities even more closely with sustainability and the sustainable development goals of the United Nations, with an ongoing commitment of around €4 billion a year; especially for environmentally friendly investment in communities in our Member States. However, it will also be an important factor for future success that the bank further intensifies its already successful cooperation with institutions such as the European Investment Bank or the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. This is because project-related larger volumes can be leveraged with these much larger partners, and as part of their projects and programs, specific goals are also set in line with the goals and principles of the Council of Europe.

But we ourselves should also do our utmost to strengthen our bank on their behalf. I would like to call on the member states which are not yet involved in the Bank, to seriously consider joining it. We have the opportunity to do much more if we benefit from a multiplying effect, and we must promote the work and capabilities of the Bank in our member states and ensure that it has a long-term future.

Thank you very much.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Ms SAYEK BÖKE, for the SOC Group.

Ms Selin SAYEK BÖKE (Turkey, SOC, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you very much, Madame President.

And I'd like to give a warm welcome to Mr Governor on behalf of the Socialist group.

In January 2018, the High-Level Task Force on investing in social infrastructure in Europe drafted the report, highly debated on its estimates, but they argued that the infrastructure gap in Europe to be fulfilled was around 100 and 150 billion euros.

Now this suggests that Europe needs more social investment, Europe needs more social rights and Europe needs less austerity. The social investment gap that we're experiencing in Europe is actually driving the ever-deepening social and economic inequality, which is why I cannot emphasise the importance of this report and the following statement in the report: "Action should not only be taken for the consequences of socio-economic inequalities but also for the causes of it."

Inequalities are actually the result of the economic model that is dictated by a shrinking welfare state, the stalling of social investment and people being left in the harsh hands of the market. As such, we actually need more social investment. We need a change in our paradigm and our objective has to change from growth at all costs to development that is inclusive and social.

This is why the Council of Europe Development Bank is extremely important. Its size might be small relative to other banks, but its mandate is huge. Therefore, we have to support the Bank in ensuring that we can cooperate in achieving the similar objectives we now have. Therefore, I really value this report which was diligently prepared. Social investments actually generate positive externalities and if left to the hands of the private sector, there will be under-investment.

This is why we need institutions that have a public mandate, like the Bank. This is why it is critical. And the Bank, like all institutions, is facing the urgency to innovate its financing instruments. The low-interest-rate environment has contributed negatively to the Bank's profits and we all know — and almost certainly — that the low-interest-rate environment, unfortunately, is going to prevail.

Now, given these constraints — rightfully — alternatives are being sought out. However, I think a warning has to be put in place for public and private partnerships. There has been ample international evidence suggesting that PPPs might not always work in the benefit of the public and might move us away from transparency. As such, if there is an undeniable need to use PPPs, then we have to ensure that transparency and efficiency of projects and processes are ensured through diligent processes themselves.

In this regard, I also commend the report on the Bank for thinking about using thematic bonds, which would contribute to the social investment patterns.

In short, I think we should all support this report, all member states should become active parts of the Bank, and we will be stronger with social investment. We will be stronger with the Bank.

Thank you.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The next speaker is Mr HOWELL, on behalf of the Conservatives Group.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, Madam President.

I would like to start what I have to say by praising the rapporteur and her comprehensive report on this. I think it's also worth pointing out the excellent cooperative way in which she has gone about producing this report, to which the Governor has already paid tribute. And let me say, too, that it was a great pleasure to see the Governor here and to hear directly from him about his own plans for the future.

I stand here in some humility because I come from a country that is not a member of the bank, and I know that many of my colleagues have already approached members of the UK government about this, and some of them are on the speaker's list, so I won't say too much to steal their thunder. But a large part of the concern that there appears to be from the British government is that the Bank appears to be conflicting in some of what it does with the EBRD.

Now, I think that is a false distinction to be made. It doesn't compete with the EBRD. There are many countries in Western Europe who get money from this bank for very good projects. We heard from our Irish colleague about how Ireland has just got money from the bank. And we also heard from the rapporteur how France is getting money for this, for very valuable cancer research, which I think is a very good example of this.

If I may point to the future for the Bank, I think the emphasis on climate change is a very important one, not just for the sake of climate change in itself, but because as the governor has already mentioned, it goes to the heart of what we are talking about in terms of social cohesion, and being able to be able to look after the vulnerable, because it will affect them before it affects the richer members of the community.

A second area that I would put a lot of emphasis on is justice. And I have pursued this both in Denmark and in Germany, and the need to ensure that the justice system reacts to the rehabilitation of prisoners so that they don't commit offences again is absolutely crucial.

And the last area that I would draw attention to is social care, which affects us all. My only concern is that -- and I'm sure the Governor has this under consideration -- it's for the capital structure of the Bank. I appreciate his need to be innovative, but he needs to make us very aware if he needs more capital for that, and I do wish him well and wish the Bank well.

Thank you.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Ms TRISSE, would you like to respond now or at the end? In the end, okay. Thank you very much.

We will continue with the list, and the next speaker is Ms DALLOZ.

Ms Marie-Christine DALLOZ (France, EPP/CD): Thank you, Madame President.

Madam rapporteur,

Dear colleagues,

I would like to thank you for allowing us to hold this debate today on a rather little known body of the Council of Europe. I read your work with a lot of interest. Several points caught my attention.

The proportion of loans disbursed in 2018, allocated to target countries, represents less than half of the loans. In the name of solidarity among its Member States, the CEB provides more support to 22 target countries in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe out of the 41 member countries. I would like to know which non-

target states are the remaining 56% in priority. It is interesting to note that the CEB is funding innovative cancer treatments in France, or rather helping local authorities to do so. This public-private partnership, and European organization, is quite original. I will be interested in other examples of private-public partnerships.

My second question is about controlling the use of these loans. For example, you indicate in your report that North Macedonia received 6,35 million euros in emergency aid for migrants. But we know that many countries face structural difficulties, not to mention problems or risks of corruption. The control of these funds is, in my opinion, essential.

What is the nature of control? Is it an external auditor? Could one imagine that the French Court of Auditors, for example, could intervene in control? Because of its vocation, the CEB is mostly aimed at projects affecting vulnerable publics; it seems essential to ensure that it is these vulnerable people who will be the addressees of the project and exclusively these people. Too often in international humanitarian programs we see the problems of lack of effective control over funds donated or loaned.

Finally, with regard to the sums lent, it seems to me essential that these funds be earmarked, that we know who pays them. On the one hand, it would allow everyone to know the role of this largely unknown institution, not only the general public but also the political actors. The CEB is an opportunity for the Council of Europe to show its detractors all its meaning, all its usefulness in our fragile Europe and the crises that shake it.

On the other hand, this would highlight this role of support for the CEB with local actors, associations, all its initiatives for the most vulnerable public. The CEB has a key role to play, I am sure.

This bank was born, like the Council of Europe, on the ruins of the Second World War. It has shown its effectiveness, often in the shadows. I think it is high time to put its great work in the spotlight.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

I remind those of you who have not yet voted for the election of a judge to the European Court of Human Rights for Portugal to do so in the remaining half hour, since the poll will be closed at 5 p.m.

I give the floor to Ms HADRI.

Ms Shpresa HADRI (North Macedonia, SOC): Thank you, Madame Chair.

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to congratulate the rapporteur Ms Nicole TRISSE on her work and to welcome the recommendation for further enhancement of the CEB's relevance, visibility and strength in relation to member states.

I agree with the rapporteur that the most important aspect of the CEB's work is its relationship with the Council of Europe and support for its values.

We need to invent a system that will not endanger the poor and the vulnerable and will tackle the growing trend of inequality. Europe is faced with a task to create a model for sustainable development and cooperation, which, in order to be successful, must be applied locally as well as globally.

The financial crisis of 2009, in a very clear way, demonstrated the high level of interdependence of the countries in the world. Of course, the developing and underdeveloped countries are less prepared to cope with the social issues and are, as a rule, more dependent on loans. In this regard, the member countries should use the Bank as a partner for supporting social projects.

In the case of the Republic of North Macedonia, so far, the Bank has approved loans for public sector projects totalling 264 million euros. Significant projects have been implemented: Small and medium enterprises Financing Project, Employment Promotion Project, Housing Project to be Leased to Low-Income Persons, Public Health Institutions Facilities Reconstruction and Upgrading Project - Phase 1, Penitentiary Institution Reconstruction Project and Socially Vulnerable Housing Project.

The Bank's loan mostly contributed to the country's efforts to create sustainable growth by strengthening the competitiveness of micro, small and medium enterprises and by fostering the creation of new permanent and seasonal jobs. The CEB aimed to reach small businesses which have restricted access to credit or are underserved by traditional bank financing. The funds provided by the Bank, which reached at least 65 eligible

businesses spread across the country, were also used to finance productive investment projects for the acquisition of machinery, equipment, vehicles, office and manufacturing premises, and production installations.

As stated in the Report, the next development plan for 2020-2022 emphasises the role of the Council of Europe Development Bank in the collective mobilisation of its stakeholders towards the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, notably by focusing on the needs of the most disadvantaged population groups in both urban and rural areas.

Our duty as politicians is to work on providing social equality and, as parliamentarians, we could all play a more active role in promoting project initiatives in our respective countries.

Thank you for your attention.

Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER (Switzerland, SOC, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

I call Mr ŠIRCELJ.

Mr Andrej ŠIRCELJ (Slovenia, EPP/CD): Thank you Madame Chair.

I would like to welcome the report relating to the Council of Europe Development bank. I think we could all agree that in the more and more interrelated global world it is often difficult to manage the corporate or profit-oriented identity of the bank and its social mission.

But this report presents how the CEB successfully manages risk on one hand and supports high value-added social projects on the other hand. I fully support CEB efforts to bolster sustainable and inclusive growth. I am also impressed with the figures which show that the CEB has, in 5 a year period, increased its loans for almost 60% and almost doubled the number of projects. Its reserves have also increased by almost 25%.

This shows the financial stability of the bank. Its financial stability is also recognised in the international markets which is also confirmed by the rating of the CEB by financial agencies such as Fitch, Moody's, Standard and Poor's.

The CEB loans range from two to 77 million euros with a reimbursement period between seven and 20 years. The CEB has also concluded a number of partnerships with multilateral investors and international organisations, mainly European Union and United Nations specialised agencies. I believe that these joint undertakings are of high value and particularly relevant for stimulating the social agenda and sustainable development goals across Europe. The European Union is the largest donor of funds to the CEB for the supporting of projects with high social impact.

I therefore fully support the recommendations in the proposed resolution, especially to strengthen the bank strategy towards assisting its members states to achieve greater territorial cohesion in the delivery of public services in urban and rural areas, notably in regards to access to education, health care, housing and employment.

It is therefore that I would strongly support the conclusions of the rapporteur about how the CEB has shown a remarkable capacity to manage risks and support financial investment with high added-value in its Member States and that it should be encouraged to persevere with projects in countries which need that.

Thank you very much.

Sir Roger GALE (United Kingdom, EC, President of the Assembly): Ms Christiana EROTKRITOU please.

Ms Christiana EROTKRITOU (Cyprus, SOC): Dear colleagues, I would first like to thank the rapporteur Ms Nicole TRISSE for her well documented report.

It is important to hold this debate today, as we must ensure that the Council of Europe Development Bank remains grounded to the Organisation's political and social objectives and the core values and principles it represents. Undoubtedly one cannot but feel impressed with the achievements of the bank, its sound financing policies and structures, its top ranking position and expert staff.

But most importantly the bank's activities and the projects it has financed have significantly improved the lives of millions of people across the European continent. The fact that the bank has a well-defined social mandate which it has never deviated from is also very significant. Through efficient instruments and procedures, the bank has promoted social cohesion and strengthened social integration through investments in quality projects related to sustainable growth, the integration of refugees and migrants, and the mitigation of the negative effects of climate change. However it is a stance it has striven to maintain throughout the years, by rightly focusing on the needs of the most disadvantaged groups through positive capacity building measures across societies and countries that needs to be applauded and upheld.

The bank's mission and mandate 63 years after its establishment remains today particularly relevant. One cannot ignore the fact that climate change could be the very first reason for a never-ending migration problem in Europe in the future. Therefore in order to be proactive we should maybe consider expanding the CEB mandate to enable it to address problems outside member states, and give solutions to third countries focused on sustainable farming and green investments.

The bank has financed numerous projects in targeted countries including my own, Cyprus. The bank has been assisting the Republic of Cyprus in better managing its water scarcity problems and has enhanced its water-supply systems. It has also recently financed the building of a high-tech wastewater treatment plant in the capital city of Nicosia. I fully support the recommendations included in the draft resolution. It is also important to ensure that the bank continues to undertake joint projects with other financial institutions, thereby pushing for an inclusive social agenda across Europe.

Finally I fully agree that more needs to be done in order to understand the causes of inequality that ultimately lead disadvantaged and marginalised people on the brink of despair. Devising the correct mechanisms to reduce inequalities, and finding ways to redress exposure to poverty need also become a central priority of the bank.

Sir Roger GALE (United Kingdom, EC, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Ms EROTKRITOU.

Vanessa d'AMBROSIO now, please, from San Marino.

Ms Vanessa D'AMBROSIO (San Marino, SOC): Thank you, President.

Today we are debating the pride of the Council of Europe: the Development Bank. A source of pride because since 1956 it has followed and supported countries and regions in projects of social and environmental sustainability, a shared commitment that over the years has found the support of more and more member states –41 to date– and has been able to change and consolidate, also through the use of carefully managed partnerships. It is an institution that has been able to respond to the challenges and has been able to enhance the projects, and at the same time manage the risk related to the various investments.

The Republic of San Marino joined the Council of Europe in 1988 and just six months later, in 1989, it joined the Development Bank, confirming how immediately San Marino was convinced of the added value of this institute. Last but not least, we welcomed the establishment of the Migration Fund to which my country has decided to participate.

Efforts to support social investments, sustainable growth, support for inclusion and integration, and commitment to green investments in line with the United Nations 2030 Agenda are the main areas in which the CEB agrees. On this trail I want to mention the support for the creation of cutting-edge reception centers, social housing and projects for the production of clean energy and the creation of jobs. As is also reported in the resolution of my colleague Ms Nicole TRISSE, whom I thank, I also remember the projects against cancer in France, in compliance with resolution 1946 (2013) and Article 3 of the Oviedo Convention, to allow treatment paths to advance in accordance with the principle of equal access to health care and appropriateness of care. A bank that has as its guiding principles the highest values, such as inclusive growth, access to health care, the dignity of the person in the various areas of life –work, housing, education– and the enhancement and protection of the environmental ecosystem. To this is added, at the same time, the great value of being able to anticipate and control the numbers by managing the risks and confirming an absolutely positive rating (as can be read from the report, a AAA).

I conclude this intervention by confirming my support for the Report. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Governor, not so much for flattery, but above all for underlining his excellent management, whose effects can well be seen in the excellent rating achieved.

Thanks.

Sir Roger GALE (United Kingdom, EC, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Is Mr GREEN here, please? He's not in his seat.

No? In that case, Joe O'REILLY, please, from Ireland.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD): Thank you, President.

Can I begin by congratulating my friend and colleague Ms TRISSE from the Social Affairs Committee on this excellent report?

The report focuses on the need to keep the bank focused on the vulnerable, social needs and new contemporary challenges, and focuses on the simplification of governance, all worthy objectives.

In my own country, we have a big challenge in the area of housing, and we plan to build 30 000 new social houses between now and 2021. It is for this reason that I warmly welcome the very recent a 150 million loan to our housing finance agency. Through new bills and retrofitting, this loan will provide quality long-term housing to 8 000 low-income persons. My country received 600 million in loans in the last couple of years with spectacular results.

I would at this point urge new non-member states to become members of the Bank, and indeed exhaust their parliamentary representatives here to become advocates for that at home. Colleagues, we have new challenges all the time, new challenges emerge, and as we move away from fossil fuels, we have through retrofitting and otherwise to guard against fuel poverty. So the Bank should and can help in this sphere.

Also, societal change constantly makes new people vulnerable. At the moment, small shops have been affected by the multiples and internet sales. Our small beef farmers are being adversely affected by new trends. Brexit will present a challenge and will raise — create social issues that will make the Bank relevant there. And of course, we have the Europe-wide challenge of migration and arranging the absorption and proper infrastructure for migrants.

I join with the remarks around the Chamber of congratulations to the Governor on the AAA rating — that's a great achievement in the context of the Bank's remit, and I welcome what the Bank is doing. I think it's so important that the Bank is there, and there to deal with new evolving emergencies, new difficulties, new challenges all the time. And, unfortunately, these keep occurring and we don't necessarily know what the next challenge will be, but it's of such importance to have the Bank there to flexibly respond to that.

Sir Roger GALE (United Kingdom, EC, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Mr O'REILLY.

Don TOUHIG. Lord Don TOUHIG from the United Kingdom.

Lord Don TOUHIG (United Kingdom, SOC): Mr President, I once borrowed some money: £7 million to be precise. That's about €10,000 at today's rate. Not for me personally, I was Chair of the Finance Committee of my county, and the county of Gwent was the first to borrow from the European Investment Bank. We obtained a loan at the most favourable interest rates and it helped us fund some key, socially-beneficial projects.

Today, after 10 years of austerity, local government in the United Kingdom is fighting to maintain basic services as a result of massive cuts in central government funding. Local councils have nowhere else to turn for assistance. Imagine my frustration, indeed, colleagues —my anger— when I read this report and learned even more about the beneficial advantages to countries across our continent from membership of the Council of Europe Development Bank. And I cannot for the life of me understand why the British government is so reluctant to join.

When I asked a question in parliament, I was given a pretty awful answer. The British government thinks the Bank solely focuses its operations on Central, Eastern and South-eastern Europe. I hope this report will be read in London, as it shows the advantages of membership of this Bank and how it has benefited France, Poland, as well as Bosnia-Herzegovina, just thrown as three examples in this report. Our French friends have seen financial support to finance cancer treatment plans. In Poland, the Bank has supported projects aimed at improving living conditions and health services in urban and rural areas. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, microcredits funded by the Bank, supported the creation and preservation of viable jobs.

I can think of a dozen areas of public service and public need in the United Kingdom that will benefit in the same way. This most excellent report and the statement made by the Governor today highlights how this Bank in the words stated here is contributing to building a more inclusive society. And, do you know, my God, in these Brexit-divided times in Britain, anything that can help build a more inclusive society would be welcome. We might then, Mr President, once again, become truly a United Kingdom. I sincerely hope that my government will study this report and wake up and see the great benefits that membership of said would bring to our country.

Sir Roger GALE (United Kingdom, EC, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Robert TROY, please, from Ireland.

Mr Robert TROY (Ireland, ALDE): Thank you, Mr Vice-President.

I want to compliment the rapporteur and, in reading the report, I can't help but think if more of our global financial institutions had acted even with some of the ethical values of the Council of Europe Development Bank, then the global crisis that we are just coming out of may not have been as severe.

Regulatory failure, corporate greed, and failure by policymakers have ensured that the Bank established in 1956 is needed now as much — if not more — than any time in the past. It's needed to invest in high-quality projects which advance social progress, improving living conditions and health services, both urban and rural, helping with resettlement of displaced persons, focusing on social cohesion to support job creation and small and medium enterprises.

My country has been fortunate to benefit from this fund to the tune of 600 million since 2004, and only this week we received approval for 150 million towards the provision of social housing. And, my God, has it ever been as needed as it is now, because it gives me no comfort to say that in Ireland never before had we waiting lists as long as we do now have for social housing. Never before had we 10 000 plus, of which 3 000 children are homeless. And never before have we, as a state, been transferring so much of our limited resources to private enterprises because we have failed to build necessary social housing.

We have young families now who are living for prolonged periods of their early lives in hotel bedrooms. This is scandalous and I welcome the fact that we now have an opportunity with this fund to provide much-needed social infrastructure in our country. And, in that context, in relation to section 10.1 — where you're recommending to the governing body that we need to optimise its internal structures and procedures towards more flexible and rapid decision-making — I think that's very important because, while timeframes for decisions vary from country to country, what we're talking about is years as opposed to months.

And we must become more efficient and more effective in our delivery, and not only in terms of the decision-making, but I think there's an opportunity for the governing body to place requirements on successful applicants to improve their efficiency and their delivery. As I said, in our country we have a housing crisis, and I think we need to force our housing bodies to deliver that needed social infrastructure much quicker than what it's doing currently.

Finally, if I could say, between 2014 and 2018 environmental projects accounted for 9%. I fully support 10.2.1 where you're going to align activities of the Bank more closely with the 2030 agenda.

Sir Roger GALE (United Kingdom, EC, President of the Assembly): Thank you Mr Robert TROY.

Just while we progress... The vote is in progress to elect a judge in respect of Portugal for the European Court of Human Rights.

I remind colleagues that vote closes in about 10 minutes at five o'clock, so anybody who hasn't yet voted can still do so by going to the area behind the speaker's chair.

Ms Inka HOPUSU please, from Finland.

Ms Inka HOPUSU (Finland, SOC): Thank you Mr Chair.

Dear colleagues,

I would like to start by thanking the rapporteur Ms Nicole TRISSE for her excellent report. It gives us a comprehensive overview of the Council of Europe Development Bank's activities and prospects for its future work. I very much welcome the suggestion to link the future strategy of the CEB to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, as they reflect our many common challenges ahead and call for action to tackle them.

In the presence of CEB's Director Mr Wenzel, I want to make some observations that could act as food for thought for the next development plan of the CEB. Let me first congratulate you for your success in supporting social inclusion in Member States. In my view, the three priorities of the CEB's current strategy are still very relevant and merit to be the focus areas in the future as well. Social justice, refugee protection and climate action are all strongly interlinked. This linkage will only further increase in the future.

In this regard, I think climate change mitigation and adaptation require extra attention. Solutions regarding its impact will revolutionise our economies in the near future. Climate change will dramatically alter our societies, our daily lives, our welfare and the movement of people.

In addition to credible responses, we need rapid action to combat climate change. Such efforts must be carried out fairly and equally. We can be successful if the change is a fair change. This means a joint view on how working life, the education system and social security are reformed so that all people are justly included. We will have to ensure that companies can reform their production and that people can develop their know-how, and keep their jobs when carbon neutrality requires changes in the production structure. This will not be easy and we must bear the societal risks in mind from the very start.

These inevitable structural changes do not come without costs and will be burdensome for all of our Member States. However, it is our responsibility to make sure that the most vulnerable groups and areas are not those who will suffer the most from these necessary reforms. In this context, I think the CEB is well placed to support its Member States in adopting fair solutions for climate change action and adaptation.

Thank you for your attention.

Sir Roger GALE (United Kingdom, EC, President of the Assembly): Thank you Ms Inka HOPUSU.

Mr Mikayel MELKUMYAN from Armenia.

Mr Mikayel MELKUMYAN (Armenia, EC): Mister President,

Dear colleagues,

The subject of our discussion is very important because Mrs TRISSE is president of the Bank. It is very positive to show the peculiarities of the business of this bank but I have different questions. I agree with my colleague Mr. O'REILLY, concerning the diversity of the Bank's credit departments.

First, you presented the fight against cancer in France, after the activity in Poland, in the Carpathians, then Bosnia and Herzegovina. Armenia is not a member of this Bank, but when I return to my country, it is obvious that I will consult our colleagues in the government and the Central Bank to have a good cooperation with the Bank. For example, in the space of 22 years, Armenia has hosted 22,000 refugees from Syria without credit or money.

This example shows that we have the will: we want to take the money to create different jobs. I am very optimistic because the Bank is a great instrument to concentrate the task of populations and countries.

Finally, I would like to quote a great actor of politics, Mr. Winston CHURCHILL: "Every pessimist, in every situation, has sought and found only difficulties, but every optimist, in every situation, has sought and found only opportunities." Thank you for your attention.

Ms Rósa Björk BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (Iceland, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you so much.

Just want to remind you all that the clock is almost five o'clock, so you have five minutes to cast your vote for the judge to the European Court of Human Rights.

So next on our speakers list is George LOUCAIDES.

The floor is yours.

Mr George LOUCAIDES (Cyprus, UEL): Dear colleagues,

I would first like to thank the rapporteur for her excellent work.

As the oldest multi-national development bank in Europe, the Bank has a distinct mission aimed at promoting projects of social infrastructure and development. The discussions concerning the social mission of the bank are important: taking into account the fact that our continent counts tens of millions of impoverished people, as well as millions of unemployed and homeless people, it becomes clear that the action plan of this organisation, that considers social cohesion and social inclusion as its top priority, is today more pertinent than ever. We therefore endorse the reference made in the draft resolution to the growing emphasis on social rights and the explicit mention to build a more inclusive society.

We also note with satisfaction the conclusion of the report that underlines the importance of keeping the bank's development plan, 2020 until 2022, in line with the priorities for sustainable development, especially as regards better and faster implementation of the UN sustainable development goals. And also, the need to address the root causes of poverty and growing inequalities. The report also stresses the need to ensure in the long run, refugees' and migrants' integration into our societies and to improve the provision of social services, access to education, healthcare, housing and employment opportunities, in both urban and rural areas. In practice this can be achieved through public investments aimed at the viable reindustrialisation of areas most affected, and the creation of permanent inclusive and dignified jobs with full labour rights.

Similarly, the above objectives can be reached through public investments supporting social development, the use of renewable energy sources, sustainable agriculture and livestock farming, education and health. We also need investments in local authorities to fund social infrastructure projects for employees, and the more vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of our societies. As mentioned in the report this implies financing to local authorities for the creation of multi-functional centres for youth activities, nurseries for lower-income families, as well as other activities focusing on cultural diversity goals that everyone seems to share as utmost priorities. Naturally for us it is important that these loans are distributed to public and social entities.

Finally, the gradual reform progress of the bank's governors in relation to its competences and functionality is something we need to examine carefully. Most importantly, these reforms need to be pursued through consensual dialogue and transparency.

Thank you.

Ms Rósa Björk BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (Iceland, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr LOUCAIDES.

The ballot for electing a judge to the European Court of Human Rights is now closed. The counting of votes will take place under the supervision of the tellers, Mr Yunus EMRE, Mr Bertrand BOUYX, Mr Vladimir KOZHIN and Mr Konstantin KUHLE. I invite them to go at once to meet behind the President's Chair. The results of the election will be announced as soon as they are available.

So next next speaker on our list is Mr AVETISYAN, the floor is yours.

Mr Sos AVETISYAN (Armenia, SOC): Madame Chairperson.

I want to welcome Mr Rolf Wenzel who has been governing this bank.

It's interesting that we have kind of discovered or rediscovered the role and the importance of the European Bank of Development of the Council of Europe.

I want to compliment the rapporteur Ms Nicole TRISSE for her work as well as the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development because it has been working for a long time with the Bank, and I heard that the Bank came to the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, which is very good.

I think that one pleasant think about this bank, as its original mission has been, was to support human development. In the modern times of corporate mindsets, to have this kind of bank is very unique in its mission. I think that there is something dismissing in this. This is the call of the visibility and also becoming a role model for other banks. This is something that I want to stress that we can build as Members of this Council in our respective countries.

I too think that Armenia should consider working with this bank in the future especially when we are speaking about the bank that has been tackling the social and health issues and building infrastructures. This is something that is unique in its way of thinking. For me it was also pleasant to find out that it has also been supporting refugees and migrants. This clearly supports the argument that these people are not a burden but rather a support and an enrichment for our societies.

I think that the story of the Bank, as small as it is, as small as its funds are, should be transmitted further and communicated to other countries. Thank you very much for your report and thank you for the job the Bank has done.

Ms Rósa Björk BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (Iceland, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Madam Martine Wonner.

The floor is yours.

Ms Martine WONNER (France, ALDE): Thank you, Madam President.

Madam Rapporteur, Nicole TRISSE, I thank you most sincerely for enlightening us on the importance that the Council of Europe Development Bank can play in a more inclusive society. How can we not be in favor of the European social cohesion movement that the organisation espouses?

The lines of action that are the integration of migrants, refugees and displaced persons and action for the climate are particularly close to my heart.

And I want to emphasise, however, the current imbalance between the three lines of action of the bank which, in light of the list of approved projects, greatly favours sustainable and inclusive growth, with little regard for the other two issues, migration and climate. Nevertheless, in that it embodies a solidary policy institution, my support for this bank is total insofar as the range of funded projects contributes to the fight for sustainable growth, fair and solidarity.

I trust the bank regarding the rigour of the specific technical and social criteria and the compliance with its directives and policies that is required of the loans granted. Our Assembly must support the Development Bank, which is separate and autonomous from the Council of Europe in its decision-making and guidance. We must embody vis-à-vis this institution a role of adviser by submitting our projects that can not see the day without the necessary funding.

I want to focus particularly on support for democratic infrastructure in the areas of education, housing and judicial services for countries that have difficulty exercising their competences due to their lack of resources. Especially since the richest and most democratic countries already receive assistance from the European Union.

By working hand in hand with the Council of Europe Development Bank, we have the opportunity to advance the construction of a society that will be more sustainable and inclusive in the years to come. It is also a way to support solutions to the migration problem and the tensions within the European Union and to support the fight against global warming, which is becoming more urgent day by day. So we can only encourage countries that are not yet contributing to start doing so.

Thank you.

Ms Rósa Björk BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (Iceland, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you Madame WONNER.

Next speaker is Mr COAKER.

The floor is yours.

Mr Vernon COAKER (United Kingdom, SOC): Thank you Madame Chair, and can I start by congratulating the rapporteur on what is an excellent report.

I was particularly moved to say something in this debate alongside a couple of comments by the recommendation number 5 in the draft resolution, where it talks about the Assembly regretting that certain countries are not parts of the Council of Europe Development Bank, and the United Kingdom, my own

country, being one of those countries. Like my colleague I don't regret it. I think it's appalling. I think it is shocking that one of the richest countries in the world has not joined with 41 other countries who are part of the Council of Europe to tackle what is a stain on our continent, namely the growing inequality that exists. I say it is appalling because when we read the report, as I say the excellent report that is before this Council of Europe, we see the staggeringly good work that is being done. Three examples were given by the rapporteur, but there are countless other examples of work that is done.

I want to, in particular, highlight the fact that I think it is really important, as the report lays out, that the poverty reduction that is included in the report talks about the need to ensure that we help the poorest of the poor. Often when we undertake these poverty programmes, they help but sometimes the poorest people are not helped. I was particularly moved, Madame Chair, by the fact that the Committee talks about the need to ensure that migrants, that refugees, the homeless, the street dwellers, sometimes those who are excluded from our society, are indeed those who are supported as well. It is difficult sometimes in society to actually, if you like, help people that sometimes people see as somehow being outside of society. To help somebody who lives on the street, who does not conform to many –sometimes– of the ways and the culture of the society in which they live in, is really difficult. So I think that was a really good suggestion.

The other point I want to make is this: and it's just a suggestion that the rapporteur may like take on board, and that is often with poverty reduction programmes, instead of supporting the existing groups in communities to deal with housing or poverty or food poverty or whatever, new structures are created. I think we should look to ensure that existing bodies within communities are supported in order to do what they can to tackle poverty. But it is an excellent report I think the Council of Europe should be proud of the fact that it is at the forefront of tackling poverty and inequality.

Ms Rósa Björk BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (Iceland, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you Mr COAKER.

Next on our speaker's list is Ms Rosa GÁLVEZ.

The floor is yours.

Ms Rosa GALVEZ (Canada): Dear colleagues,

I am pleased to participate in your discussions on the Council of Europe Development Bank.

For the rest of the deliberations on the content of the next development plan of the CEB, for the period 2020-2022, the rapporteur Nicole TRISSE presented us with a relevant summary of the bank's achievements and a very useful roadmap.

Canada has long played an active role in regional development banks. Our contribution is seen as a vital part of our international assistance efforts.

In 2017-18, for example, a significant portion of the \$5.37 billion in official development assistance provided by Canada was channeled through these banks. These include the African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, of which Canada is a founding member and the eighth largest shareholder.

Just as the CEB has the social mandate to invest in projects to support sustainable and inclusive growth, to promote the integration of refugees, displaced persons and migrants and to combat climate change, Canada –through the development banks I just mentioned– advocated funding for projects with similar themes. For example, under the African Development Bank Skills, Employability and Entrepreneurship Program in 2017, Canadian contributions helped the Rwandan government implement an effective training and internship policy for young women. And through the EBRD, Canada has argued for the approval of a €150 million loan to Ukraine Railways, which was approved in 2018.

The loan will allow this state-owned company to purchase 6,500 cars and could reduce carbon dioxide emissions by up to 80,000 tons a year. But it is also important to stress, as rapporteur TRISSE did in her report, that project loans do not have to be huge to make an impact. The CEB's €2 million program loans launched in 2018 to support microentrepreneurs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, of which at least 800 small businesses are expected to benefit in this country, perfectly illustrate this point.

In conclusion, I congratulate the CEB on its recent success. In its last annual report, I note that from 2017 to 2018, these disbursements grew by more than 20% and that it issued, in March, its second innovative social inclusion obligation of 500 million euros. I learned that these obligations will support social housing for low-income people, education and vocational training, and small and medium-sized businesses across Europe.

Thank you very much.

Ms Rósa Björk BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (Iceland, UEL, President of the Assembly): I call upon Mr Fourat BEN CHIKHA.

The floor is yours.

Mr Fourat BEN CHIKHA (Belgium, SOC): Dear Madam Rapporteur,

First of all, I would like to thank you and European Development Bank for the work that has been done. I was very pleased to read what our European Development Bank is doing and I want to congratulate the Bank for the positive impact it has had on social affairs, especially for people on the move and displaced people.

As a member of the Socialist and Green Group, I was also very pleased to read their emphasis on the green investment for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Yet I would like to bring up Point 2 of the draft resolution that states that the Assembly would recommend more technical assistance and support for institutional capacity-building. Because the data as presented by the Bank concerning the amount of investments that were approved shows that in 2014 over two billion was invested in approved projects, of which 1.3 billion went to target countries. For 2015, 2.3 billion was invested, of which only 1.4 billion went to target countries. For 2016, funding going to target countries seems to stagnate and even drop. In total, more than 3.4 billion was granted, but only 1.4 billion went to target countries. By 2018, almost four billion was invested but only 1.6 billion went to target countries.

It seems to me that the target countries are not accessing the funding of the Bank. So my question is, what can be done and the technical assistance of the Bank so that it can support institutional capacity as recommended in Point 2 of the draft resolution? Is there any specific plan of action to strengthen the institutional capacity-building?

Thank you.

Ms Rósa Björk BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (Iceland, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Ms Jennifer DE TEMMERMAN, for France, the floor is yours.

No she's not here, so I call upon Mr Mr Sergey KALASHNIKOV. The floor is yours.

Mr Sergey KALASHNIKOV (Russian Federation, UEL)*: President, colleagues.

The report submitted provides a very broad overview of an instrument which is an effective mechanism in response to those social challenges which we are confronted with today. I would like to provide you with some information to explain why the Russian Federation has not yet joined the Bank. The reality is that although we understand how important this Bank is as an institution, we have a whole series of questions relating to its activities.

First of all, it is our feeling that the Bank is, I would say, slightly politicised. For example, we do not understand why in the UN General Assembly Resolution on Kosovo, the Bank is acting as if Kosovo were an independent state. We do not understand why there is not enough transparency on the way in which the bank disburses its loans. We understand that Albania, Greece, and these are not particularly rich countries, but they don't receive help, while Poland continues every year to receive 500 million euros, and this continues to this day. So if we look at the material which we have available, we can see that these resources are not being distributed in a fair way. And we would like to see objective criteria defining how resources are allocated.

My next point: we believe that when the bank put together its goals, it was seeking to deal with those issues which interest particular countries. Not talking about the inclusive development of countries, but the focus is on certain issues which are already being dealt with in these countries. We believe that if the bank is to achieve the strategic goal of achieving social equality throughout Europe and making it possible for all citizens to live a dignified life, you need to not just look not at issues which faced by individual countries but problems

which all countries are dealing with. We know that each country has its own particular problems. Some countries have different issues which are of concern to them, and the Bank has to establish certain priorities, I understand that, but I have to say in response to the rapporteur and the governor who made points on the governance of the Bank. There was a proposal made last year to improve the Bank's governance, but we haven't heard so far what changes are going to be made. I'd like to hear from you what is going to change here and I am looking forward to continuing this discussion in the Parliamentary Assembly.

Thank you.

Ms Rósa Björk BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (Iceland, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Next on our list is Mr José Luis PECH VÁRGUEZ.

The floor is yours.

Mr José Luis PECH VÁRGUEZ (Mexico): Dear colleagues,

I would have liked to deliver my speech in French but, to respect the time limitations, I will speak to you in Spanish.

Mr José Luis PECH VÁRGUEZ (Mexico)*: Ladies and gentlemen,

The rules of the international financial system have diminished the capacity of national governments to meet the basic needs of their populations. In other words, the essence of the state has been undermined.

Emerging countries, whatever the government that arrives, find themselves having to deal with debts which prevent them from dealing with the very key issues that a country has to deal with, and they get into debt again. This ever bigger snowball has wiped out the future of many countries. What we've seen essentially is the banks have prioritised the economy of finance over the economy of production.

In Mexico this situation only encouraged corruption, with governments forming networks based on cronyism, diverting resources and concentrating wealth, resulting in great inequality. As a result we have had the wealthiest person of the world and, at the same time, over 44% of our population in poverty.

The economic growth that we had in the previous decades did not lead to inclusion and development. For example, this year, 565 billion dollars will be spent on servicing debt, over three per cent of our GDP, and more than three times what the government investments in social programmes to involve young people, adults, women, people in rural areas and other marginalised groups in the development process. We are providing these groups with bank accounts so they can access credit in order to have a future.

The CEB is a wonderful world example because it doesn't forget that its *raison d'être* is to help those that have been deprived to move forward in the future by providing opportunities for social inclusion.

In Mexico we are experiencing the same migration phenomenon as you are in Europe. We have many brothers and sisters from Central America that are looking for a better life in Mexico or are in transit to the United States. Mexico wishes to respect the human rights of these persons but also do something to solve the causes of the phenomenon. We are creating opportunities in the place of origin of these migrants in order to allow them to be part of the development process. Dealing with the causes of this particular phenomenon may be cheaper than dealing with the effects, for which we never have enough resources. It is part of our vision as well.

I'd like to end with a few words. The words of the Spanish poet Leon Felipe who lived and died in Mexico and which reflects the spirit of the Development Bank: "I go with my reins taut, against the wind. It's not important for me to arrive quickly and alone. It's important for me to arrive on time and with company as well."

Thank you very much. I would like to congratulate the Council of Europe and the governor for the results they have presented today.

Ms Rósa Björk BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (Iceland, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you Mr PECH.

Next on our speaker's list is Mr Jean-Pierre GRIN.

The floor is yours.

Mr Jean-Pierre GRIN (Switzerland, ALDE): Thank you, Madame President.

Madame President,

Dear colleagues.

The Investment Bank of the Council of Europe supports social investments in 41 member countries.

The excellent report of our colleague Nicole TRISSE informs us that, despite the financial, economic and structural constraints, the CEB is successfully succeeding in supporting social projects generating high added value.

The report also exhaustively reviews the work of the Bank over the past five years. After the 2009 financial crisis, which profoundly changed the European economic landscape with an ever increasing unemployment rate, the Bank financed a large number of social and economic projects.

With sustainable development and the fight against the causes and effects of growing inequalities generating poverty, the Bank must also finance public authorities –in rural as well as urban areas– to fight against the extreme poverty that generates the social and cultural divide.

One of the bank's priorities must be to tackle more effectively the causes and consequences of socio-economic inequalities, in order to ensure greater social cohesion in the countries that urgently need them.

Links with the Council of Europe need to be strengthened with the aim of improving the visibility of the Bank in order to encourage non-member states to join.

But for a bank to function and its solvency to be recognized, it is necessary that the management of its capital resources be good and that the increase in its reserves be increased. And in these two cases, we can only congratulate our Development Bank.

The various projects financed by the Bank are in three areas: health –cancer treatment and research–, support for public investments and a number of micro-credit programs.

It can thus be noted that these projects are in line with the political and social objectives of the Council of Europe, which consist in particular in promoting the economic and social progress of its members.

Additional efforts could be made in emergency assistance to refugees, migrants and displaced persons, although these groups also benefit from various social cohesion investments.

Our colleague Nicole TRISSE's report rightly recommends continuing to streamline the Bank's governance and the selection process of various projects to address the causes and consequences of socio-economic inequalities.

This is to improve public benefits in terms of access to education, medical care, housing and employment.

Thank you, Ms TRISSE, for having noted in the draft resolution these various questions.

Ms Rósa Björk BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (Iceland, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you. That concludes the list of our speakers.

I call Mr Wenzel, the Governor of the Council of Europe Development Bank to respond to the debate.

You have three minutes.

Mr Rolf WENZEL (Gouverneur of the Council of Europe Development Bank): Thank you very much, Madame Chair. And I thank all the speakers for their comments and, what I take is generally support, first, for the report by Madame TRISSE, which is, as I said earlier, very rich in detail but also very clear in its conclusions, and we very much appreciate that report. There were not so many questions but some remarks that I would like to respond to.

Number one: membership. Thank you, first of all, for those who supported that non-members of the Bank do become members of the Bank, and I have to say, I have heard no comments, no explanation why certain countries are not yet members, but I'm ready to continue that discussion bilaterally at any time.

Now, some countries said, well we don't understand the Bank, how the Bank's policies are formed. Well, let me just say, first of all, we have a very clear mandate, which is promoting social cohesion in Europe. The current policies are shaped by the members of the Bank, by the shareholders, by those who have contributed financially and who are contributing with their support during the implementation of all our projects. So if you want to shape future policies of the Bank, just join the Bank.

The third point I wanted to make is, project work. First of all, we can –according to our rules– only finance projects in our member countries. So I heard the member from Armenia saying that there is no project, no support for the refugees that we have in Armenia. The reason is very easy, Armenia is not a member of the Bank, so the Bank cannot become active in supporting projects in Armenia. Again, that is a call for becoming a member of the Bank and for benefiting from the work of the Bank.

Then there was a question about the difference between projects approved and disbursement. Well again, the point is very easy: when we approve a project that does not mean that the next day we can disburse. We are financing projects meaning, we disburse in tranches, according to the progress of the implementation of the project. For example, we finance a housing estate, meaning we finance the first works, then we finance the next step of the works until the last part of the loan will be disbursed when the project is finalised. So this explains why we have the difference between projects approved and project disbursements. And sometimes we encounter difficulty when it comes to procurement issues, technical issues, which have to be solved.

There was also a question regarding accounting, monitoring... Well, I can ensure you: all shareholders, and all those who read very carefully our annual reports, they know that we apply international best standards because this is what we –I believe– owe to our shareholders, we are responsible for being transparent as an institution to explain to our shareholders how we use their funds, we publish the results on our website and we also have to be very transparent to other investors who would like to know what we are doing and how are we doing things.

So I think Madame Chair –looking at the time– this is all I wanted to say now and as I said I am ready to discuss further bilaterally.

Thank you very much.

Ms Rósa Björk BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (Iceland, UEL, President of the Assembly): On behalf of the Assembly, I thank you Governor for your statement and your replies.

I call upon Ms Nicole TRISSE, the rapporteur, to reply.

You have two minutes Ms Nicole TRISSE.

Ms Nicole TRISSE (France, ALDE, Rapporteur): Thank you, Madam President.

Since you have answered all the questions concerning the Bank of the Council of Europe, I will simply make a general observation. First, I wanted to thank you. I think we had a lot of speakers, comments, observations. I also thank those who gave their testimony because, indeed, they receive the help of the CEB. I thank those whose countries are not members, because I understood that for some, they were ready to lobby their government to tip the scales and get their country to join the Bank, and that is so much better.

That's what I meant to say. I'm just glad I could explain what the bank was. I also note that the resolutions I am proposing, obviously, are shared. So I think there is more to vote, after having given the floor to my chairman of the Commission. Thank you.

Ms Rósa Björk BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (Iceland, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you Madam Triss. Does the Chairperson of the Committee Mr Schennach want to add something to this?

You have three minutes.

Mr Stefan SCHENNACH (Austria, SOC): Yes, Ms Chairman.

Dear Mr Rolf WENZEL,

Dear Ms Nicole TRISSE,

Thank you for the moment you both offered here together today to a Parliamentary Assembly. Mr KALASHNIKOV, if you tell me afterwards about one single bank in the world, which asks questions to parliamentarians, then we can talk about transparency. This here, what happens here, is something unique. I know no other bank whose boss answers to parliamentarians.

Mr WENZEL also said that we are a unique institution. I remember one year ago, as chairman of the committee, I went to Nicole TRISSE and said: "Dear Nicole TRISSE, you are so enthusiastic; you are so curious. Would you not like to make a report on the Council of Europe's Bank?" And she says, "Why me?" And I said, "Because you are the right one." This report shows Nicole Trisse understood this bank.

Once you get in touch with the Council of Europe's bank, I can say it is a very simple person, it does not let you go because it is so fascinating. It is, I believe, the only bank that makes decisions according to environmental and social guidelines. What we have heard today, this increased attention also to the issues of refugees and integration, means the Bank is actually back to the cradle, as it was actually founded after the end of the Second World War –the disaster in Europe– to help the refugees and internally displaced people to reintegrate and overcome these crises.

Much has already been mentioned here today. I myself know the only school that is financed by the bank, in Bosnia, in a city where until today nothing works in ethnic dialogue. This is Mostar. The bank has set up the only multiethnic school there. Prisons that have been renewed on Human Rights courts. Also, microcredits have been disbursed. Nicole TRISSE mentioned here the giving of €5000 to a woman in Sarajevo, or wherever. For the independent design of one's own life, that is a lot. I know from Mr WENZEL that microcredits to women have always been repaid.

Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

Give this report your expression that you are behind our Bank. I'm from Austria, as you know. It's a shame we are not there. Rolf WENZEL knows, in the last five years we have tried together to convince. I will not give that up. I invite the Ms Vanessa D'AMBROSIO from San Marino to do the same. The Russian Federation can now try after their return. Armenia has a new government. We have already appealed for Azerbaijan and I do not have much hope for the United Kingdom. But I have asked Nicole TRISSE to write to all these countries so that they explain why they are not at the Bank; because they do not justify it. Thanks.

Ms Rósa Björk BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (Iceland, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much Mr Schennach.

Ms Nicole TRISSE, you asked for the floor.

You have one minute left so you have the opportunity.

Ms Nicole TRISSE (France, ALDE, Rapporteur): I wanted to say that I really appreciated Madame D'AMBROSIO's phrase, I think it said that the dignity of the human being seems to be a great principle of this bank, that's it. Thank you.

Ms Rósa Björk BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (Iceland, UEL, President of the Assembly): So the debate is closed. The Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development has presented a draft resolution, to which the Committee has tabled six amendments.

I understand that the Chairperson of the Committee wishes to propose to the Assembly that all of the amendments to the draft resolution which were unanimously approved, should be declared as agreed upon by the Assembly.

Is that so Mr Schennach?

Mr Stefan SCHENNACH (Austria, SOC): That's right.

All anonymously.

Vote: The Council of Europe Development Bank: contributing to building a more inclusive society

Ms Rósa Björk BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (Iceland, UEL, President of the Assembly): Are there any objections?

No objections.

I declare that all the amendments to the draft resolution have been agreed upon.

So we will now proceed to vote on the draft resolution contained in document 14961, as amended.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I call for the results to be displayed and the draft resolution in document 14961 as amended is adopted.

Debate: Protecting and supporting the victims of terrorism

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Now if we can regain order, I would welcome you back to the next session, which is the debate on protecting and supporting the victims of terrorism.

The next item of business is to report with that title 'Protecting and supporting the victims of terrorism' document 14957, presented by Ms Marietta KARAMANLI on behalf of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy. I call Ms KARAMANLI, the rapporteur, and you have 13 minutes in total, which you may divide between the presentation of the report and your reply to the debate as such.

So Ms KARAMANLI please.

Ms Marietta KARAMANLI (France, SOC, Rapporteur): Thank you, Mr President.

Madam President,

My dear colleagues,

It is an honor and an important responsibility to come to speak to you today after several months of work, in meetings for which I would like to thank the Commission and the administrative staff who accompanied me at all times. This is an important and sensitive topic, one that is very sensitive, that of better recognition and the most effective and fair assistance to the victims of terrorism.

Our duty of remembrance to and with the victims is guided by the desire for justice for the many victims and their families.

Unfortunately, the truth is also that support for victims sometimes comes too late and remains insufficient.

Yesterday, the President of the French Republic, Emmanuel MACRON, spoke here in Strasbourg of the attack committed in this city, indicating that terror and obscurantism must be countered with the spirit of resistance and the sentiment of fraternity. It is this very spirit that guides us in the observations and recommendations that I will present to you.

Indeed, the serious attacks of the past four years have revealed serious shortcomings.

Numerous questions have been raised during recent work of the Council, such as covering the costs incurred by the victims, the essential counselling, the necessary information on the follow-up given to the investigations and more broadly, the appropriateness of a mechanism for the recognition and compensation of victims by the state.

In view of these facts, in 2018 I proposed deepening and adding to the evaluation of the application of the provisions of the Convention and of the recommendations made to states, meeting with the associations and groups of victims and their representatives, with the participation of civil society organisations and subject matter experts, and, finally, taking the example of several states to see how the mechanisms were designed and implemented, and identify good and best practices.

Indeed, in recent years, France, Spain and the United Kingdom have suffered large-scale terrorist attacks and sometimes terrorism persists, on rare occasions but always fatal. These and other countries have developed and implemented victim support strategies and policies that it is worth sharing with all Council of Europe member states.

At the same time, Germany, which has also been attacked, has through its experience in recent years faced problems that other countries could learn from, and therefore lessons have been learned.

In my motion for a resolution, I will recall that a number of existing legal instruments have not been fully implemented or put into practice. A more coherent and systematic approach to the protection and support of victims of terrorism is needed, and this approach should be imposed on all Council of Europe member states.

My analysis was based on four points: recognition, support, link with civil society and international action.

Better recognise victims because it is essential that victims of terrorist attacks are easily identifiable and formally recognised by the legislation, policies and procedures. The basic needs of all victims of crime include, in particular, the recognition of victim status, protection from any additional violence or secondary victimisation, access to legal, financial, medical support and information, the fight against all forms of discrimination the victims may face, justice, compensation.

Two points specify these rights.

First, the needs of victims may change over time and some groups may be considered vulnerable and thus require appropriate support.

In addition, recognising the victims is also helping to promote a positive counter-discourse claiming that terror will not destroy the fundamental principles of democracy and human rights and individual rights of each victim.

Second point: achieve effective support for victims. Because many Council of Europe member states have introduced legal and institutional measures to support victims of crime, however, these measures are rarely specific to the victims of terrorism.

There is a wide disparity in levels of protection and assistance in Europe.

Governments must ensure that non-specific victim support agencies in the criminal justice sector receive training and have the resources to best meet their needs. Where possible, victims should be given the opportunity to attend, participate and/or be involved in some way in court proceedings if they wish.

Financial support solutions should be offered to all victims of terrorism, regardless of their place of residence or their citizenship, and appeals for donations should be subject to some control to ensure effective and efficient collection and redistribution of those involved.

Finally, assistance to victims of terrorism must be coordinated, comprehensive and effective to avoid secondary victimisation, which does not result from the initial criminal act, but from the institutional response to the victim.

Non-bureaucratic solutions - as you can see - and effective are possible, since it is the victim who is put back at the center of the mechanism and not the victim who has to adapt to all the often vertical procedures that exist.

Third point: strengthen the link with civil society. That is, victims' organisations have a prominent role to play in raising the awareness of all stakeholders in society of the needs of those affected by terrorist acts, also intervening in public discourse, ensuring the issue is discussed and defend the interests of the victims.

Governments should therefore be responsive to the needs of these organisations and be transparent in making decisions about their funding.

Last point: consolidate the action at the international level. There is a specific mechanism developed and implemented by the Council of Europe. Article 13 of the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism provides that each party, i.e. each State, adopt measures as necessary to protect and support the victims of terrorism committed on its own territory.

The same article specifies that these measures will include, according to the appropriate national systems and subject to domestic legislation, financial assistance and compensation for the victims of terrorism and their immediate family members. However, this provision only applies to victims within a member state and does not concern European citizens affected by terrorism outside Europe.

Member states are therefore generally reluctant to introduce comprehensive provisions on compensation for victims in international legal instruments because of their significant financial consequences.

Amendments were made to the list of Guidelines for the protection of victims of terrorist acts adopted by the Council of Europe in 2017. And in July 2018, the Committee of Ministers adopted a new strategy against terrorism (2018 -2022) focused on prevention, prosecution and protection, including victim assistance.

At its third plenary meeting in May 2019, this committee also decided to create a network of single points of contact for the exchange of procedural information on the legal status of victims of terrorism in the courts of the member states of the Council of Europe, and that is also important.

In a comprehensive and complementary way, the United Nations and the European Union work for the recognition of victims.

However, it is clear from the observations that the international dimension needs to be further strengthened in order to better share information between national compensation services, to avoid instances of double compensation, to coordinate assistance and to share best practices, experiences and expertise of each country.

The report I am presenting also includes a review of the experience of four states: Spain, France, the United Kingdom and Germany. It shows that the information to victims, the existence of a single contact or coordination point, fair compensation, follow-up and support over time, sufficient funding of aid, strong cooperation with dedicated associations, symbolic and shared measures within the national communities and a coordinated mobilisation of stakeholders constitute strong factors with a real impact on the victims.

I therefore invite the Assembly and the member states, the Observers of States whose parliament enjoys observer or partners for democracy status with the Parliamentary Assembly, to take a series of measures. Some are already discussed, such as recognition and status of "*victims of terroris* ", support to victims of terrorism nationally and internationally and cooperation with civil society.

Others must be, and the European Union must first make its Centre of Expertise for Victims of Terrorism a pan-European tool, of course in liaison with the Council of Europe, and to promote the full implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism and the Additional Protocol to the Convention and the Revised Committee of Ministers' Guidelines on the Protection of Victims of Terrorist Acts of the 19 May 2017.

Lastly, the European Union should also examine, in consultation with the Council of Europe, the possibility of adopting a European Charter of the Rights of Victims of Terrorism to facilitate recognition, communication and coordination in Europe, and thus mark the importance of the rights and the recognition of the status of the victims of terrorism.

I also propose monitoring of the measures adopted by States. This is, it seems to me, a variation of this flexible right that our Parliamentary Assembly promotes and which constitutes a reference intended to be disseminated, to become widespread, to become a standard for civilisation and a general rule.

This programme is vast. I am well aware of it.

As the eminent Irvin Yalom says: "*if you do not talk about the essential, you do not talk about anything*".

By evoking the effectiveness of the measures, their continuity in time and space, their materiality and their financing, we speak of the essential and we assure our fraternity and our solidarity with the victims of terrorism.

I thank you for your attention and I remain attentive to your observations and requests.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you indeed, Ms KARAMANLI. Thank you for your contribution. You will have 1 minute and 14 seconds or thereabouts left at the end.

Before I move to the speaker's list and speakers on behalf of the political groupings, with your indulgence, I would like to welcome Irish television Oireachtas, this TV here, to the hemicycle and to acknowledge the presence of our newly appointed Irish Ambassador to the Council of Europe, Mr Breifne O'Reilly.

Now I move to the speaker's list on behalf of the political groupings and our first speaker on behalf of the United European Left is Mr KATROUGALOS, please.

Mr Georgios KATROUGKALOS (Greece, UEL, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you Mr Chair.

We fully support the report and we praise the rapporteur, not only because she managed to include an analytical list of proposed remedies in her report, but above all because she managed to include them in a holistic approach, supporting the necessity for pan-European regulation of the issue. This is necessary, not only at the level of exchange of good practices, but also and above all, towards the goal to have a universally agreed legal framework between the Council of Europe and the European Union, ultimately resulting in a European charter on the rights of victims of terrorism.

This is necessary for many reasons. First of all because of the increasingly transnational and multi-dimensional nature of terrorism, and the greater mobility that globalisation generally entails. Second, because although we have already some important legal instruments: we have our own convention on the prevention of terrorism which includes an Article 13 on the protection of the victims and we have the 2012 Directive of the European Union.

But now it's time to move from words to action. An essential part of what I have called a holistic approach is the re-reaffirmation of the report on the victims' dignity and the necessity to empower them, not just to offer them a pecuniary compensation. It is also important that the report posits that the state has a legal obligation to protect and support them, not just an obligation stemming from the international instruments I mentioned, but also from the domestic constitutional order. The positive affirmative action of human rights as is reaffirmed by the case law of the Court.

We must have always in mind that the fight against terrorism must be a fight in democracy, that is in full respect of the rule of law. You remember the warning of Nietzsche and Strindberg that when you fight against monsters, you risk becoming a monster yourself. Where you fight dragons, you can become a dragon. So there are still issues left open. First of all protection should be extended to victims of terrorist acts committed by state actors. Then we still do not have a universally agreed definition on terrorism. You remember that freedom fighters like Arafat and Mandela have been considered terrorists in the past. So we have a long road before us still, but the contribution of the report is especially important and we praise once again the rapporteur.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Our next speaker, on behalf of the EPP is Mr KARIDIS from Greece. As all speakers, you have three minutes,

Mr Dimitrios KAIRIDIS (Greece, EPP/CD, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, Mr Chairman.

I am by coincidence the third Greek in a row speaking on the subject, I start feeling I'm no longer in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe but in the Greek Parliament. I'd like to congratulate my dear colleague and compatriot Marietta KARAMANLI for her excellent work in drafting the report and the resolution at hand. Mrs KARAMANLI has based her work on both an account of the existing bibliography, and the series of fact-finding missions in member states and specific case studies.

My country, Greece, has a long and painful experience of suffering from terrorism. I am proud to present to you, Mrs KARAMANLI, for your further consideration, the recently published work, the handbook —The Oxford Handbook on Terrorism— by two Greek colleagues of ours, and dear friends, Andreas GOFAS and Stathis KALYVAS. Which serves as the basis of my intervention here today. Terrorism is a serious security threat to our societies and one —if not the most serious— form of political violence for our advanced democracies today.

Protecting and supporting the victims of terrorism is an essential moral obligation of our states and an important part of any anti-terrorist strategy. Why is that? Because of the nature of terrorism. Terrorism is fundamentally a communicative act, whereby the recipients of the violence serve as a conduit for communicating the terrorist act. Being a victim of terrorism is both a very private traumatic event, but also a very public and political experience. In the aftermath of a terrorist attack, society often equates strength or resilience of a nation to deal with terrorism with the recovery of its victims. If terrorists move in a world of abstraction and radical ideas, the victims of terrorism can play a vital role in humanising the high costs of

terrorism and thus delegitimise terrorism and its underlying radical ideology. In sum, protecting the victims is good for the victims themselves, but it is good for all of us as well. Therefore, the protection of victims is a wider public interest and should be part of state policy in all member states of our Council. Adopting the conclusions of the report and the resolution at hand is a necessary first step in that regard.

One final point. The threat of terrorism is likely to persist. This is not a sprint, this is a marathon. At each step, we need to consider what the long-term effect of our own actions will be, and refuse to take steps that will, in the long term, play into the terrorists' hands. This means that we resolutely continue to take the necessary steps to counter terrorism, but we also refuse to panic, sensationalise or glamourise what terrorists are doing.

Thank you.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

On behalf of the Socialist Group, Mr ÇEVİKÖZ from Turkey please.

Mr Ahmet Ünal ÇEVİKÖZ (Turkey, SOC, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you honourable President, distinguished members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

The report on protecting and supporting the victims of terrorism stands as an excellent work on covering the unseen effects on victims of any given terrorist attack. I congratulate the rapporteur for this outstanding report.

I use the word unseen intentionally because victims of terrorism try to cope with diverse difficulties in life. They have a social life, a family and a work environment. If someone loses a loved one in a terrorist attack, that tragedy affects their life in all aspects. It is a trauma and here I define trauma as demolishing the bridge between the past and the present, as disrupting the history of an entire family. That might appear like an individual psychological problem, but the traumatic effects of any given terrorist attack affects the social network of the victim and therefore I strongly underline the role that civil society organisations may play.

I also endorse the view expressed in the report that it is in the interest of national authorities and international organisations to share information with civil society organisations and coordinate activities with non-governmental organisations involved in supporting victims of terrorism.

As a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe coming from Turkey, a country that has been fighting against terrorism for more than 40 years, I strongly emphasise that terrorism is terrorism, no matter where it comes from, left, right or extremist ideological groups. The report, especially in Section A, Article 329, underlines that every effort should be made to adequately protect victims from further victimisation by the original perpetrators, or those aligned with their cause, and from secondary victimisation as a result of their interactions with the authorities. Unfortunately terrorist attacks and assassinations do not only victimise the families, but governments frequently prove incompetent and inadequate to protect the victims from further and secondary victimisation. The victims of terrorism are perceived as a silent crowd. They are left alone in trials and they suffer even more because of impunity. If someone is known to be affiliated to a certain ideology say, for example, to be committed to the left, their children are labelled as traitors or terrorists. Most importantly they are left alone with their own agony and with their own traumas in other words with their own destiny. This is why victims of terrorism form a special category of victims.

Finally this is a topic where we can enhance cooperation and coordination with other organisations. The report reiterates that we could consider adopting in cooperation and consultation with the European Union, a European charter on the rights of the victims of terrorism to facilitate recognition, communication and co-ordination throughout Europe and beyond to highlight the importance of rights and recognition of the status of victims of terrorism. This is a very sensible approach and should be strongly encouraged.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Our next speaker on behalf of the European Conservatives Group is Lord RUSSELL.

Lord Simon RUSSELL (United Kingdom, EC, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you.

I would also like to congratulate the rapporteur for a timely and very well-informed report.

Terrorism, unfortunately, has become a fact of modern life for many of our member states. While huge focus, funds, and efforts have gone into trying to prevent and forestall terrorist incidents — and quite rightly so — more recently we began to acknowledge the pain, trauma and profound shock and grief experienced by the victims of terrorist incidents.

Beyond acknowledgement, we have also begun to listen to victims and to learn from their experiences, and to acknowledge the need to collate and pool knowledge of existing and evolving best practice.

This is a development which we should embrace and wholeheartedly welcome.

Not least because the tortuous course of the final stages of the ISIS caliphate in Syria and the potential scattering across multiple countries of its adherents require us all to be on a permanent state of high alert. When it's particularly encouraged by the initiatives mentioned in the report in Spain, France, and in my own country.

In doing my research, one source cited that the assassination attempt on King Louis-Philippe I of France in July 1835, which killed 18 bystanders, as the first major terrorist incident in modern Europe with over 10 civilian deaths. The most lethal, with 270 deaths, was the bombing of Pan Am flight 103 over Scotland in December 1988.

The report takes particular note of the decision by the EU Commission to set up the EU Centre of Expertise for Victims of Terrorism. A very welcomed initiative. I hope it doesn't come as a shock to you to have a Member of the UK delegation praising the European Union. A very welcomed initiative, which firstly will develop guidelines and training materials; secondly, act as a hub of expertise and platform for practitioners dealing with victims; and thirdly, assist the EU Commission and the EU network of victims' rights in reinforcing operational cooperation between member states and victims associations. I would say, please, can we work proactively and in full cooperation with this initiative? And please, can we not either deliberately or inadvertently duplicate the efforts of other bodies and some other initiatives?

In the same way that the first- and second-line medical responders to terrorist incidents have developed tried and proven triage protocols to save lives, can we not evolve clear best practice guidelines and processes to develop victim-centred forms of triage so the victim support staff can be trained to provide timely and appropriate interventions that help victims rebuild their shattered lives and traumatised souls as quickly as possible?

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Our next speaker on behalf of ALDE is Mr Jokin BILDARRATZ from Spain.

Mr Jokin BILDARRATZ (Spain, ALDE, Spokesperson for the group)*: Thank you very much President.

First of all, I would like to express my thanks to Ms Marietta KARAMANLI for an excellent report on an issue which is extremely complicated and sensitive as well.

I'm going to begin telling you a personal experience of my own.

On February 22nd of 2001, when in San Sebastián, in the Basque Country, the ETA organisation placed a bomb, two people died and two people were injured. One of the people that was killed was somebody that I knew, from our city. After a couple of months, his widow called me because she felt totally abandoned by the system. She wanted to convey to us that, in the first week, all of the politicians, society and local community had come to her support. But once the cameras were gone and time had passed, the politicians and all that support disappeared. That is the moment I understood and comprehended the importance of empathy for victims. When we have the capacity to express that empathy, we're in a position to solve some of the problems that are generated by this issue.

And something else. This individual, this victim, after 14 years, was able to see some sort of closure with regard to this issue. But the case of one of the individuals that was wounded is still open after 18 years. The case remains open, and it is not because a lack of will on behalf of the government. Quite the contrary, because we in the government are trying to work in a concerted and positive fashion. But it is so complex. The system, the institutional architecture is so complex between judges, lawyers, politicians, parliaments, agencies, authorities... At the end, we make our lives so complicated that we can't offer much to the victims. We don't support them as we ought to.

There are four factors that I'd like to bring up, which are mentioned in this particular document.

First of all, victims have the right to know the truth. They have the right to truth. I remember, at this point, the families of MH17. Some of the family members of those victims have been brought here by our Dutch colleagues, and after all of these years, these individuals still don't know why, what happened, what the truth is. Because this helps the justice process, it helps to seek justice.

And, of course, the right to reparations guarantees that this won't happen again.

How do we deal with these victims? It is absolutely necessary for us to treat them with the greatest sensitivity.

Thank you very much.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

And at this juncture, I'm in a position to bring you the results of the election of a judge to the European Court of Human Rights in respect of Portugal. And the results are as follows: the members voting, 186 members voted. There were six filed as blank ballots, so that left 180 votes cast and the votes required for an absolute majority where 91.

The votes cast were as follows:

Ms Anna Maria GUERRA MARTINS: 107

Mr José Luis LOPES DA MOTA: 18

Mr José Antonio MOURAZ LOPES: 55

Ms GUERRA MARTINS, having obtained an absolute majority of votes cast, is elected judge of the European Court of Human Rights for a term of office of nine years, which shall commence as and from 1 April 2020.

So congratulations to her.

I now move to the speakers. I should point out that the rapporteur will reply at the end of the debate, but do you wish to respond at this stage? No. So if not, we will continue with the debate.

So in the debate, I call next, from the EPP *Mademoiselle* TRASTOUR-ISNART from France, please.

Ms Laurence TRASTOUR-ISNART (France, EPP/CD): Thank you, Mr. President.

Madam rapporteur, thank you for your report.

Terrorism is a deadly ideology that has struck in Nice, Paris, Utøya, Moscow, London, Madrid and many other cities. Whenever a human being is wounded or killed in an attack, it is a part of our humanity that is bruised.

I think we all agree here that international cooperation on terrorism is essential, because terrorism knows no borders. There is a need to consolidate and extend the international legal framework for the fight against, and suppression of, terrorism, stemming in particular from Council of Europe conventions.

I am particularly thinking of the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism, which we should urge States that have not yet ratified it to do so. Our determination to act against terrorism must be flawless. But we must not forget the victims of terrorism, those who have known in their flesh, in their hearts, the horrors caused by this barbaric ideology. Many of them keep, and will have, serious moral and psychological consequences. As part of an information mission entrusted to me, I interviewed soldiers in France suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome. And it is clear that victims of terrorism suffer too often. That is why it is essential to accompany them, to support them, to protect them all, without distinction, with benevolence and humanity.

The victim support tools that it proposes, at national and international level, involving civil society, the European Union and the Council of Europe, are relevant. I found particularly insightful the passage of the explanatory memorandum, explaining that the support of the victims is essential, because it ultimately allows the victims to spread a counter-speech that claims that terror cannot destroy the fundamental principles of democracy and human rights. That humanity always wins over hatred, that resilience always trumps destruction.

Therefore, a benevolent support of victims by the State and international society is a powerful response of civilization to barbarism. This draft resolution and recommendation is part of this desire. So, I fully support this report. Thank you, Madam Rapporteur.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

I call next in the debate Mr Conor McGinn, United Kingdom, Socialist Group.

Mr McGinn.

Mr Conor MCGINN (United Kingdom, SOC): Thank you Mr Vice-President.

It's a particular pleasure to speak in this debate while you are in the chair, for reasons which will become apparent later in my speech. I want to commend the rapporteur for what I think is an excellent and comprehensive report, written very sensitively and in full understanding of the complicated nature of the topic that we are discussing.

I want to firstly reference, in relation to the report, incidents and an institution in the north-west of England where I am a member of Parliament. The first is the Manchester Arena bombings, which was a barbaric and horrific attack aimed at young families, children. And the scars of that, both mental and physical, are still with us the short period of two years on. But the funding for individuals affected by that had stopped, and it's unclear about what will be done to mitigate the loss of that. I would urge the UK government to consider it very carefully.

Secondly, the work of the Tim Parry Johnathan Ball Peace Foundation in Warrington is referenced, an organisation that itself came out of a terrible tragedy where two young children were murdered in a town less than 5 kilometres from where I live in the constituency of Saint Helens, which I represent, they chair the EU Radicalisation Awareness Network. They have developed, over the last 25 years that they have been in existence, to deal with the contemporary threats that there are from extremism and radicalisation.

Their work has three core components: prevention, resolution, and response, before, during and after. I think they should be the fundamental tenants of our approach to supporting victims of terrorism and conflict. The translation service, I suspect, doesn't convey to colleagues from other countries outside Britain and Ireland that my accent is not one of the north-west of England. I'm a British MP representing the Labour Party, but the reason it's an honour to speak with you in the Chair, Senator O'Reilly, is because we are both Irish and we grew up in neighbouring counties — you in Cavin, me in Omagh. I hope it's not impertinent to say that our childhoods were little distance apart, Chairman, but nonetheless we understand the complexities around this important issue.

What I would say is that my experience in Northern Ireland shows that the term 'terrorism' and 'innocent victim' is a very very contested one and I think the well-considered amendments made by colleagues from the Basque country and Spain should be supported, because in the report it is referenced that terrorism are acts against the state but, in some circumstances in the conflict on the island of Ireland, the state itself was an actor in that.

I want to finish by quoting the words of Mrs Mary O'Hare: her daughter Majella was 12 years old and was shot dead on her way to mass. An unprecedented apology was given by the British government for the actions of a member of its armed forces that day. Mrs O'Hare was asked how she felt, and she said: I feel sad and I feel lonely. There are countless people like her on the island of Ireland and Britain and across Europe, and alleviating their suffering should be our primary purpose in this regard.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr McGINN, for the kind words and, indeed, if I might congratulate you for your political success and in your country of adoption, and it's a great achievement.

I now move to our next speaker, Mr FOURNIER, from France and the EPP.

Mr Bernard FOURNIER (France, EPP/CD): Madame President,

My dear colleagues,

Many member states of the Council of Europe have been, or are facing, the threat of terrorism. Our Assembly has been repeatedly called upon to condemn in the strongest terms all acts of terrorism.

I would therefore like to thank our rapporteur, Marietta KARAMANLI, for the quality of her report on the protection and support of victims of terrorism, to which I wish to pay tribute.

Terrorism is a threat to states, to democracy, to human rights. It is also a trauma for citizens and victims, who sometimes escape in "shreds" —to use the title of a book written by one of the survivors of the attack against Charlie Hebdo in Paris, on 7 January 2015.

This consideration of the specific needs of victims of terrorism is essential, whether these needs are physical, material, emotional or psychological. As the report quite rightly points out, victims are not just "collateral damage" but "an integral part of terrorism and, therefore, the fight against terrorism".

Both governments and parliaments should therefore take appropriate measures to address this particular situation, in line with the revised Committee of Ministers' Guidelines of May 19th 2017, on the protection of victims of terrorist acts.

Our rapporteur notes that a number of legal instruments have not been fully implemented. She also stresses that the prevailing approach to protecting and supporting victims of terrorism deserves to be more coherent and systematic in all Council of Europe member states.

I will therefore vote on the draft resolution proposed to us so that victims of terrorist acts can benefit, in the future, from better protection and greater support.

Thank you.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

I now call in the debate Ms FATALIYEVA, of Azerbaijan, from the European Conservatives Group.

Ms Sevinj FATALIYEVA (Azerbaijan, EC): Thank you, Mr Chairman.

Let me start by expressing my gratitude to Madame KARAMANLI for raising such important issue into these discussions.

Ladies and gentlemen, we all have to admit that terrorism has become an internal companion of mankind and recently becoming more widespread and rampant. Terrorist acts lead not only to the death of people, claiming their lives, causing them suffering, destroying their properties, but also to the destruction of civilian objects and habitat.

At the same time, terrorism poses a threat to the safe existence of entire nations undermining the Rule of Law, the national security of the state and disorganising the social system. There is no country in the world that is ensured from this evil. My country, Azerbaijan, is one of the countries suffering from terrorism. Since the late '80s, Armenian terrorist organisations and intelligence agencies have committed more than 32 terrorist acts in the transport system and other public facilities in Azerbaijan, which is an integral part of the territorial claims of Armenia against Azerbaijan.

The victims of these attacks were thousands of innocent civilians. The Khojaly Genocide in 1992 committed against innocent people with special cruelty with participation of ASALA groups, Arabo et Aramo, is the most striking example of the fact that Armenia is pursuing a policy of terrorism at the national level. Among the 613 who were killed, 613 in the Khojaly Massacre there were 63 children, 106 women and 70 old people. Eight families were totally exterminated. One hundred and thirty children lost one parent and 25 children lost both. A total of 487 civilians became disabled as a result of this onslaught. Around 1,275 innocent residents were taken hostages while the fate of 150 people still remains unknown.

The civilian attacks in Baku Subway was a series of terrorist incidents in March and July 1994. As a result of the first attack, 14 people died. As a result of the second, 13 people were killed.

Let me remind you of the murder of Zahra, a 17 month old girl, in 2017. As a result of missiles shot by Armenian soldiers, she was killed. The death of 14 year old Shahmaliyeva Aygun in 2012 as a result of explosion of a stuffed toy thrown to Tovuz River from the territories controlled by Armenia. And the murder of 9-year-old Fariz Badalov in 2011 as a result of sniper shooting by Armenian armed forces from Agdam region occupied by Armenia.

These children are victims of terrorism. We can't protect them nor support them, because they are dead. The report urges us to think how to protect those who become victims of terrorism and I think the answer is quite clear. There can't be no reason for terrorism especially when it concerns children. We must react to existing threats immediately because only coordination of the efforts of the international community based on the international legal framework may contribute to the protection of victims.

Thank you.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

I now call Mr Dimitri HOUBRON from France and ALDE group, please.

Mr Dimitri HOUBRON (France, ALDE): Thank you, Mr President

Madam rapporteur,

My dear colleagues,

First of all, allow me to reiterate the tribute paid to the victims of terrorist attacks on the territory of the Council of Europe member states, as well as throughout the world. One of the morbid objectives of terrorism is to destabilize a state by provoking people's distrust of the state's ability to ensure its security. In other words, if the state is unable to ensure the security of the population, then they would be entitled to question its democratic model and its fundamental freedoms. This is the danger, and this is the point, I think, made by the rapporteur of this report. This renovated definition, you clearly define it in your report, I quote: "the victims convey the message of the attackers, so the victim is not a collateral damage, isolated from an act of political violence, but an integral part of terrorism. And, therefore, of the fight against terrorism. Protecting and supporting victims of terrorism is tackling the root of this scourge."

I highlight three elements on which I wish we could reflect. The first is the establishment of a definition, as universal as possible, of the concept of victims of terrorism. Despite the complexity of defining the very term of terrorism today, defining these concepts is the first issue, as it will bring legal clarity and effectiveness in our means to protect and support victims.

The second is to secure international cooperation against global terrorism. This is the second issue we need to address in order to prevent an entire state or region from becoming isolated. The third is the need to ensure a viable link with civil society representatives. That is to say, citizens who, bravely, alert the intelligence or police services of their knowledge, regarding an imminent attack or the place where the terrorists have hidden. These people, placed under a special regime of witness protection, are constantly exposed to reprisals and are also victims of terrorism.

Finally, I really want to salute the great quality of Ms KARAMANLI's work. Whom I know, in France, because of her dedication to the cause that concerns us today.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

I now call Ms Sahiba GAFAROVA of Azerbaijan, European Conservatives.

Ms Sahiba GAFAROVA (Azerbaijan, EC): Thank you very much, Mr President.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The issue we discuss today is very important. Indeed, in recent years, several member states of the Council of Europe have experienced terrorist attacks carried out by groups and individuals.

The report notes that a number of existing legal instruments have not been fully implemented and put in practice. Madame Rapporteur stresses the need for a more consistent and systematic approach to protecting and supporting victims of terrorism throughout the Council of Europe member states.

I fully agree with the rapporteur that victims of terrorist attacks must be afforded adequate protection and support and that their dignity and human rights must be fully upheld.

Dear colleagues, I'd like to mention that terrorism is not a new phenomenon in Europe. I am also from Azerbaijan, a country that has suffered very much from terrorism. But, unfortunately, in the report, in the list of the European countries which have experience of terrorist attacks, there is not my country. However,

Azerbaijan became an object of terrorism from our neighbour country Armenia since the beginning of 20th century. Terror attacks reached their peak in 1905-1907 and in 1918-1920. Armenian terrorists acted with special cruelty. They spared neither the elderly nor women and children leaving behind burned and destroyed villages.

Since the end of the 1980s, Azerbaijan has again become the main target of Armenian terrorism. Armenian aggression against Azerbaijan has resulted in the occupation of 20 percent of the territory of Azerbaijan and full-scale war and mass displacement when thousands of people were killed and about a million people forced to flee their native lands and homes. They are victims of one of the forms of terrorism: military terrorism.

The war and forcible displacement brought a disproportionate burden on them, along with the direct casualties they have been suffering from indirect consequences including economic and social damage, different forms of violence and displacement. Despite all the resolutions by different international organisations, such as the United Nations, the European Parliament, the OECD, this very Assembly and many others, Armenia ignored all them.

The popular speech of the Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan stated that Karabakh is the territory of Armenia in his last speech in the United Nations, which clearly shows that Armenia continues to ignore all resolutions about the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all Armenian forces from the occupied areas of Azerbaijan.

I'm sure that this kind of speech can only increase the number of victims of terrorism but not reduce them. I'd like to stress that Karabakh will never be the territory of Armenia. It was, it is, and will be the territory of Azerbaijan.

Dear colleagues, a durable solution to the problem of victims of Armenian terrorism in Azerbaijan can only be achieved through the withdrawal of Armenian forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and the return of these victims of terrorism to their homes.

Thank you very much.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Our next speaker is Mr Edmon MARUKYAN from Armenia and the ALDE group.

Mr Edmon MARUKYAN (Armenia, ALDE): Thank you, Mr Chairman.

As we all heard, I have to answer our Azerbaijani colleagues. Actually, I have a speech which is pan-European, which is about the fight against terrorism. But I'm wondering if the Azerbaijani delegates here are speaking about terrorism and speaking about Armenia in a situation when we were debating here. And while we were debating here today, an Armenian soldier was attacked and wounded in Armenia in the Tavush region — not in Nagorno-Karabakh, in the Tavush region of Armenia.

So, representatives of the same country, here in this house of democracy, are speaking about terrorism. What about the April war? Three years ago, Azerbaijan attacked Armenian civilians, cut the ears of elderly people, killed them, beheaded its soldiers Isis-style. So your country, your army, is behaving like a terrorist organisation: Isis.

So what about democracy? You are speaking about our prime minister, who was democratically elected. What about your president? What about your country? I know that our colleagues, our delegates, are fed up of these debates but we are forced to answer to this undemocratic country's representatives and delegates, and remind them that terrorist attacks, terrorism, beheadings, killing civilians, not allowing civilians to work in their fields on a daily basis, shouting and wounding and killing them, children, peaceful families — it's Azerbaijani forces that are doing that on a daily basis, regularly and very organised.

Here, in the Council of Europe, in the Parliamentary Assembly, they are trying to show themselves as very democratic and talking about victims of terrorism. Also, we have a problem with the definition as well. What about the definition of terrorism? What do we mean by terrorism, victims of terrorism?

Armenian civilians who cannot work in their fields, who cannot sleep in their houses because of Azerbaijani attacks. Are they victims of terrorism or not? Should we talk about them as well? Is this mechanism that our very respectful rapporteur who is going to, you know, is pushing and we are for it and we will vote for it, will it protect these victims of terrorism?

So these are all our questions that we must debate here. We must find solutions and not, and not attack each other on a daily basis like today when Azerbaijani forces in Armenia, in the Tavush region, who attacked an Armenian soldier and he is wounded. Now he's in a hospital, so I'm condemning and I hope all our colleagues will support Armenia in this case.

Thank you.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

After the last number of contributions, could I remind colleagues that we're here, not as representatives of our country, but as members of this Parliamentary Assembly to deal with across-the-board issues.

Our next speaker is Mr Kamil AYDIN from Turkey and non-aligned.

Mr Kamil AYDIN (Turkey, NR): Dear Chair and colleagues.

I also would like to start with my deepest gratitude to the rapporteur, for she produced a good piece of work.

However, I believe it could have been more encompassing: you know if it was not so limited to three main European countries – England, France and Germany. Because most bloody acts of terrorism at the same time occur in different parts of Europe as well.

Dear colleagues, sometimes in order to escape from our mistakes we tend to resort to the use of some misconceptions or aphorisms as history repeats itself. In fact it's unfortunately not the history but our mistakes, biases and prejudices which make history repeat, mostly with tragic consequences. In this respect, on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the European Council, in most of the speeches made so far there has been a strong emphasis on the tragic consequences of two world wars, considered to be the main reason for organising and forming a unified Europe under the umbrella of Council of Europe with particular references to democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

After 70 years, we the peoples of Europe still face serious risks and threats, such as cyber attacks, migration and terrorism targeting the democracy, sovereignty, welfare and security of each and every country. To be more specific, terrorism has always been a security challenge for governments and a source of fear for ordinary people, causing great losses and misery. Terrorists aim to intimidate people and create an atmosphere of fear and chaos in societies. If our purpose is to combat terrorism we have to address intimidation, fear and chaos. Therefore I believe that the protection of victims and comprehensive support to victims are crucial measures in addressing the threats and harm posed by terrorism.

In addition to the losses of thousands of innocent people in Turkey as a result of terrorist attacks committed by PKK/PYD, Daesh, FETÖ and their extensions under different names, we recently witnessed a new type of victim of terrorism in the country: that is, families whose children were abducted and taken to terrorist camps through blackmailing and threatening by PKK. Its political representative launched a silent protest in Diyarbakır in front of the HDP headquarters in order to make their voices of agony and misery heard all around the world.

To sum up, individuals, societies, NGOs, media and states have significant responsibilities towards victims of terrorism. We should act collectively and we should realise that supporting victims is as important as security measures in the fight against terrorism. Thank you very much.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Can I now call Mr WELLS? From the Canadian delegation observers and whom I had the pleasure of meeting yesterday.

Mr WELLS.

Mr David M. WELLS (Canada): Unlike 11 September 2001, the significance of the date 23 June 1985 is likely not immediately obvious to many of you. In Canada, however, it remains the date of the worst terrorist attack in our history.

On that date, a bomb exploded on Air India Flight 182, originating in Toronto and stopping in Montreal to pick up passengers bound for Heathrow and on to New Delhi, killing all — and it exploded over the Atlantic Ocean — killing all 329 passengers and crew members on that flight, 280 of whom were Canadian.

While in Canada we now observe a National Day of Remembrance for all victims of terrorism, each 23 June, it took far too long for our government to fully recognise the devastating impact that particular tragedy had on the families of victims — and how inadequately they were treated in its aftermath.

Thankfully, in recent years, that has begun to change. In 2010, on the 25th anniversary of the Air India bombing, and following a four-year Commission of Inquiry, the Canadian prime minister, Prime Minister Harper, issued an apology to the families of the victims. Paraphrasing the report, the prime minister noted that the families of the victims were, for years after the attack, “treated with scant respect or consideration by agencies of the Government of Canada.”

As important as that apology was, though, equally important have been the actions that the Government of Canada has taken to right the wrongs exposed by the Commission of Inquiry and to ensure victims of terrorism are treated with fairness and compassion in the future. I will tell you about a few of those actions.

In 2012, the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act and related amendments to the State Immunity Act came into force in Canada. These legislative changes have given victims, irrespective of their nationality, the right to sue perpetrators of terrorism in Canadian courts for losses or damages they incurred as a result of an attack anywhere in the world. And what is particularly novel about them is that they also apply to states that support perpetrators.

Just recently, making use of these legislative changes, victims of terrorism were paid out millions of dollars in compensation. Additionally, since 2007, Canada has provided financial assistance to Canadian victims of violent crime through a Victims' Fund. The fund covers expenses related to travel and, when necessary, medical treatment and funerals.

This financial assistance is not limited to victims of terrorism, though. And I emphasise this because, as Rapporteur Ms Marietta KARAMANLI excellent report explains: “terrorism as a phenomenon can take differing forms,” and “a universally agreed definition has proven difficult to establish.”

Further to that point, the statistics speak for themselves: between 2013 and 2019, 25 Canadians died in terrorist attacks outside of Canada; in 2017 alone, according to Europol, 205 terrorist attacks either took place, were foiled, or failed in Europe. The danger of us operating in silos is self-evident.

To conclude, colleagues, the draft resolution provides a long list of actions that Council of Europe member states – and observer states such as Canada – can take to create a unified approach to supporting victims of terrorism. While Canada has already taken a number of these actions, there is always more work to be done.

Thank you.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

I now call Ms Ruth GOÑI from Spain and member of ALDE.

Ms Ruth GOÑI (Spain, ALDE)*: Thank you very much, President. Ladies and gentleman.

I'd just like to start by congratulating Ms KARAMANLI on this report, which is a question that is of great importance personally for Spain: the protection of victims of terrorism.

As you all know, the terrorist attack in 2004 in Madrid, was the single terrorist attack which caused most victims in Europe, with 193 deaths and many hundreds of victims. Over the years, Spain has also suffered from terrorism carried out by the radical Basque organisation ETA, which tried to force its vision on both the Spanish security forces and Spanish civil society, even when the victims played no political role. ETA killed 854 people, caused more than 7,000 injured in 3,000 terrorist attacks, and 24 of those who were killed were children. Tens and thousands of other people were forced to flee the Basque Country and Navarre because they could no longer stay in their homes.

These figures underline the need for us to try to fight the counter narrative of terrorism in our countries. In Spain, we've heard too much of this false, hurtful narrative. So, we've seen with absolute consternation public tributes paid towards ETA terrorists that have recently left prison. This is an attack on victims and society as a whole. The threats I'm talking about here are shameful. No country in the world can support such things. Such threats are being extended against institutions, and often, they are supported by the institutions, which are underpinned by Basque Nationalists. In Pamplona, a local councillor has recently been found guilty of having acted under direct orders of ETA, the terrorist organisation. This is simply unacceptable.

Elected officials who allow such tributes should be immediately stripped of their office. As this condoning of terrorism gives terrorists the idea that they can achieve their aims with violence.

Last week, the Spanish police carried out an operation against radical separatist commands in Catalonia, who had been storing chemical products to manufacture explosives. According to police investigations, they intended to carry out terrorist attacks just this month in different parts of Catalonia.

It is terrible for the Spanish society, that has been shaken by terrorism and violence, to have to relive the darkest days of our recent history.

Honourable members, we as democrats, must stand together when it comes to fighting against terrorism. We shouldn't allow someone that pays tribute to terrorists, who have taken lives, to remain unpunished. We have to ensure that terrorist attacks of this type come to an end. We have to remember our victims, and that's vital for the dignity of all.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

I now call Mr AVETISYAN from Armenia and the Socialist Group, please.

Mr Sos AVETISYAN (Armenia, SOC): Thank you, Chairperson.

Firstly I would like to congratulate Ms Marietta KARAMANLI for her excellent report.

The protection of terrorist victims is one of the main global challenges for all states in this part of the world. The report is extremely valuable. It attempts to call upon the definition of a victim of terrorism and it has suggestions for protection mechanisms, which are very valuable.

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon but it has complex repercussions in the modern world. What is a terrorist victim? It can be a single person but it can travel to all the community which is affected by this act of terror. There's something important that I want to underline: in our thinking, we should be global because only a global effort can help to tackle terrorism.

But when I see the former neighbouring country, people are simply propagating lies and lies, and then there is this junior guy running around with a camera to tell these lies to his people. I feel sad and I want to remind them that it was in 2004 when a NATO officer axed a sleeping Armenian soldier in the peacekeeping mission training: Mr Safarov. And the very beloved president of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev rewarded him by making him a major of the army and gave him an apartment.

When a state is becoming a direct sponsor of terrorism, that is really sad and we cannot do much about it. Furthermore, the military aggression against the civilian Armenians has been used as a smokescreen for actually executing terroristic acts, for mutilating people, for capturing and torturing them, which does not have any military reasoning behind it. I really hope that we didn't continue these chains of lies, but I see that it is unlikely because there is no maturity about this topic.

As a conclusion, I think we need to work on this convention of the Council of Europe to improve its mechanism, to be careful of who is a victim and is not in the definitions — this is extremely important. At the same time, I also want to compliment you for understanding the sensitivity of the issue, for saying that the human rights and protection of human rights is not necessarily against the lawful duty of the states to fight terrorism.

Once again, I hope that we will grow up in this Council, will be mature and will understand that only a global effort can help to soothe the ones that we have.

Thank you very much.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

I now call Mr REISS from France and the EPP.

Mr Frédéric REISS (France, EPP/CD): Thank you, Mr President,

Dear colleagues,

As part of the second International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism, celebrated on 21 August, it was observed that for victims, the emotional damage sometimes outweighed the physical injuries.

For this reason, immediate and continuous psychological medical assistance is of great importance. As the Mimosa therapeutic project reminds us, "in addition to the trauma and the violence suffered, it is important to specify that the victim of a terrorist act is never directly targeted. It is above all what they represent that is targeted."

Physical reparations and compensation must be as fair as possible. Remember that terrorism can strike anywhere in the world. It therefore seems unacceptable to make distinctions according to the nationality of the victim. Thus, during the attacks in Paris or Strasbourg, foreigners were among the victims. Similarly, during attacks in Egypt or Tunisia on tourist sites, many French people were affected. One of the most sensitive points remains the length of the proceedings and the payment of compensation. In this respect, the role of victims' associations is fundamental.

In France, the attacks of Paris in 2015, like the attack of Nice in 2016, created a real effect of shock in society. Direct victims and their friends and family, but also larger circles of people who were not being directly concerned, have been affected by these tragic events.

Thus, in France, CNRS researchers, under the direction of Mr PESCHANSKY, created the so-called "13 November" programme, which aims to work on the impact on individual as well as collective memory of attacks. This programme is all the more original because it involves following a thousand individuals over a decade, and therefore being constantly exposed to their evolution, very diverse from one individual to another.

This transdisciplinary program seems particularly interesting because it will, in the medium term, provide tools for a medical and psycho-therapeutic approach better adapted to all victims. Thus, a specific study was set up on very young children aged 4 to 12, who were particularly affected during the attack on 14 July in Nice. The REMEMBER analysis, meanwhile, attempts to understand the origin of individual inequalities in the face of cerebral intrusions: why are some subjects more or less capable than others of inhibiting the images, sounds and smells associated with traumatic shocks?

The first results show that the very notion of the victim of terrorism can only make sense if we take into account these neurological disorders, which affect people well beyond the first circles, and this also largely because of a continuous, sometimes outrageous media coverage of these tragic events.

I congratulate Marietta KARAMANLI for this excellent work and will vote without hesitation for the draft resolutions and recommendations.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Our next speaker is Mr HUSEYNOV from Azerbaijan and the ALDE group.

Mr Rafael HUSEYNOV (Azerbaijan, ALDE): Thank you Chair, dear colleagues.

Today, of course everyone says terrorism and terrorists are one of the greatest calamities of the world and humanity.

However it is obvious that those who survived the tragedy of terrorism, and those who continue to suffer from it, are now more than aware of the grief of this disease. It is necessary to protect, support and take care of a single person, as well as several people who are victims of terrorism. But if a whole nation and the whole country is terrorised, then efforts to protect and support it should be more organised, more systematic, more complex. Azerbaijan has been the target and victim of the decade-long widespread and horrible terror committed by, not just individuals, or groups, but by the whole state, and keeps this painful issue very close to its heart.

The chain of such old bloodthirsty gangs as ASALA, Haydut and Hchnak, belonging to worldwide popular Armenian terrorist network, were added by "Group of June 9", Armenian Union Army and Armenian Freedom Movement, Suisse group, Apostle and others founded in France, Switzerland, Russia and in other countries which committed countless blood-crimes during the 1980s and 1990s. There is evidence that Armenia, a member of the Council of Europe, has made terrorism an integral part of public policy. Monte Melkonyan, head of the terrorist group of ASALA, a revolutionary movement in Western Europe, who, along with other

violent crimes was convicted by the French Government for a terrorist attack that killed 8 civilians at Orly Airport in 1983, was proclaimed a national hero of Armenia. Furthermore, a monument and a street in Yerevan was named after him.

Or Vazgen Sislyan, who committed a serious terrorist act that led to the deaths of thousands of people in France, Hungary and Azerbaijan. He was declared a hero by a former president of Armenia. Or Varujan Karapetyan, sentenced by a French court to life imprisonment for a terrible terrorist act in Paris, which also killed French citizens, was awarded the title of hero by the Armenian state.

The monument to the Nazi Garegin Njde in Yerevan is also clear evidence that this country is involved in terrorism, as well as accepting and supporting terrorists as true heroes. My country, and many countries of the world, and the parliaments of several countries, officially recognised the Khojaly genocide that is actually described as the second Holocaust. That two former presidents of Armenia are directly involved in this genocide, and openly express pride in this in interviews with foreign media, is an obvious indicator proving the organic association of this state with terrorism.

Of course, we value and fully support this report which has an extremely noble intention. This report is not just a comprehensive report of a serious problem, this report is primarily a call to join forces in the fight against serious crimes against humanity.

Let us all hear this existing and anxious voice make conclusions and be more in solidarity.

Thank you

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you indeed.

At this juncture we have...

Yes, Mr KOX.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL): As a point of order I would mention the fact that we are discussing the most relevant and important report and resolution but we've now had so many speakers from Armenia and Azerbaijan who only concentrate on their important problems.

Could you please take care of it?

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): I was actually about to make that intervention and I had waited.

We do have a speaker from Armenia and a speaker from Azerbaijan and I would appeal to both of them to be moderate in their approach and to speak to the report.

I didn't want to make the intervention until there were the same number of speakers coming from each country.

So would you please bear in mind that we have a particular mandate here and moderation would be appreciated. Relevance to this excellent report would also be appreciated if you could speak to the report. Thank you.

Now I call on Ms HAYRAPETYAN from Armenia and the EPP group, please.

Ms Tatevik HAYRAPETYAN (Armenia, EPP/CD): Thank you dear Chairperson, ladies and gentlemen.

First of all let me thank the rapporteur for the report.

Terrorism is one of the most major threats to peace, security and stability, as well as to the enjoyment of human rights and social and economic development. Unfortunately nowadays we are witnessing more and more cases of terrorist attacks, which destroy the lives of many innocent people. In fact if the problem seems not to affect us directly, that doesn't mean any of us is guaranteed (not to experience) those kind of terrible cases.

Until now the victims of terrorism continued to struggle to have their voices heard, their needs supported and their rights protected. Victims often feel forgotten and neglected once the immediate aftermath of a terrorist attack fades, which can have profound consequences for them. Victims can only recover and cope with their trauma through long-term multi-dimensional support, including physical, psychological, moral, social and financial, in order to heal and live with dignity.

Until now the victims of terrorism continued to struggle. We mostly witness cases of terrorism in wartime periods. The case of Syria is a vivid example of that. At the same time as my colleagues, Armenian colleagues, have already mentioned, in the four-day April war, we saw also cases of terrorism initiated by the Azerbaijani Army. Civilians can't and shouldn't become targeted even in the most severe wartimes. However it still happens. Though according to the Geneva Convention acts of terrorism and violence against peaceful civilians are prohibited even in wartime.

We cannot stay indifferent towards such actions. They should be harshly condemned and necessary preventive measures should be undertaken. That's also why this report is very important.

Just to sum up I would shortly respond to my Azerbaijani colleagues. By forging the history you can change the reality, and the reality is that Nagorno-Karabagh belongs to people who live and will always live on the land they belong to, and their ancestors belonged to since ancient times. They have proved many times that they are able to protect their security and their right to live free from Azerbaijani aggression by all possible means.

Thank you for your attention.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you for your relative moderation.

Now our final speaker who will emulate that, I hope.

Our next speaker, I should say, from Azerbaijan is Mr SEYIDOV from the European Conservatives Group.

Mr Samad SEYIDOV (Azerbaijan, EC): Thank you very much, Mr President.

And, of course, first of all, let me express my gratitude to the rapporteur for this excellent report, for a very important report, for a report, which has been presented in time because we are looking for the definition of terrorism. I think this is not so difficult to find the definition of terrorism. Terrorism, or terrorist acts, is a cancer on the body of mankind.

We are in Europe. This is a European disease and, unfortunately, it is so difficult to find the appropriate treatment of this deadly disease.

For a long period of time, I was working as a president of the university and when I was working at the University, one young lady lost her right hand as a result of the terrorist act in the centre of Baku, in the subway. Together with this hand, she lost everything: beauty, hope, everything. And life became, for her, terrible. And, you know, she was looking for — not for compensation, neither for great support from the colleagues — she was looking for justice. Justice! And every time she came to my office and said, "When? When Mr Rector? When could it be possible to speak about that?"

And Madame Rapporteur, I want to express my gratitude to you for your excellent report, because of this report, I think, these kinds of persons can find justice.

And another very important aspect of your report is that you prepared this report for individual cases, but I have read very attentively your report, your report is very valuable for states. You are talking about the basic needs of each person as a victim of terror. But these basic needs could be applicable for the states, and I think our Assembly should do our best not only for each European, but our Council of Europe should do our best for each member state. And if we are able to do that, these kinds of tough discussions between representatives of nations we can withdraw from the Assembly.

Thank you very much.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you for that.

Now Mr HASANOV from Azerbaijan.

Mr Elshad HASANOV (Azerbaijan, NR): Thank you, Mr Chairman.

Dear colleagues,

Today terrorism is a tragic reality of the world. Several nations of the Council of Europe have faced terror attacks in recent years. Now we need to coordinate our counterterrorism policy to eliminate terrorism.

Protecting the victims of terrorism is a vital act of reaffirming the victim's dignity and human rights. In this respect, the European nation should fully support the possibility of adopting a European Charter of the Rights of the Victims of Terrorism.

Azerbaijan, like some other states of the Council of Europe, has experienced terror attacks. In the early 19th century the Armenian military and terror groups occupied Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding districts of Azerbaijan. As a result of this complex conflict, as it was mentioned by our colleague, 20% of Azerbaijan's territory was occupied. Nearly one million people became refugees and IDPs.

Today the issue of victims of terrorism is a part of the modern history of Azerbaijan. These people have been fighting for their dignity and human rights for many years. In this regard, I'd like to remind all of you well-known case of Chiragov and others versus Armenia.

In 2015, the European Court of Human Rights revealed its decision over this case. The applicants are victims of terrorism as Azerbaijani nationals from Nagorno-Karabakh. In 1992, they were forced to flee their homeland. Since then, they have been unable to return to their homes and properties because of Armenian occupation and terror. The European Court of Human Rights, in its final conclusion, wrote that Armenia exercises effective control over Nagorno-Karabakh and has continued to violate some fundamental rights, including the right to respect private and family life and the right to an effective remedy.

We should, of course, welcome the ruling of the European Court but unfortunately, the applicants' rights to live in their homeland are still violated. We must guarantee the right of access to justice, the condition of compensation and the existence of support services. The government of Azerbaijan has been doing its best to protect and support the victims of terrorism. There are many social, educational and economic projects specifically for IDPs and victims of terrorism. The government of Azerbaijan has been supporting victims of terrorism in every aspect of their lives. As MPs — who have to show the most sustained commitment to ensure full protection for victims of terrorism, who have to support any initiative intended to encourage society to stand firm against all forms of violence, separatism, and terrorism, and to ensure an effective counter policy to terrorist policy — we do not have just a legal but also a moral obligation to protect and support victims of terror.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Now Mr KONDRATEV from the Russian Federation, non-aligned, please.

Mr Aleksei KONDRATEV (Russian Federation, NR)*: Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to remind you that the subject at hand today is the protection and support for the victims of terrorism.

I won't talk today about the problems that exist on the basis of what the speakers have said before me. I would like to say that the Russian Federation probably has the biggest and saddest experience of fighting terrorism in the last 30 years. What Russia has experienced has not been felt by any other country here. We know better than anyone how to protect and support the victims of terrorism and how to give them financial and social support.

What have we been doing in Russia on this score? Let me just inform you, colleagues.

There has been a call for a united front against terrorism in all countries. We brought together our national legislation and an article of our constitution, which says that, if there are any terrorist acts, then the rights of those who are affected are protected by the law, and they shall have access to justice and compensation, which is what the report calls for. It is something that already exists.

There's a concept of public safety, which was passed by the president of our country. One of the provisions of that says that public safety shall be upheld. There is a provision which says we should minimise any financial losses incurred through terrorism. There's specifications about what emergency services should do: how to help people who have suffered from terrorist acts and require counselling and psychological help afterwards, minimisation of any moral effects on society or any particular groups in society. If buildings and sites are destroyed by terrorism, they shall be rebuilt with the help of the Russian Federation. Physical persons and legal entities who have suffered, shall be recompensed. Articles 18 and 19 of the 6 of March law...

Sorry I'm just drawing to a close, I want to cover this as well. All of this work has been done in Russia, but of course, the devil is in the detail. At the end of the report today, there is something that we don't quite understand. Perhaps I can just say this. The wording doesn't really correspond to our understanding of things. In paragraph 5 the Assembly says that "the survivors of terrorist attacks, along with former terrorists and foreign fighters, should be actively involved in all efforts to prevent radicalisation leading to violent extremism in all Council of Europe member States, and resolves to closely follow this matter in its future work."

Now I don't really understand this. We are going to abstain on this.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, and can I have the next speaker Mr KILIÇ from a Turkey, non-Aligned.

Thank you.

Mr Akif Çağatay KILIÇ (Turkey, NR): Thank you, Mr President.

Of course, I would like to congratulate our rapporteur on the good work that has been put forward and the effort which is the most important part of this because, Ms KARAMANLI, you put point forward which we can see is touching everybody who is also part of the Council, and also in humanity.

Like my colleague from Azerbaijan said, terrorism is a cancer, which we have to fight on all fronts and in all shapes and sizes, and we can, say, distinguish between these acts of terrorism. When, in France, Charlie Hebdo was mentioned here, when the terrorist attack was carried out, we stood in solidarity, and I was, in those days, one of the ministers who was in Paris working on our support and solidarity, standing with the French people.

However, we have to also address the following: if we are trying to bring out in documents, with your efforts and everybody else here, which is going to try to support the victims of these heinous acts, these murders, these killings. And we have to do this. We have to have a framework. We have to understand in which ways we have to go forward. Past experiences come and go, but the victims which have been affected by these, they have the scars for life, both psychological and physical.

The word justice was mentioned. We have to be just and we have to look, like I said, from certain perspectives. Unfortunately, my country, Turkey, has been suffering from terrorism for a long time now. We have lost more than 40,000 of our people to terrorist acts. However, when terrorists acts are perpetrated in Turkey, the voice which comes forward to support is not that much. The victims of these terrorist acts hear this.

Right now in Diyarbakır, more than 50 families are sitting in front of political parties steps and trying to find their children. There is a boy named Azat who has been lost since he was 10 years old. So we have to look into these. We have to work with the families, we have to support them. And I would have wanted to see some of our members, of our friends, when the attacks in Ankara happened at the train station and we lost more than a hundred people, to come to Turkey and stand with us.

So, the effort is great and we have to support this, but the application of what we bring out has to be unanimous. We should be standing together as 47 members, not only on certain aspects. So let's not forget that. This cancer, the cancer of terrorism, can hit us anywhere anytime. In Germany, the NSU trials have gone on, people with backgrounds from migration have suffered certain things. We have to remember this and today is the one-year turnover of Jamal KHASHOGGI who was killed and murdered as a journalist in an embassy, unfortunately in Istanbul, but we have to, I think, remember this person as well, who was a person, from the writer's part and from the social media.

Thank you.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): And our final speaker is Mr KLEINWÄCHTER from Germany, non-aligned.

Mr Norbert KLEINWAECHTER (Germany, NR): Thank you very much for this report.

It's a topic that affects me personally. I have a woman in my constituency, who comes from Eichwalde, who in 2016 went to the Christmas market at the Gedächtniskirche in Berlin and did not return. All that was given to the relatives, was a bit of help, a mourning card and otherwise they were told that it was bad luck. That is unacceptable. We should work together here, and that is why it is a very, very good start to strengthening the very rights of these victims, to protect them, to do them justice, and ultimately, if applicable, they should be compensated for any consequences on their health.

But also an important point, which I would like to emphasise once again, is the assistance in dealing with the media, in dealing with their personality, in dealing with the fact that they can also withdraw from the debate, if they want to – believe me that is a very important point that needs to be raised in this respect.

Yes, to protect our people, and that too is in the report, particularly at this time, when the pressure to resist as a society that we have from different sides. This pressure from terrorism, this pressure from violence, this pressure from migration; at no time should we abandon our rule of law, may we give up our values and we must obey our laws, because these, and only these, are decided democratically.

On one point, though I may, of course, register criticism – it is not enough just to say "yes, it is great when victims of terrorism in Christian charity speak positively and not with hate". That's very nice, if someone like Antoine de Lérís has just done that. But who really can? No, I believe we as societies also have to learn that genuine anger sometimes spreads and we have to learn to be civilized. That's the important thing. We must learn to foresee the hatred of others and resist it accordingly. This concerns especially the hatred of Islamist groups even within our own country.

We remember: one of the big assassins, Mohammed Atta, had lived in Germany, had been licensed to fly in the United States, before he steered the plane into the Twin Towers. Many of the enemies are among us and positive self-discourse is not enough. So we must, and that must be the consequence, be very careful about who we let in, who we have among us. The sad truth, which we have to express in the context of terrorism and migration, is that many do not love our countries; that is ultimately part of an honest debate.

Let me also mention that there are also victims of individual attacks that we must not forget. A kind of guerrilla terrorism, which has already spread in Germany with individual knife attacks and homicidal machinations. I know even the father of Marcus Hempel, who was killed in Wittenberg with a purposeful punch; or Daniel H. in Chemnitz with a knife attack. These are targeted attacks, and the victims must not be forgotten.

Thank you for your work.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Now that concludes the list of speakers.

I call Ms KARAMANLI, our rapporteur, to reply and you have 2 minutes, please.

Ms Marietta KARAMANLI (France, SOC, Rapporteur): Thank you, Mr President.

My dear colleagues,

If I can sum up in two or three words what you said, first of all, you have all in the end expressed your determination to fight against terrorism and to protect and support the victims.

I think that's the summary. Somewhere, even beyond all the differences that we can see here, I still hold a solidarity, a unanimity in this fight that we must carry out within the Council of Europe and our States, as parliamentarians. Let's not forget, do not mix state and parliamentarism.

As a French woman from the south of Europe originally, I am delighted today to be able to share the reflections you have expressed. I am very touched.

I just wanted to emphasise one point: we all agree that the European Charter for the Rights of Victims is necessary. I think, Madam President, with all the colleagues in our Committee, that I will endeavour to get closer, in the most effective way possible, to address and to advance on a charter of this type, through the work that we can do with the European Union and the work that we can do within our Council of Europe. I count on your support to go further together.

In any case, thank you for this unanimity, for this desire to really protect the victims, the support for the victims. There is still much work to be done to go further on terrorism, on ways to combat terrorism. This was not the framework of this report; it was first of all to provide the necessary solidarity to the victims who can be found everywhere. The dates you have given, and the others, the testimonies that you have expressed, in any case, show that it is everywhere and that we must have fight together.

Thank you.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, indeed, to our rapporteur.

Now just my colleague and friend, the Chair of the Committee, Ms RUIJTEN, do you wish to speak?

You have three minutes.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD): Perhaps Mrs Oomen is more simple to pronounce. That's the name I got when I married.

First of all dear colleagues, Mr President, on behalf of the Committee for Political Affairs, I have to express like almost everyone did, is that it is an excellent report by Ms Karamanli. We have had as a committee at least 10 hearings. But we also discussed the content of the report with United Nations. Ms Karamanli paid visits to several member states and she talked with victims and all the organisations representing them. But above all she listened to them and she wrote down the recommendations from this report.

Dear colleagues, the most important lesson for me is that after a terrorist act everybody is claiming to do something for the victims. But after some time, they are forgotten. Or it seems that they are forgotten. So that is the reason that we now ask the governments and not only the member states, but also those who are in our ... everybody in the Council of Europe, we asked them that, is a roadmap and this roadmap has to go beyond what is normally done.

We have to do, we have to foresee that the needs of the victims are better met than it was done before. And I sincerely hope that everybody, member states, and the partners for democracy take over the recommendations. And that we will once again, we will make a new charter meeting, as the victims want us to do.

And once again I would like to thank sincerely Ms Karamanli who did this report.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you indeed, and I'll take you up on calling you Ms OOMEN. Thank you very much.

I now declare the debate closed and the Committee, they were coming to the consideration of amendments — Document 14957 of your files.

The Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy has presented a draft resolution to which five amendments have been tabled. The Political Affairs and Democracy Committee has also presented a draft recommendation to which no amendments have been tabled.

We will first consider the draft resolution contained in Document 14957.

I understand that the Chairperson of the Committee of Political Affairs and Democracy wishes to propose to the Assembly that Amendments 2, 3, 4 and 5 to the draft resolution, which were unanimously approved by the Committee, should be declared as agreed by the Assembly.

Is that so, Ms OOMEN?

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD): That's okay.

Vote: Protecting and supporting the victims of terrorism

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you. Does anyone object?

As there is no objection, I declare that Amendments 2, 3, 4 and 5 to the draft resolution have been agreed.

I call Mr BILDARRATZ to support Amendment No. 1.

You have 30 seconds.

Mr BILDARRATZ, is he here? Yes.

Mr Jokin BILDARRATZ (Spain, ALDE)*: Thank you, Mr President.

I would like to thank the rapporteur for being so kind as to accept the amendment that I tabled. With regard to this particular amendment, it is a very straightforward one, in fact. My proposal is that we delete the word "innocent" because it adds an adjective that can be interpreted in various ways and I don't think that's helpful. So I would suggest that we delete the word "innocent".

Thank you.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment?

What is the opinion of — sorry, nobody against?

Okay.

What is the opinion of the Committee on the amendment?

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD): It was adopted with one vote against.

Mr Joseph O'REILLY (Ireland, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): I shall now put the amendment to the vote and I declare the vote open.

I now declare the vote to be closed and I call for the vote to be displayed and Amendment No. 1 is agreed to.

We move now to consider the draft resolution.

We will now proceed to vote on the draft resolution contained in Document 14957, as amended.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I call for the result to be displayed.

The resolution is adopted. Congratulations.

We will now proceed to vote on the draft recommendation contained in Document 14957.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I call for the result to be displayed, please.

The draft recommendation in, as I said, Document 14957 is adopted.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): The next item on business this afternoon is the debate on the report titled 'Post-monitoring dialogue with North Macedonia' document 14964, presented by the co-rapporteurs Ms Lise CHRISTOFFERSEN and Mr Aleksander POCIEJ on behalf of the Committee on post-Monitoring Dialogue with North Macedonia.

We will begin with Ms Lise CHRISTOFFERSEN and Mr Aleksander POCIEJ, co-rapporteurs.

You have 13 minutes in total which you might may divide between the presentation of the report and reply to the debate. I call Ms Lise CHRISTOFFERSEN.

Debate: Post-monitoring dialogue with North Macedonia

Ms Lise CHRISTOFFERSEN (Norway, SOC, Co-Rapporteur): Thank you, Madame President.

Dear colleagues,

North Macedonia joined the Council of Europe in 1995, and has since 2000 been engaged in post-monitoring dialogue. We commend the delegation of North Macedonia for their contribution to our fact-finding visits and to this report, the first one since 2013.

Ever since, the country has been committed to its Euro-Atlantic integration — not without obstacles, though, among them the name dispute with Greece. A breakthrough came in June last year, with the Prespa agreement, signed by both countries. The official name is now the Republic of North Macedonia.

An agreement on friendship and neighbourly cooperation was signed with Bulgaria in 2017.

Paragraph 4 mentions some important political events from 2014 on. Among them the release of illegally wiretapped conversations, which caused a major political crisis. The EU-sponsored cross-party Przino agreements, in the end, led to a change of powers in 2016 and the set-up of a Special Prosecutor, investigating politically related crimes deriving from these wiretapped conversations. The Special Prosecutor's office has pressed charges and indicted a high number of people for different forms of corruption. One of them, the former prime minister, Mr. Gruevski, fled the country and was granted asylum in Hungary.

In paragraph 6, we mention the dramatic storming of the Parliament in 2017.

We commend the authorities for ambitious plans for reforms in four key areas: the judicial system, the security services, public administration and in the field of anti-corruption, as well as for their willingness to cooperate with the Council of Europe. We take note of the recent upgrading of the legal framework concerning the national security services, and the monitoring of their activities by a parliamentary committee, chaired by the opposition. We welcome the participation of the opposition parties in the reform processes but reject the acts of the former president, who refused to promulgate important laws adopted by Parliament.

We notice the steps taken to increase the independence of the justice system, as listed in paragraph 10 and recommend some legal reforms in paragraph 11, concerning the prosecution office, and the enabling of the Special Prosecutor to finalise their investigations. Despite high-level meetings, no agreement has yet been reached about a new law on the Public Prosecution Office, encompassing the possible inclusion of the Special Prosecutor's Office.

Lately, this issue has become even more complicated by a so-called extortion affair, revealed in Italian media, including three businessmen and the Special Prosecutor's office, leading to the resignation and arrest of the Special Prosecutor herself. Soon after she was also unanimously dismissed by Parliament.

Whatever the truth is, the affair demonstrates that corruption is still a serious problem, despite new legislation and a new state commission for the prevention of corruption. GRECO especially points out corruption among members of Parliament, judges, prosecutors and the police.

The electoral system needs to be reformed and the CPT has called for improved conditions in prisons and institutions. Steps have been taken, though, in the right direction. In addition, ECRE has recommended strengthening the Ombudsman institution.

Positive development is found in the field of media, but lack of independence and financial sustainability are remaining challenges. Progress is also made in fighting discrimination, but the State Commission needs to be strengthened. Inter-ethnic relations are still fragile, despite the Ohrid Framework Agreement.

North Macedonia has ratified the Istanbul Convention. An anti-discrimination law is passed, encompassing the rights of the LGBTI people. The first Pride Parade took place in Skopje in June this year.

To sum up, the Monitoring Committee notes important progress, in particular, in adopted legislation regarding the independence of the judiciary and the fight against corruption, but we still need to see their full implementation. Therefore, the Committee proposes that the PACE for the time being decides to continue the post monitoring dialogue with North Macedonia, focused on democratic institutions, independence of the judiciary, fight against corruption, improvements in the electoral system and the rights of minorities.

Having said that, I want to conclude by commending both the position and the opposition in North Macedonia for their ability to find compromises through a host of serious political crises. As rapporteur for the last four and a half years, I have been able to follow this rather closely. Parliament is working. There is no boycott from the opposition. That makes me confident that, in the end, they will also find a solution to the remaining difficult issues. As such, North Macedonia could serve as an example for other member countries in the Council of Europe.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Ms Lise CHRISTOFFERSEN.

Does Mr Aleksander POCIEJ have anything to add?

Mr Aleksander POCIEJ (Poland, EPP/CD, Co-Rapporteur): Thank you Madam Chair.

I would like to add or emphasise only two things.

We strongly believe in the Prespa Agreement signed in 2018 with Greece, that was a very very very important path for the future of North Macedonia. We really welcome this path and we can see the bright future.

Also I must emphasise that for the future, what shall be done, and for me as a lawyer and as a Polish citizen, I have to underline the problem of strengthening the judiciary and really to make all efforts in the future for there to be completely different, separated bodies and (that they are) completely independent.

That's all, thank you very much.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Ms Christofferson and Mr Pocij.

You have 5 minutes and 57 seconds remaining.

In the debate, I call first Madame Dalloz on behalf of the EPP group.

Ms Marie-Christine DALLOZ (France, EPP/CD, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, Madam President.

Madam and Mr co-rapporteurs,

I congratulate you for your hard work and your well documented study of the situation in North Macedonia

There has been a lot of progress, as you have all pointed out, particularly not only due to the Prespa agreement. It is to be welcomed that the recommendations have been taken into account by this country despite a sometimes complicated political situation. However, it is necessary to continue this dialogue with the Monitoring Committee .

Two points seem essential to me.

First, the functioning of the National Electoral Commission and the electoral base, whose registration on the electoral lists are too often disputed by voters. This first problem, which I was able to observe myself during the electoral observation missions that I carried out in this country, is to be correlated with the delicate question of the census of the population.

Indeed, the last census in North Macedonia dates from 2002, 17 years ago, especially in a country where the population is changing. In particular, it would be necessary to better know the Roma populations and the Albanian populations of North Macedonia. It's not just about numbers, statistics, but the real functioning of democracy. A correct electoral base is the foundation of an efficient and above all effective democracy. Thus, the forecast of a census in 2020 must become a reality.

The second point concerns the situation in prisons. I am pleased that the Council of Europe Development Bank, which we have been talking about this afternoon, has financed the reconstruction of Idrizovo Prison. But the situation remains worrying. This problem can be linked to certain factors pointed out by the European Union, notably the need to fight against organised crime and the reform of the administration. It would be useful and even necessary for the report we are debating today to be transmitted with the CPT's reports to the members of our countries who will go to the General Affairs Council on 15 October, where the fate of Northern Macedonia in its process of accession to the EU will be debated.

It is clear that for North Macedonia this European perspective is a catalyst for the implementation of economic reforms. However, I think that the dialogue initiated here in the Council of Europe is more important. By assisting Northern Macedonia in the reforms affecting the rule of law, human rights and democracy, our organisation plays a vital role and we should be proud of it.

Dear Macedonian friends, the improvements have been remarkable, and I personally welcome them, but there is still work to do and our post-monitoring dialogue is there to help you on this path.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The next speaker is Mr Stefan SCHENNACH on behalf of the Socialist Group.

Mr Stefan SCHENNACH (Austria, SOC, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, Madame President.

On behalf of the Socialist and Green Group, I would like, first of all, to sincerely thank the two rapporteurs for this report because it is really very thorough.

Macedonia is a country that I have visited and led the missions of the Parliamentary Assembly for years and, sometimes, we felt we would never be able to build bridges. Following on from what the previous speaker said, the census is so important because then language rights will begin to take effect.

Not only do we have Albanian ethnicities but also Roma ethnicities, we have Serbian, we have Bulgarian, we have Turkish, we have Vlax and so on. And that is one of the biggest obstacles, because of course in these cities and towns it does depend on what the official languages are.

It is a great thing not to have to talk about FYROM anymore, the former Yugoslav republic in Macedonia. The fact that we finally managed to emerge from this impasse, and reach an agreement — the Prespa agreement — with Greece and also that Macedonian Parliament had the courage to take a position after a somewhat strange referendum.

Equally important is the agreement with Bulgaria. Again, the previous government got into a problem with that. I would also like to mention Pushchino, agreements 1 and 2. Here, the European Commission also had a massive impact on forcing the government to resign, and then there was an interim government and then a new election.

But I would like to remind you of something that may have been rather neglected, which is the Colorful Revolution. The young people who, day after day and night after night, under great pressure have expressed their discontent with this. They have succeeded for the first time in building bridges between the ethnic identities in the country. In the end, even, there were weddings between different ethnic identities.

In all post-Soviet or post-Yugoslav countries, you always have to look at the public prosecutor's office, and we need more transparency on that. I very much do agree with the rapporteurs that this Special Prosecutor's office must be supported. It has done incredible things. This woman has been sensational in combating corruption, fraud and we must give her all the support we can.

Thank you very much.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The next speaker is Lord DUNDEE on the behalf of European Conservatives.

Lord Alexander DUNDEE (United Kingdom, EC, Spokesperson for the group): Madam President, assisting this debate, and as your colleagues have already observed, we have a very useful report indeed. Consequently, all of us will be grateful to its co-rapporteurs, Ms Christofferson, and Mr Alexander Pocij.

Today, I'll briefly connect together three considerations within North-Macedonia, certain recent, yet solid achievements, which are much to be welcomed. Following this, what should now be monitored, is the way in which this exercise is of service to the rest of the Council of Europe.

Credit should certainly go to the main political parties in the country, for they allow their differences to be transcended through consent, to a democratic roadmap contained in the Pržino agreements of 2015 and 2016. As a result, previous inconsistencies have already reduced. Those relate to the rule of law, the judicial system and to the fight against corruption. External matters have improved as well. The dispute with Greece has now been resolved: this was over the country's name.

There's also a far better relationship between North Macedonia and its neighbour Bulgaria, needless to say the stability of the whole region has gained from these two developments alone. Furthermore, accession negotiations have now been relaunched for the country to join both NATO and the European Union. As the co-rapporteurs rightly point out, the purpose of monitoring at all is to cause these constructive developments to be sustained, and further built upon as necessary.

The focus of this monitoring should therefore be upon the independence of the judiciary, the accountability of judges, and the reform of the special prosecutor's office to which Mr Schennach has just referred, to ensure it is free from political interference and in line with the Council of Europe standards. Then, to include vigilance over the fight against corruption, the attainment of electoral form and policies to secure the rights of minorities such as Roma community, and consistent with the audit framework agreement.

Not least should we bear in mind the important advantage of a successful exercise, in this case concerning North Macedonia, in a wider context. For the more post-monitoring dialogue evolves as a competent, timely and systematic model, the more it stands to be properly effective where relevant, elsewhere within our Council of Europe affiliation.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): The next speaker is Mr Jacques MAIRE on behalf of the ALDE group.

Mr Jacques MAIRE (France, ALDE, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, Madam President.

Thank you first, of course, to our two rapporteurs, Ms Lise CHRISTOFFERSEN and Mr POCIEJ for their work in monitoring this demanding dialogue.

Of course, like everyone else, we welcome the 17 June Prespa Agreement. Mr Zaev showed on the occasion of this very painful decision that he is a true statesman. I was myself in North Macedonia on 27 January 2019, the very same day that the Greek Parliament ratified the agreement. And I observed on this occasion that beyond the narrow majority expressed at the time of the referendum, the name change is now clearly accepted by the population, who appreciates the end of this sidelining by the international community.

Northern Macedonia is concentrating on its reform agenda, impatient as it is for the opening of negotiations with the European Union, of which we know the key points. As a reminder, they are the fight against corruption and organised crime, the reform of justice, of course, the intelligence services and the public administration.

I join the two co-rapporteurs in welcoming the reforms initiated by the government aimed at improving the independence of the judiciary, but I would also like to mention, like my colleague from the EPP Group, the question of elections, in particular the electoral roll. We will not be able to avoid a census for much longer, even though we understand the political sensitivity.

But the news shows that we are still far from a satisfactory situation. As was mentioned, the corruption charge against the special prosecutor responsible since 2015 for investigating is something that strikes us. So the ALDE Group supports the recommendations of this excellent report, but we think we should probably go one step further.

Northern Macedonia is taking steps in many areas, but it is not doing it quickly enough or strongly enough, despite the commitment of its leaders. The local context does not facilitate, indeed, the adoption of legislation. Certainly, and this is a positive point, the opposition does not boycott the institutions, unlike other countries in the region, but reform of the judiciary requires two thirds of the votes of the parliament, which drags down the negotiations. Emphasis must also be put on behavioral changes and the effective implementation of the reforms, and to do so, we must help the country even more, because the Council of Europe has a duty to actively support this transition phase.

We believe that it is time to think about a more direct involvement in the process of reforms through monitoring, of course, but also by involving other reference institutions, such as the Venice Commission or GRECO. This is important in order that accession negotiations to the European Union, this central objective of Northern Macedonia which we fully share, are started as soon as possible.

Thank you.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The next speaker is Mr Georgios KATROUGKALOS on the behalf of the United European Left.

Mr Georgios KATROUGKALOS (Greece, UEL, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I wanted to commend on behalf of our group, the two rapporteurs, but above all, to praise and commend North Macedonia on all its efforts to adapt to the European *acquis* of the rule of law and of human rights.

And, more especially, to the courage it has shown in signing the Prespa Agreement. I had the privilege to be the acting Foreign Minister who defended the ratification of the treaty at the Greek Parliament, which I can assure you was not, even in the my country, an easy job. And I'm proud because Prespa did not just resolve a bitter bilateral dispute, it sent a strong message to our area, the Balkans, and also to Europe.

The message addressed to the region is loud and clear: there is a way to resolve disputes through diplomacy and political dialogue. In this framework, the agreement has contributed to the stabilisation of a region where nationalism is still alive and kicking. It is not an eternal curse for the Balkans to be the powder keg of Europe. The message towards Europe was also loud and clear, a message of optimism, a message reaffirming the commitment of the people of North Macedonia, but also the other peoples of the area, to their European perspectives.

And it should be clear, also, that Europe should reciprocate. We should reinvigorate the perspectives, the European perspectives of the western Balkans, especially the European Union as other speakers of the groups have already noted. Should on 15 October there should be an immediate decision to start negotiations independently from other candidatures of other states which should be considered on their own merits and of course the Council of Europe should continue to support the reforms. It's a matter of credibility for the European institutions.

In the few seconds that remain and since I'm not sure that I have the possibility to speak about the amendments filed, I want to urge against their adoption because they risk upsetting the balanced character of the resolution. We owe that to the people of North Macedonia.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The co-rapporteurs will reply at the end of the debate.

But do Ms Lise CHRISTOFFERSEN or Mr Aleksander POCIEJ wish to respond at this stage?

No? We will continue with the list.

The next speaker is Mr Nikola POPOSKI from North Macedonia.

Mr Nikola POPOSKI (North Macedonia, EPP/CD): Thank you very much, I would like to thank the co-rapporteurs.

The year 2020 in the Macedonian context brings us to our double anniversary, 20 years of post-monitoring in the Council of Europe and 15 years since we acquired the candidate country status in the European Union. To be fair, we have largely benefited throughout the years and learned from valuable recommendations issued by the group of states against corruption, the Venice Commission as well as the Parliamentary Assembly election observation mission reports. As one of the most experienced post-monitored nations it appears that all comes down to the fact that we have to focus all our efforts on the proper implementation of the numerous pieces of legislation that we have already adopted and then amended year after year.

Our experience also suggests that implementation can only be efficiently achieved by domestically cultivating independent institutions and a genuine democratic culture. The aspect that has evolved after this lengthy experience is that we have perhaps shifted a way from using or abusing international organisations for

domestic political infighting, differences on numerous politicised issues are quite sizeable but none of them would be efficiently resolved here, but rather through the work that we have to be committed on and all the efforts that are happening back home.

At the end, it seems that there would be a further, perhaps, the last extension of the post-monitoring. We understand that there are political considerations about it but in the view of the upcoming 20th anniversary of our post-monitoring it might be handy to consider the possibility of conceiving an impact assessment for our post monitoring experience. We hope that that can bring us a bit closer to a realistic picture about how much progress we have achieved, as well as to estimate the contribution of many of the instruments perhaps this time through the lenses of our post-monitoring tools.

Thank you very much.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The next speaker is Mr Josip JURATOVIC.

Germany, Socialist Group.

He is not here.

The next speaker is Ms Hajnalka JUHÁSZ, Hungary, EPP group.

Ms Hajnalka JUHÁSZ (Hungary, EPP/CD): North Macedonia has experienced significant political changes in recent years.

The prisoner agreement signed by the main political parties in 2015 and 2016 resolved a long-standing crisis and resulted in a political organisation. Hungary recognises the profound political changes that have taken place in North Macedonia. We acknowledge the significance of the treaty on good neighbourliness, friendship and cooperation with Bulgaria and the Prespa Agreement, which paved the way for North Macedonia's accession to NATO and also hopefully to the European Union.

These two treaties set an example for the whole Balkan region on how to reach a compromise and reconcile long-standing historical issues. The committee notes important progress made by the country to restore the rule of law. In particular, it welcomes the legislation adopted regarding the judiciary and the fight against corruption, but insists on their full implementation. The report makes a recommendation that PACE should continue the post-monitoring discussions it has already begun with North Macedonia, particularly with regard to the independence of the judiciary, combatting corruption, the concept of consolidation of its electoral framework, and safeguarding the rights of minorities. Continuation and implementation of the reforms are of key importance as well as the acceleration of all those processes that bring North Macedonia closer to the European requirements and standards.

We wish to stress that Hungary has been a reliable and consistent supporter of the Euro-Atlantic integration process of North Macedonia. European Union enlargement and the European perspective for the Western Balkan countries is of key importance for us. Hungary is of the opinion that there can not be a stable and secure Europe without a stable and secure Western Balkans. We fully support the continuation of the post-monitoring dialogue between North Macedonia and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Thank you very much indeed.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The next speaker is Ms Zita GURMAI, Hungary, Socialist Group.

Ms Zita GURMAI (Hungary, SOC): Thank you very much, dear colleagues.

I would like to thank the co-rapporteurs for their excellent work.

I think overall the report is positive. We can welcome the positive development in North Macedonia. We can also commend the authorities of North Macedonia for their commitment to advance reform and look forward to the implementation of the reform.

Major changes have happened: the country held a referendum and ratified the historic Prespa agreement, solving the name issue after 27 years. As a result, North Macedonia was invited to join NATO. The recommendations by the European Commission to open accession negotiations to join the EU is another step for Euro-Atlantic integration.

We have to underline that significant reforms have been launched in recent years. The laws on the court and the judicial council were adopted in line with the Venice Commission recommendations and anti-discrimination law encompassing sexual orientation and gender identity as grounds for discrimination was approved. The institution of the ombudsman was strengthened, as was oversight over police forces. The adoption of the new anti-corruption law. The media operates in a better environment, the safety of journalists is no longer an issue. The recent adoption of the law on the use of languages is an important step forward to further implementation of the 2001 Ohrid Framework Agreement.

In addition, we should welcome the attention of the authorities of North Macedonia to take due account of recommendations of the Venice Commission and GRECO. Unfortunately, there are new member states where these cannot be said. I know that reforms need to be implemented, continued, and the draft resolution makes a number of recommendations in this regard.

I agree with them because it can change people's perceptions and restore their confidence in institutions. I would like to highlight point 5 of the draft resolution that states that the Assembly is calling on the Hungarian authorities to release Mr GRUEVSKI in order to continue his trial. The former prime minister fled Macedonia and was granted political asylum in Hungary. The Hungarian court deciding about the Macedonian extradition request could not assess the case properly. The court by law only could assess the lawfulness of the extradition request taking into consideration the Hungarian immigration of his decision to grant asylum to GRUEVSKI.

The final decision was taken by Mr László Trócsányi, former Minister of Justice in Hungary. Mr Trócsányi was the Hungarian government's nominee to the new European Commission but Viktor Orbán's nominee, Mr Trócsányi was rejected twice by the European Parliament's Committee on Judicial Affairs because of conflict of interest. So if the Hungarian government points to a court decision, it's misleading because it was first and foremost a Hungarian government's political decision by a highly political Justice Minister.

Thank you very much.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The next speaker is Mr Egidijus VAREIKIS, Lithuania, EPP group.

Mr Egidijus VAREIKIS (Lithuania, EPP/CD): Thank you.

Thank you Madam Chairperson.

I would like to start with the history. More than 100 years ago, at the beginning of 20th century Europe spoke about the so-called Macedonian question. It was a very serious thing as we remember from the historic handbook the solution of the Macedonian question was not simple. Someone tried to solve the Macedonian question by war, by division, by the creation of Yugoslavia, by many means. But no means were very successful.

Now at the end of the 20th century we started to speak about the Macedonian solution instead of the Macedonian question. When the Republic of Macedonia, which is now North Macedonia, became a member of the Council of Europe we started to observe that instead of calling it the Macedonian question we could speak about the Macedonian solution.

Now we have a report that is really reflecting that Macedonian solution. There are very few important things about that: first the name of North Macedonia. It is one segment of the solution, I would say the geopolitical segment of the solution of the ancient Macedonian question.

In the report you can read that the country needs to establish good relations with its neighbours. It's not easy. It's not easy because of historical relations and ethnic groups living in the country. It's not simple you know. It's not a simple idea to make them get along. But if you want to have a solution you have to create harmony among with ethnic groups instead of separating one from another. I myself participated in a few pre-electoral and electoral missions in this country. I know that it's not easy, but I also see that the progress is significant.

Part of the solution as you can see in the report is the internal development of the country. There are many sentences in the resolution as well as in the explanatory memorandum about what the country has to do. But this is the final goal. I think the final Macedonian solution is to have a stable country integrated in the European Union and NATO. European integration is really the roadmap we have now for the country. If you read the report carefully you can see all the things that our country has to do are listed here.

Thanks to the rapporteurs and I think this is a useful tool for the future solution of this country's problem.

Thank you.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Ms Shpresa HADRI, North Macedonia, Socialist Group.

Ms Shpresa HADRI (North Macedonia, SOC): Thank you.

Ladies and gentlemen,

After 19 years in post-monitoring dialogue and six years since the last report, I welcome the commitment of the rapporteurs to present a report and a draft resolution. The report clearly shows that the overall progress of our country since the last report is far from being questioned. I sincerely hope that our strong commitment to carry out all necessary reforms and our close cooperation with the organisation in the near future will convince the rapporteurs Ms Lise CHRISTOFFERSEN and Mr Aleksander POCIEJ that the post-monitoring dialogue with North Macedonia should be finalised.

We have always paid great attention to the post-monitoring instrument and seen it as a support to establish permanent and responsible institutions in line with Council of Europe standards.

Let me briefly comment on the latest developments in our country.

The signing of the Agreement between North Macedonia and Greece on the name issue was a very brave move to resolve the 28-year dispute between the two countries. For us it was a historic opportunity for advancing towards membership in the EU and NATO, as two strategic goals of our foreign policy. With the friendship agreement with Bulgaria and the Prespa Agreement, we managed to set a positive example for the whole region of the Western Balkans, closed all the open issues with our neighbours and significantly contributed to regional co-operation, stability and security.

We are firmly committed to improving the judicial system, and to that end, we have adopted laws for judicial reform in line with the recommendations of the Venice Commission and are currently in the process of preparing a new law on the Public Prosecutor's Office. Furthermore, we have adopted a new legal framework for the prevention of corruption, strengthened the institution of the Ombudsman and improved the climate for media freedom and freedom of expression.

With the ratification of international instruments, we have reinforced efforts to eradicate domestic and gender-based violence, improve the situation of persons with disabilities, and combat all the types of discrimination.

The Law on Language Use was an important step towards continued implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, which regulates the relations between the communities and is the cornerstone for the further building of a multi-ethnic democratic society.

Dear Colleagues,

The Republic of North Macedonia has actively participated in the work of all institutions within the Council of Europe and at the same time responsibly fulfilled the obligations deriving from membership. For us the role of the Council of Europe has been essential for our democratic development, especially in the field of Human Rights and the rule of law.

We expect that the efforts of the authorities, parliament and people of North Macedonia will be recognised and that it will result in the finalisation of the post-monitoring dialogue within our Assembly.

Thank you for your attention.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The next speaker is Madame VASSILEVA, EPP Group, Bulgaria.

Ms Ivelina VASSILEVA (Bulgaria, EPP/CD): Thank you Madam Chair.

I'm happy indeed that my first intervention in the chamber of the assembly is dedicated to the progress achieved by the Republic of North Macedonia, towards the standards and principles of the Council of Europe. In this respect, I would like to express my appreciation for the work done by the distinguished rapporteurs, Ms Christofferson and Mr Piociej.

I dare to believe that their joint report is an important contribution to the democratic development of our neighbouring state. The Republic of North Macedonia and its people are dear to the hearts of Bulgarians. During the recent history of our relations, Bulgaria was the first one in the world to recognise the independence of this state. It was done on the 15th of January 1992. Bulgaria has been supporting their recognition by other states and international organisations, as well as their territorial integrity and stability during the crisis suffered by the country.

In our view, the independence and stability of this neighbouring state are of crucial importance for the stability of our region. Bulgaria is strongly backing the Republic of North Macedonia in its path to NATO, and during the presidency of the Council of the European Union at the beginning of 2018, Bulgaria gave a new impetus to the progress of its integration into the European Union. In this way, we hope the Republic of North Macedonia is going to contribute in a great extent to the stability of the western Balkans as a whole.

We are proud that the agreement of friendship, good neighbourly relations and cooperation between Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia signed in 2017, which has been followed by the Prespa Agreement with Greece in 2018, has led to significant improvement of the relations in the whole region of South East Europe. For us it is also of paramount importance that the agreement provides for better infrastructure connectivity between our two states, in order to facilitate the relations between the people. It builds a spirit of mutual trust and cooperation, not only at the state level or local authority level, but also at the citizens' level.

Indeed, such a spirit is at the core of European principles and values, promoted and defended by the Council of Europe since its establishment 70 years ago. I'm certainly convinced that the Republic of North Macedonia is going to pay serious attention to the list of recommendations in the draft resolution, in order to properly and promptly address the shortages remaining to be filled.

It is obvious that the Republic of North Macedonia is advancing quickly in meeting the standards of the Council of Europe, and I have no doubt that soon we will be able to congratulate the new progress achieved in this respect.

Thank you.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The next speaker is Mr Betian KITEV, North Macedonian Socialist Group, thank you.

Mr Betian KITEV (North Macedonia, SOC): Madam Chair, ladies and gentlemen,

First of all I would like to congratulate the rapporteurs for their detailed report. In my opinion, the report portrays the situation in a realistic and objective way and therefore, deserves praise. We consider the mechanisms and expertise of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe as essential for the overall democratic development of the country. Objectively pointing out areas where improvement is needed is the best way to contribute to resolving problems, and in this respect we see the support of the Council of Europe.

The report rightfully recognises the major positive changes that have happened since the last report in 2013. We have managed to overcome the political crisis, to strengthen the rule of law, to make fundamental changes in an inclusive and open political atmosphere, and to deliver tangible results. As stated in the report, our constructive cooperation with the Council of Europe countries continues as many important laws have been adopted or revised on the basis of the recommendations by the Venice Commission, GRECO and other monitoring bodies. I am glad to state that the Parliament has improved its performance as a forum for constructive political dialogue and has enhanced its oversight and legislative functions.

We have taken difficult and courageous steps to resolve the name issue and in June 2018 have signed the historic Prespa agreement with Greece. The majority of citizens in a consultative referendum accepted the Prespa agreement, thus supporting the NATO and EU membership of the country. With the Prespa Agreement we have significantly strengthened the good neighbourly relations, contributed to the wider stability and set an example of reconciliation in the region.

In spring we held presidential elections. They were assessed as well-organised, the fundamental freedoms were respected and the citizens made informed choices between the candidates.

The Ohrid Framework Agreement, which provides the framework for preserving the multi-ethnic character of society continues to be implemented. The recent adoption of the Law on the Use of Languages, currently under consideration by the Venice Commission, is an important step forward in further implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement. We are strongly committed to building greater trust between all communities and believe that all national minorities should have the same social, political and economic rights in the country.

At the end once again, we Macedonians, together with all other citizens from our country, deserve to be part of the European Union. A warm thank you to the German Bundestag for the support. Now we will wait for the final and very important support from our friendly France. Now is the right time to help us.

Thank you for your attention

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

That concludes the list of this speakers in a moment I shall call Mr Aleksander POCIEJ and Ms Lise CHRISTOFFERSEN co-rapporteurs to reply.

You have six minutes. So I call Mr Aleksander POCIEJ.

Mr Aleksander POCIEJ (Poland, EPP/CD, Co-Rapporteur): Thank you very much Madam President,

I just wanted to pay tribute to the role of my predecessor, the person I replaced as rapporteur, Mr Valeriu GILETSKI, who unfortunately could not complete his work. He is no longer with us, but the work that he did is his work. I wanted to underline that to everybody because he made a massive contribution to this report. I also wanted to thank the work of the secretariat of the Commission. Without their work, this report would not have been possible. Thank you very much.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): I call Ms Lise CHRISTOFFERSEN.

Ms Lise CHRISTOFFERSEN (Norway, SOC, Co-Rapporteur): Thank you, Madame President.

I will try to answer as many of the points made by the speakers as possible.

To start with Ms DALLOZ, there is going to be a census next year. We have been told that the census has been scheduled for 2020. You also mentioned worrying conditions in prisons, and we have also underlined the same, but at the same time work has started on increasing capacity in prisons, training officers, and better healthcare in prison. So the work has been started.

Mr SCHENNACH, Lord DUNDEE, I fully agree on what you said and you can also see it in our report. I think it's fine that you give credit to the political parties, and Mr SCHENNACH also underlined the different ethnicities as Mr KITEV himself underlined in his speech.

Mr MAIRE, you mentioned help from the Council of Europe's other institutions, and GRECO the Venice Commission is brought on board but other institutions are on board already. For instance, the CPT and the ECRE, which we mentioned in our report.

Mr KATROUGALOS, the Prespa Agreement. We should also commend the authorities of Greece, I think, for their contribution to end this 27-year-old long conflict. You also mentioned the EU accession talks. In our report, we have focused on the contribution from the Council of Europe, and not interfering with other institutions, but we had this item in this hemicycle yesterday, under the contribution from the Committee of Ministers. We can also raise this question in our own parliaments, of course.

Mr POPOSKI, Ms HADRI and Mr KITEV, I can understand your impatience and that you would like not to celebrate the 20th anniversary of post-monitoring, but as we underlined in our report, we have to see some implementation. We know that the situation is kind of fragile but the Council of Europe will assist you in moving on in the right direction. So just keep up your good work and I'm sure that the post-monitoring will end pretty soon.

Ms JUHÁSZ, you also underline the Euro-Atlantic integration as important.

Ms GURMAI, you referred to domestic politics in Hungary, and I suppose that you also raise that in your own parliament.

Mr VAREIKIS, a good point. We now talk about the Macedonian solution instead of the Macedonian question, and that just underlines the positive development in the country. You also mentioned the importance of harmony among ethnic groups and the progress that's been made there.

Ms VASSILEVA from Bulgaria, you raised a very important point that we maybe don't underline enough. This is not just about North Macedonia, this is about the stability in the Western Balkans and North Macedonia can contribute to that stability. In the end, this is important for Europe as a whole.

So, to conclude, thank you very much all of you for your support for our report. Thank you for commenting on Macedonia for the positive steps they have taken and to you who represent most North Macedonia in this hemicycle. I think you have found tonight that you have a lot of friends that are eager to help you move on.

Thank you.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Does Sir Roger GALE, the Chairperson of the Committee wish to speak?

Sir Roger GALE (United Kingdom, EC): Thank you, Madame President. I'll be very brief.

The report of the post-monitoring dialogue was prepared by the co-rapporteurs as you've heard, Lise Christoffersen and Valeriu Ghiletschi, who left the assembly this year, and Aleksander Pocij very kindly agreed to take over the brief and bring this to a satisfactory conclusion. The co-rapporteurs have worked together for more than four years. They have prepared an account of the many changes that have occurred in North Macedonia since 2013. They paid many visits to the country and they observed elections. They've also acquired considerable knowledge of the country. They witnessed the change of power and the major agreements reached by the four political parties representing both the Macedonian and the Albanian communities.

Madame President, I think that this assembly owes the two rapporteurs Lisa Christoffersen and Valeriu Ghiletschi particularly, and also Aleksander, a debt of gratitude and I would join Aleksander in thanking the Secretariat without whom of course none of our rapporteurs could do the work that they are able to do.

So since the adoption of the last report in 2013, North Macedonia has faced a significant political crisis. Despite this, the country has managed to overcome serious issues to ensure the functioning of their democratic institutions. Many challenges remain, of course, but they include the preservation of inter-ethnic co-existence. The country has shown that political compromises and dialogue is the key to overcoming a crisis.

The Monitoring Committee expresses confidence in the authorities' ability to carry out the reforms expected. The Assembly of the Council of Europe should, I think, stand with the North Macedonian authorities and be supportive of the continuation of their reforms in the confidence that this will lead as swiftly as possible to an end to post-monitoring.

Thank you, Madame President.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you Sir Roger GALE.

The Monitoring Committee has presented the draft resolution to which 5 amendments have been tabled. I understand that the Chairperson of the Committee wishes to propose to the Assembly that amendment No. 2 to the draft resolution which was unanimously approved by the Committee should be declared as agreed by the Assembly.

Is that so Sir Roger GALE?

Sir Roger GALE (United Kingdom, EC): That is correct.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Does anyone object?

As there is no objection, I declare....oh sorry, Mr.....

Mr Georgios KATROUGKALOS (Greece, UEL): I made that sort of reference in my speech. I consider that this amendment touches upon one of the most sensitive issues in North Macedonia. The language issue which has been the object of one of the constitutional reforms: I think that our concerns are fully satisfied by the initial phrasing of this paragraph, which makes reference to the Venice Commission suggestions.

So my proposal is to stick to the initial text.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): So, I understand so we are going to take each amendment individually, if I understand you correctly Mr KATROUGKALOS.

I call Mr Haluk KOÇ to support amendment number one. You have 30 seconds.

Mr Haluk KOÇ (Turkey, SOC): Ms Chair,

First of all, I would like to thank the two rapporteurs and Mr GHILETCHI, the ex-rapporteur for their excellent post-monitoring report about North Macedonia. I congratulate the North Macedonian colleagues for their efforts on the wave of democratisation. I wish them the best of luck.

In this amendment, the last sentence of paragraph 8 gives the impression that the Assembly is dictating the solution to North Macedonian political actors. This amendment aims at changing the wording of the text so that the Assembly strongly encourages a solution instead of dictating it. This is why we propose this amendment.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): I have been informed that Ms CHRISTOFFERSEN wishes to propose an oral sub-amendment, as follows:

In Amendment No. 1, delete the words:

“Replace the last sentence with the following sentence: 'The Assembly therefore'.”

And insert:

“Add the following sentence at the end: 'The Assembly also'.”

If accepted, Amendment No. 1 would read:

“In the draft resolution, paragraph 8, add the following sentence at the end: 'The Assembly also strongly encourages all political stakeholders to design legal solutions to situations causing systemic deadlocks.’”

In my opinion, the oral sub-amendment is in order under our rules, however, do 10 or more members object to the oral sub-amendment being debated?

No? Zero members objected the oral sub-amendment being debated.

Therefore, I call Ms CHRISTOFFERSEN to support the oral sub-amendment.

Ms Lise CHRISTOFFERSEN (Norway, SOC, Co-Rapporteur): Thank you, Madame President.

We are not dictating a solution on a general basis in paragraph 8.

This sentence is written with a direct reference to what happened when the President chose to confront parliamentary decisions, but we recognise that there could be other deadlock situations as well. So, that's why we suggest not to replace the last sentence, but add the sentence in the amendment number one.

Thank you.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Does anyone wish to speak against the oral sub-amendment?

No.

What is the opinion of Mr Haluk Koc on the amendment?

Mr Haluk KOÇ (Turkey, SOC): I agree with the rapporteur.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): And the committee is obviously in favour of the oral sub-amendment?

I will now put this oral sub-amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I call for the result to be displayed.

The oral sub-amendment is agreed.

We will now consider the main amendment as amended.

Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment?

No.

What is the opinion of the committee on the amendment?

Vote: Post-monitoring dialogue with North Macedonia

Sir Roger GALE (United Kingdom, EC): The Committee is in favour.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): I shall now put Amendment No. 1 as amended to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I call for the result to be displayed.

Amendment No. 1 is agreed.

Amendment number 2. I call Mr Koç to support Amendment No. 2.

You have 30 seconds.

Mr Haluk KOÇ (Turkey, SOC): Thank you.

In this amendment we propose to insert this phrase at the end of the paragraph 19.2: "because the protection of languages which fall below the 20 per cent threshold is envisaged in the language legislation", it should be emphasised, since the number of citizens might not correspond to the actual use of a language as in the case of Turkish community in North Macedonia.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment?

No?

Oh, sorry, Mr KATROUGKALOS.

Mr Georgios KATROUGKALOS (Greece, UEL): I'm just referring to what I have said. It was a very strong dialogue developed in the past regarding the linguistic issue. I don't think we should impose directives on the people of North Macedonia based on an amendment.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The committee is obviously in favour. I shall put the amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I call for the results to be displayed.

Amendment No. 2 is agreed. Amendment No. 3 - I call Mr Haluk KOÇ to support amendment number 3.

You have 30 seconds.

Mr Haluk KOÇ (Turkey, SOC): In this amendment it's important to emphasise that the census should employ proper questions and methods, to ensure that the demographic situation in the country is reflected accurately.

Thank you.

This is why we propose this amendment.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you. Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? Ms Lise CHRISTOFFERSEN?

Ms Lise CHRISTOFFERSEN (Norway, SOC, Co-Rapporteur): Thank you Madam President.

We think that the intention of the amendment is covered already, because we say, in line with international standards, Eurostat standards for censuses, and these disputed methods. And we see already from the 2002 census, there are six national minorities listed, so we think it's unnecessary.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

What is the opinion of the committee on the amendment?

Sir Roger GALE (United Kingdom, EC): The committee is opposed.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): I shall now put the amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I call for the results to be displayed.

Amendment No. 3 is rejected.

I called Mr Haluk KOÇ to support amendment No. 4.

You have 30 seconds.

Mr Haluk KOÇ (Turkey, SOC): Thank you Ms Chair.

The aim of this fourth amendment: the educational and cultural needs of ethnic groups carry importance and should be emphasised in the resolution. This is why we propose and give this amendment.

Thank you.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment?

Ms Christofferson?

Ms Lise CHRISTOFFERSEN (Norway, SOC, Co-Rapporteur): Thank you Madam President.

We don't see the reason why only three ethnic groups out of seven ethnic groups are mentioned especially. And when it comes to minorities they are covered by paragraph 19.1 and 19.2 together with the amendment No. 2 that we just adopted.

Thank you.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

What is the opinion of the Committee on the amendment?

Sir Roger GALE (United Kingdom, EC): The committee is against.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): I shall now put the amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I call for the result to be displayed.

Amendment No. 4 is rejected.

I call Mr Haluk KOÇ to support amendment No. 5.

Mr Haluk KOÇ (Turkey, SOC): For this last amendment, we propose to insert a new subparagraph in 19.5. The current electoral regulations do not address the difficulties faced by the different ethnic communities whose high population does not correspond to a proportionate number of seats in the parliament, since members of those communities are scattered around the country.

Thank you.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? Ms Lise CHRISTOFFERSEN?

Ms Lise CHRISTOFFERSEN (Norway, SOC, Co-Rapporteur): Thank you Madam President.

I think the interests of different ethnic communities is fully covered in paragraph 14 in the report. We have asked the authorities in North Macedonia to revise the electoral legislation in line with recommendations from the Venice Commission. And the Venice Commission underlines among other things a representation of ethnic communities, and in addition they are covered by the Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

What is the opinion of the Committee?

Sir Roger GALE (United Kingdom, EC): The Committee is against.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): I shall now put the amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I call for the results to be displayed.

Amendment No. 5 is rejected.

Draft resolution: we will now proceed to a vote on the draft resolution contained in document 14964 as amended.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I call for the results to be displayed.

The draft resolution in document 14964 as amended is adopted.

The assembly will hold its next public sitting tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. and I am again with the agenda which was approved on Monday.

The sitting is adjourned.