

EUROPEAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Wednesday 18 May 2016

Chairpersonship of Ms Danielle Auroi, Chair of the Committee

The session opened at 14:15

Interparliamentary meeting on the posting of workers

Chair Danielle Auroi. Our European Affairs Committee has worked a great deal on the issue of the posting of workers.

Our colleague, Gilles Savary, who has been our rapporteur jointly with Chantal Guittet and Michel Piron, will speak after the representative of the European Commission and Ms Karima Delli, MEP, to present the main avenues of our work on this subject and the priorities we have now adopted.

I would like, for my part, to provide some insight into the approach of the French National Assembly's European Affairs Committee on this important topic, which we know is a sensitive matter for many member countries, as recently evidenced by the yellow card resulting from the reasoned opinions given to date by eleven EU national parliaments, in other words the representatives of over a third of the States.

Of course, for us, there is no question of denying the economic benefits, especially in terms of employment, of the posting of workers, be they Swedish, Romanian, German or Spanish. The aim is to avoid their contribution to social dumping in Europe, which harms workers and forms a factor of disunity among the EU countries. The directive, it should be remembered, was designed at the outset to protect workers.

That's why we wanted a strengthening of European and national regulations, especially controls, and greater responsibility of contractors. So you can therefore see for yourselves the objective relationship between our topic of this afternoon and that which we addressed this morning, corporate social responsibility.

The strengthening of European rules on the posting of employees is a priority for us. Employee mobility as part of the freedom of movement for workers and the freedom to provide services, can be beneficial for all European workers only if it is governed by rules that are clear, fair, transparent, controllable and acceptable to all.

As stated by the European Commission, major advances have been obtained thanks to the directive adopted in 2014 to strengthen the means of combating frauds, abuses and circumventions. But the circumventions of rules on posting are persisting, thus demonstrating that the regulatory framework is no longer adapted. The aim in particular is to combat the practices of letter-box entities and fraudulent operations, and also to improve coordination between Member States' labour inspectorates.

I am pleased that we can debate today between national and European parliamentarians on this sensitive issue. Each and everyone's concerns must be heard. The right compromise will arise from this dialogue and debate, I'm sure. It's my hope that our debates will make a useful contribution to the quest for joint solutions.

Chairman Jean Bizet. I wish first of all to congratulate Chair Danielle Auroi on the organisation of this interparliamentary meeting and thank her for involving in it the members of the Senate's European Affairs Committee. I greet all our colleagues from national parliaments present today. I'm sure we'll have the most fruitful of exchanges throughout this afternoon.

The issue of the posting of workers is particularly important. We have worked a lot on this matter at the Senate and formalised positions in a rather consensual manner I must say. This issue underscores the importance of the level of protection of workers, wherever they work in the Single Market area. It stresses the challenge of the convergence between our economies in this Single Market, a marker of what the European Union is. We are indeed seeking to achieve convergence, admittedly progressive, or even somewhat slow in the eyes of some. Overly manifest divergences are hard to accept in a borderless area with freedom of movement. What's more, the very meaning and coherence of the European project are at stake.

We are seeing a soaring number of posted workers in the European Union. Faced with such a phenomenon, it is difficult for us to content ourselves with the reasons generally put forward, such as the shortage of labour in specific sectors. We must even question ourselves about the eviction effect on local labour caused by this scheme. Despite the precautions to be found in the European text of 1996, the posted worker may appear less costly than a national employee with an equivalent qualification and task. As some elements are not taken into account in the rights of the posted worker, a 30 to 70% gap can be seen with respect to the average salary applying in the host State. Such a situation has not failed to create distortions of competition and makes posting more attractive than local recruitment.

The social charges issue adds to this wage cost difference. The posted worker indeed remains insured under the social security regime of the sending country, provided the posting does not exceed 24 months.

An enforcement directive of May 2014 stated the implementation provisions of the 1996 directive. The 2014 text has largely answered the desires expressed unanimously by the Senate in a European resolution of 2013. It has been rapidly transposed into French law and followed by a very large number of controls. We are nevertheless concerned over the control of small, short-length operations, that create distortions of competition suffered by small local companies. I think that each of us has already sized up the issue in their respective territory.

The proposal for a targeted review of the 1996 directive has now been brought before us. The review of the regulation on the coordination of social security systems has for its part been postponed in the context of the British referendum. The review of the directive responds to the desire of several countries including France. It is however encountering opposition from other Member States. We will examine this text shortly in the Senate's European Affairs Committee. Subject to that examination in greater depth and the improvements we may propose, I feel I can say that we approve the European Commission's approach. It should provide useful clarifications to meet the challenges I mentioned at the beginning of my statement.

Whatever the imperfections of the 1996 text, we must not forget that times change and that we must judge that text at its term: for the start of the Single Market, it was no doubt important to begin that way. But it is clear we must now make progress in this matter.

Mr Jackie Morin, Head of Unit 'Free movement of workers' at the European Commission Directorate-General 'Employment, social affairs and inclusion'. Thank you for having provided me with the opportunity to present the analyses by the European Commission and its position. I will begin by a reminder of the basic facts of the issue.

Posting is a temporary activity outside the borders, undertaken while keeping the contractual tie with a company in the worker's home country. Posted workers are protected under directive 96/71 which lays down the principle of the freedom to provide services and identifies a certain number of rules related to the country of work, which must be applied to the posted worker.

Among these rules appears that on compliance with minimum rates of pay. This notion has given rise over the years to an extensive body of case law, especially on defining what a minimum rate of pay is. Currently, there are two sources of tension regarding the 1996 directive: the quality of its implementation; the basic balance laid down by it.

As regards implementation, several initiatives have been taken in recent years, and an enforcement directive 2014/67 was adopted in 2014 to thwart attempts of abuse and fraud. Its transposition deadline will be on 18 June 2016.

We feel that, thanks to this enforcement directive, the Member States will be better equipped to define posting situations, implement administrative controls and enjoy strengthened mutual cooperation. The Commission will follow with the greatest attention this new directive and ensure the quality of its implementation. It should help combat abuses and frauds. Of course it will also be necessary to assess in due course this implementation and the efficacy of the provisions adopted.

The second source of tension concerns the balance found in the 1996 directive. That directive lays down two differing sets of rules for companies providing services in the European territory: local companies must respect all the mandatory provisions, including those on pay in the broad sense; companies posting workers must comply with only some of these rules – in particular as regards pay, only those on the minimum rates of pay.

We are therefore in a Single Market system where competition takes place on different bases depending on whether the service provider is a national one or not. This can produce undesired effects, in that the best service provider may not be chosen because of the different rules that apply.

In an impact study that we made, we observed employment eviction and substitution effects in a few Member States, especially for activities with a high amount of low-skilled employment.

The Commission thus proposed, on 8 March, a targeted review of the directive to correct two aspects: the rule on remuneration for posted workers and alignment of the directive with the most recent legislations.

The proposal introduces the notion of remuneration in replacement of the pay rates notion. Local companies and those posting workers will thus be subject to the same general and mandatory rules on remuneration, including when these rules are based on collective agreements.

The proposal also introduces a certain number of adaptations to improve the coordination of the directive with the most recent texts. The enforcement directive recognises the link between the main contractor and subcontractors. It is proposed to give the Member States the possibility of extending this recognition to other aspects of working conditions in the subcontracting chain.

As regards social security, long-term posting is recognised and leads to affiliation in the country of work. It has been suggested to follow the same reasoning concerning working conditions.

Referring to temporary workers, the choice left to Member States concerning equality of treatment will be transformed into an obligation in harmony with directive 2008/104 which imposes equal treatment for temporary workers nationally.

By its proposal, the Commission is showing its support for the development of the internal market, in this case that of services, by combating discriminations. There is indeed no discriminatory element in the revised directive. Nor does it interfere with national competences, in particular regarding the rules setting wages.

We have considered that the review of the directive would have only a moderate impact, since half of posting situations arise from a contractual relationship entered into in countries where pay conditions are higher than the European average. Situations where the wage effect counts a lot are relatively limited.

The proposal is being debated at the Council. It has been the subject of motivated opinions pursuant to protocol no. 2 on the application of principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. The Commission is examining these opinions and will therefore have to re-examine its draft legislative act. It can decide to keep its proposal, modify it or withdraw it. It will have to give a motivated opinion on its decision.

As the college of commissioners has not yet taken a decision, you'll understand that I cannot be more explicit today.

Chair Danielle Auroi. I believe that the principle of tidying-up the 1996 directive is indeed unanimously supported. The following statement by our colleague Karima Delli, MEP, will no doubt enlighten us further in this respect.

Ms Karima Delli, member of the European Parliament's Committee on Employment and Social Affairs. We are at the heart of a difficult debate but which will also allow headway to be made with the European project. First, the reality of workers posted in France and Europe is not that which some would like to depict.

Above all, it is clearly a matter of a directive protecting workers by ensuring the continuity of their social rights. French people leaving for a one month assignment in a central European country, for instance, thus remain paid and covered as if they were working in France, therefore without changing social security system. As for the Polish, German or Greek worker posted to France, they are entitled to the guaranteed minimum wage (SMIC), the same working hours regime and the same conditions as all other French employees, thanks to the directive.

Yet it should not be denied that the 1996 directive is too often abused. There are an estimated 300,000 fake posted workers in France. These workers go undeclared and are exploited

by employers who fail to comply with the rules and hide behind sub-contracting companies or letter-box entities to cut wages or employee social coverage. There is truly a need to combat these rogue employers who abuse the system to practice modern-day slavery, as seen in my constituency on the Flamanville EPR reactor site led by Bouygues with hundreds of workers who weren't paid regularly.

I would also like to bury the impression that posted workers take the place of unemployed workers. It must be repeated over and over again: this is a misconception echoed in certain Eurosceptic speeches.

In France, posted workers satisfy an unmet demand for labour in sectors finding it hard to recruit. In 2014, 37% of posted workers in France worked in the construction and public works sector, 26% for temporary employment agencies, and 18% in industry. However approximately 40% of construction and public works entrepreneurs said they had difficulty in recruiting until 2015! Since then, with the fall in the number of construction sites, and therefore the decline in recruitment, the problem is decreasing.

The arguments of those who wish to repeal the posting of workers directive are nonsense. They'd have dramatic consequences for European employees if applied.

The April 2014 reform helped to reinforce the controls to combat abuse. In the construction sector, contractors and their subcontractors are held co-responsible if fraud is established. But we would have liked this co-responsibility to be applied to all sectors, especially agri-foods and transport.

That reform has not yet born all its fruit as the Member States have until June 2016 to transpose it into their national law. Some of them – above all those from where the majority of detached workers in Europe come – had asked that the Commission wait at least until all the States transpose the December 2013 reform before proposing another one. It was blackmail.

We are pleased, at the European Parliament, that the Commission published a reform proposal in March 2016, but is this highly publicised proposal really going to settle the problem?

Seen from France, where the Valls government has taken measures these last two years going far beyond the European rules combating abuse in connection with the posting of workers, the proposal by commissioner Marianne Thyssen does not make a significant contribution. For example, posting is limited to two years, but, in reality, it is already limited on average to 45 days in France, and to less than four months in Europe...

In addition, we are trying to move towards the principle of 'equal pay for equal work at the same workplace', but the approach remains very vague, the text referring only to the 'necessary remuneration to protect employees.' The Commission is thus attempting to impose for posted workers the same guaranteed pay conditions as for local workers, for instance the thirteenth month, but its position lacks clarity. What is 'fair pay'? Is it really pay ensuring a decent life in the country of residence?

The proposal for a review also envisages to impose compliance with collective agreements in all sectors, and no longer only some sectors. Furthermore, temporary work agencies will have to respect the same rules as others when posting workers. We will therefore support this proposal which is a step in the right direction, but the real problem is that of controls.

That's why we are calling for the creation of a European body of labour inspectors. Controls must be extended to everything helping to determine the dignity of a job performed on European soil.

On the spot, I have met many truckers who sleep in their cab. In 2016, can we accept such work conditions, when even the decent housing criterion is not respected?

Subcontracting is also used to circumvent the occupational safety and health rules. That's scandalous when ninety European directives on occupational safety and health are in force!

The posting of workers directive should be reforged on three pillars: minimum European wage, unemployment insurance and European general social insurance, reinforced controls. Let's not reduce the debate to clichés about the Polish plumber!

Mr Gilles Savary, member of the Sustainable Development and Spatial Planning Committee of the National Assembly's European Affairs Committee. I welcome the holding of this meeting with colleagues from other national parliaments. We have worked on the posting of workers, which today often leads to a hi-jacking of the initial spirit by allowing the development of a parallel, low-cost labour market. The social sovereignty of States is thus called into question.

In these circumstances, competition takes place not through the quality of service, or by optimisation of production, but by taking advantage of social rights: only the weakest and most needy workers are going to be sought... When the phenomenon flares up, it may prove pernicious as it feeds xenophobic reactions: it's not pleasant for a French family to lose a job.

The European Union must be a win-win game. Competition is healthy when it leads to increased efficacy or more consumer services, not when it is based on employing workers doing unreasonable hours. However, when workers leave their country for five weeks they strive to work as much as possible in that time, overstepping the mark by far.

Sometimes, moreover, international service delivery agencies bag part of their wages. All they're doing is trade in low-cost labour. Chain postings are then often based on complex arrangements.

In this form, posting is a real poison. We must say no to a race to the lowest social bidder, and to the payment of social charges elsewhere than where the worker works. We must say no to competition through servitude which is moreover highly dangerous politically for peoples.

The peoples of Europe are indeed calling on us to act by revising the directives or by creating a roving labour agency that can perform roving controls across Europe. Action by the European Union is needed for this purpose because bilateral liaison offices, whose cumbersome procedures intensify those of the labour codes, have shown they were not efficient. We therefore proposed a European workers map distinguishing between genuine and fake posted workers. Commissioner Marianne Thyssen expressed her determination to act in this direction.

On my initiative, the French parliament has adopted an act that anticipated the European directive by extending the contractor's responsibility to all the subcontracting chain, in all sectors and not only in construction and public works. For its part, the so-called Rebsamen Act has strengthened the inspection bodies by enabling administrative sanctions to be taken against offending businesses, without prejudice to other sanctions, in particular judiciary, to which they are

liable, but which can be imposed faster than the latter.

Then there is the problem of temporary posting or posting by international service delivery agencies. This consists in recruiting low-paid unemployed persons to put them on offer on other markets than their home market. Recruitment by international service delivery agencies can be justified for orchestra conductors, scientists or sales representatives dealing with after-sales service, but only if their posting is related to the activity of their parent company. In other cases, such posting-placement is merely a rogue and imbalanced posting, of which the proliferation is responsible for European States no longer enduring each other.

Yes, a Bulgarian temporary employment agency can set up in France. I don't see anything wrong in that. I am also in favour of opening our arms to foreign European workers if they pay social charges. But the unequal conditions of competition from one country to another, such as the absence of a minimum wage in Germany, mean that it is difficult to go any further. This isn't what the humanistic requirements of the founding fathers of Europe were aiming for.

I hail the courageous work of commissioner Marianne Thyssen who dealt with the review of the directive. In another respect, as a member of the France-Poland amity group, I can understand certain reactions, such as those that have led to the yellow card. But I wish to draw your attention to the fact that the reason put forward, namely non-compliance with the subsidiarity principle, may backfire against those who gave it because, by basing ourselves on that principle, we could ban the posting of temporary workers in each country. The practice of posting would then suffer in Europe.

It would thus be better for the European Union to deal with the issue itself, in the context of different national legislations where the exercise of subsidiarity necessarily goes hand in hand with taking charge of the corresponding responsibility. If Europe has a meaning, it must prove it here.

Ms Maria Spilabotte, vice-chair of the Italian Senate's Employment and Social Affairs Committee (*interpretation from Italian*). We debated at length this morning the topic of corporate social responsibility, but posting, the second topic, which we are addressing this afternoon, is closely related to the latter since it concerns the rights of European companies that make use of posted workers. It should be remembered that the free movement of workers allows them to set up in each Member State and authorises them to provide services there. This is enshrined in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and forms a pillar of it.

The Italian Senate's Employment and Social Affairs Committee, which I vice-chair, recently addressed the sensitive issue of the review of the 1996 posting of workers directive. It heard all the stakeholders, especially companies and trade unions and, on the basis of the criticisms, established its own assessment. The proposal for a review introduces the notion of pay parity, extends it to all sectors without limiting itself to construction work and sets a 24 month maximum for the length of posting.

This proposal has been the subject of motivated opinions from eleven different countries activating the yellow card procedure which obliges the European Commission to re-examine its proposal. For some countries, the principle of 'equal pay for equal work in the same workplace' should not be subject to review. In other countries, it is feared on the contrary that the same principle may be incompatible with the Single Market, as pay differences may legitimately form a comparative advantage.

Our committee adopted on 13 May a favourable opinion on the proposal for a review. We

noted the absolute need to strengthen the European rules, which must be transparent, verifiable and clear. Referring to the maximum length of 24 months, all the parties we heard consider it rather long. In Italy, a posting lasts six months on average. That's why we suggest, in the European directive, a maximum length of twelve months. As for pay, we suggest referring to the collective agreement.

Last, we advocate the upstream recording of posted workers, with transmission to the national authorities of the data concerning them. In the road transport sector, suitable regulations are needed.

Enforcement of the directive will be difficult but will represent a challenge, as a single vision of the issue will improve the well-being of European citizens as a whole.

Mr Stefan-Radu Oprea, chair of the Romanian Senate's Economic Development and Strategy Committee (*interpretation from English*). It's a great pleasure for me to represent here my country's senate, and I wish to thank our kind hosts for having organised this meeting addressing matters of great interest. These issues have given rise to lengthy debates in my parliament.

We feel that the issues posed by the posting of workers should be addressed with utmost attention both at European level and in the national legal systems. At the level of the European institutions and in our national parliaments, our main concern should be to ensure better implementation of the social rights of posted workers employed elsewhere than in their country of origin.

We are grateful to the European Commission for the efforts it is making to promote the equal pay for equal work principle, but we think we should remain vigilant to avoid any revision of the legislation in this field materialising in a setback in terms of competition between statutory minimum wages, by affecting the rules of fair competition and the operation of the Single Market. It's not therefore a question of principle but of implementation.

As you certainly know, the Romanian Senate has sent the European Commission a motivated opinion on its proposal on the posting of workers.

When drafting the motivated opinion we had in mind that a prior consultation of the Member States is mandatory when the Commission makes a proposal that produces vast economic and social effects on the labour market. In addition, the impact study appended to the proposal does not contain any rigorous analysis of its financial consequences on the European internal market. Despite the stated goal of eliminating restrictions to the freedom to provide services, the proposal produces the opposite effect by introducing restrictive provisions.

We note with satisfaction that the review process should be deferred to a later date pending the transposition of the enforcement directive of directive 96/71/EC, and would not be launched until after a precise assessment of its effects. In a way, we need to ask ourselves whether the 'equal pay for equal work' principle does not risk becoming incompatible with the Single Market, if it is taken into account that the wage differential is a legitimate component of the comparative advantage which can be availed of by service providers.

May I make a last remark, as a Social Democratic MP, with respect to the importance of collective agreements. In this respect, Article 3.8 of the proposal should provide for more flexibility and allow collective agreements to become binding immediately after negotiations between social

partners.

Mr Finn Sørensen, member of the Danish Parliament's Committee on Employment (*interpretation from English*). As a preliminary, I wish to say that, in the political party to which I belong, we are highly opposed to the European legislation on the posting of workers which, to our mind and as interpreted by the Court of Justice of the European Union, leads directly to social dumping.

I have however come to speak to you here on behalf of the parliamentary majority of the Folketing. I shall therefore just explain to you the reasons that prompted us to adopt a motivated opinion which, added to others, led to activation of the yellow card procedure.

First, we congratulate the Commission on the spirit of its initiative. That people are paid the same amount in the same workplace for the same work, seems good to us, even if it isn't stated as clearly in the proposal for a directive.

We have however noted two negative points in it. Whereas a previous version laid down that the right to define a minimum wage is a matter for national legislation, that sentence has been removed from the new text. Can we know why? Also, point 3.19 lays down that each Member State can decide that work conditions and wage conditions are the same for all workers, whether posted or not. Mr Morin, can you confirm that?

We feel that these provisions violate the subsidiarity principle because national sovereignty is thus weakened, whereas these competences are fully within its field. We don't want to negotiate on a false basis. Whether it is then a matter of national legislation or a branch agreement is merely a secondary point.

Last, the Danish Parliament believes unanimously that the Court of Justice of the European Union has too much power to define and interpret these provisions.

Mr Michel Piron, member of the French National Assembly's Cultural Affairs and Education Committee and its European Affairs Committee. Posting should be an opportunity, not a problem. It raises difficult questions which are far from being solved in a fragile political context marked by identitarian closure.

Posting has undeniably given rise to major abuses. The issue questions the political capacity to bring statements into line with acts. Let's therefore implement the directives.

Four points attracted my attention. First, the chain of responsibilities poses a problem. In the name of the complex chain of subcontractors, it does not seem satisfactory to me to bring full responsibility to bear on the first contractor as the recent French Act does. To my mind, it's asking too much of the first in the chain, and not enough of the others. It should therefore be determined up to and down to where responsibility can rise and descend.

Second, as to pay, the Commission has certainly taken a step forward. But what about social charges? Considerable divergences continue to exist between the various EU countries. What are really the capacities to control payment in the country of origin? I do not feel a European body of officials could check all that. The matter needs to be reworked and the idea of getting social security contributions paid on the spot needs to be rehabilitated.

Third, I am not at all opposed to posting provided it is more secure. The Commission's proposal admittedly constitutes an improvement. But it does not provide an answer to the demands expressed as regards social charges.

My last point will be a question: how can the swelling European divergences be overcome? The question is for the European Commission to answer.

Ms Ana Birchall, chair of the Romanian Chamber of Deputies' European affairs committee (*interpretation from English*). Thank you for having organised this meeting providing a platform for rational, fair and transparent discussions on subjects of high importance for the European Union such as corporate social responsibility and the posting of workers. You have managed to set up these debates no matter how different our opinions. This promises a constructive discussion, after which we will certainly overcome the difficult points because, even if our opinion is perhaps different from yours, it also deserves to be listened to, heard and taken into consideration.

I wish to emphasise that Romania supports any initiative to protect posted workers against all forms of abuse or exploitation, by restricting the possibilities for companies to make profits by illegal means, especially through undeclared work, forced self-employed activity or subcontracting. At the same time, Romania also supports the proposal in that it provides for the publication of a list of companies that have committed serious infringements of European employment legislation and also provides for the establishment of a social protocol to protect fundamental rights, because the latter must prevail over economic freedom.

However, we consider the fact that companies have used posting to take advantage of wage differentials between Member States cannot be deemed inappropriate behaviour. The typical result of a market economy is the development of market strategies, such as investment strategies based on exploiting the differences between the various markets. Also, we believe that the decline in wages in States with strong economies has come about more because of the need to maintain the competitiveness of European companies in the context of globalisation than on account of the posting of workers.

Posting is a significant expression of the freedom to provide services across the European Union and forms a stimulating factor for its economy. As such, it is related to the existence of the Single Market and cannot, to our mind, be restricted. The European Union has developed broad policies to encourage investment. It would be incoherent to create advantages for investors while limiting their access to a cheaper workforce.

As you know, the Romanian Chamber of Deputies has adopted a motivated opinion prepared by the committee to which I belong, calling for activation of the 'yellow card' procedure. We anticipate that it will be seriously taken into account. We regret the decision of some Member States who strongly defend the review of directive 96/71 even before the implementation of the 2014 enforcement directive.

It seems to us that this insistence may appear as the reflection of pressures from domestic public opinions. We can of course accept it to a certain extent, but cannot of course accept this pressure being transferred to the European level and, from there, to Member States whose economies are less developed.

As I said, Romania hails the decision of the ten other Member States which have expressed their opposition to the review of the directive on the posting of workers. We are confident in the

success of our approach, with support from our partners from national parliaments that have joined us. It is an act of justice towards a country like Romania, fully consistent with European values and principles. It illustrates the fact that each European citizen must identify with the European Union and find a real benefit in it.

If the review is adopted as such at European level, it will represent a serious infringement of the mobility of workers, gravely affecting not only the principles that make the European Union coherent but also the operation of the European market. The knock-on social effects would create new imbalances at the very time when populism is rising. Thanks to our debates, I hope we will reach instead a fair and balanced proposal.

Mr Patrik Björck, member of the Swedish Parliament's Committee on Social Protection (*interpretation from English*). I am a member of the Social Democratic Party currently heading the Swedish government. First, I fully agree with the remarks made at the start of our debates. The initial goal of the directive was to protect workers, not promote social dumping. But it has had the opposite effect.

The issue is related to that of corporate social responsibility, which we spoke about this morning. While workers from Bangladesh have been exploited by foreign companies, and we all believe of course that is unacceptable, it is equally unacceptable that workers who are EU nationals are exploited in the same way in Sweden. I hope that all the Member States can agree on the 'equal pay for equal work' principle.

I hope that this yellow card procedure will not compromise the spirit of a directive which the Swedish government considers moreover to be seriously in need of a review. Failing the review, the free movement of workers would be threatened. Let us be clear: the directive needs to be revised so as not to compromise the free movement of labour. I understand very well that the various Member States, with different traditions and histories, view the directive differently, but we must all agree on the 'equal pay for equal work' principle. That principle must be the foundation for this debate.

Last, I find it hard to understand the criticisms raised by subsidiarity. I therefore agree with Mr Gilles Savary.

Mrs Maria Das Mercês Borges, member of the Assembly of the Portuguese Republic's Employment and Social Security Committee (*interpretation from English*). On behalf of the Portuguese delegation, thank you for your invitation. It's a pleasure to participate in this important meeting. I am sure we will be in a position to enlighten certain issues, especially to promote the 'equal pay for equal work' principle. We consider it crucial to combat not only the abuses to which the posting of workers give rise in some countries but also the informal economy.

According to our Parliament, the European Commission's proposal complies with the subsidiarity principle, but the Commission must engage in dialogue with the social partners, trade unions and employers. The involvement of all the stakeholders will help to improve the 1996 directive and, therefore, the protection of posted workers, as well as the transparency of the European market.

Lord Whitty, member of the UK House of Lords' EU Internal Market Sub-Committee (*interpretation from English*). This exchange of views between delegates from the various national Parliaments on an eminently complex, obviously divisive issue, is very interesting but, as chairman of the House of Lords' competent committee, I cannot myself express a strong view because the British government has not yet submitted a reasoned opinion. It's most disturbing...

If I base myself on the preliminary discussions, I feel it is unlikely that our committee will use the yellow card procedure. The proposal for a review indeed complies with the subsidiarity principle; the issue indeed falls under the competence of the European Union. We are not going to oppose this review, we are not going to stand with those who brandished the yellow card. The question of relations between the European Commission and national parliaments is nevertheless quite interesting. When national parliaments use the yellow card, what can the Commission do?

The current British government or, at least, the Conservative Party, is opposed to the very principle of the posting of workers directive, but, a few weeks off the referendum on the United Kingdom's continued membership of the European Union, the issue of posted workers and the exploitation of workers on the one hand, and organised fraud, on the other hand, is eminently thorny, without mentioning the race to the bottom in working conditions in the United Kingdom. It is therefore unlikely that the British government will oppose, in the weeks ahead, a strengthening of the rules in force.

My committee has not yet settled the issue. Personally, I have been a trade unionist longer than a politician, and I have been in favour of this strengthening for a very long time. Some questions, related to social contributions, deserve thorough debate, but we must improve the protection of workers and promote the equal pay for equal work principle. Perhaps the European Commission will have a somewhat different opinion, but what matters is that our own positions converge. It would be a pity that opposition between the Right and the Left, or between the eastern and western countries, were to prevent us from protecting posted workers.

This afternoon's debate will have allowed us to understand each and everyone's perspectives. We must still work enormously to reach a directive that meets all our expectations and genuinely protects workers, whatever their country of origin.

Ms Antonella Incerti, member of the Italian Chamber of Deputies' Public and Private Sector Employment Committee (*interpretation from Italian*). Thank you Ms Chair for having organised these meetings answering our strong need for dialogue.

The Italian Chamber of Deputies' Public and Private Sector Employment Committee, of which I am a member, has studied the issue of the posting of workers most carefully. The directive indeed paves the way to umpteen possibilities and has given rise to a certain number of extremely troublesome abuses, especially unequal pay and the risk that companies posting personnel may be advantaged with respect to competitors subject to stricter rules. We must put an end to abuses and combat social dumping at all costs; this is moreover the point of view expressed by the Italian government in its general policy statement. Overall, and subject to a more detailed examination, the review proposal seems to be a welcome step to us. The aim is indeed to ensure that the protection of posted workers is not reduced, which would give undue competitive advantages to some companies.

Affirming this basic principle, according to which the pay for a given job in a given place must be identical, appears to be very important to me. In contrast, reserving the application of the conditions set forth by the employment legislation of the host country, when these are favourable to

the posted worker, to postings of over twenty-four months, appears to me to be somewhat restrictive. Perhaps we could opt for a shorter length of time, for instance twelve months, as proposed by our senator colleague.

I feel that the issue of controls and paid social contributions is very important, as is the definition of the concept of pay which, for the time being, is somewhat ambiguous. These measures should also be applied beyond the sole construction and public works sector, especially to European transport. We are all relatively convinced that healthy competition is good for the economies of our countries, but let's banish unfair competition and ensure that no provision ends up hindering free competition or compromising good worker protection.

Mr Christian Holm Barenfeld, member of the Swedish Parliament's Market and Employment Committee (*interpretation from English*). We are against the amendment of the directive. We feel that it is essential to secure the rules applying to posted workers and protect the freedom to provide services. A directive on the enforcement of the 1996 directive was already adopted in 2014, which the Member States have until 18 June 2016 to transpose. Let's not introduce new changes, otherwise we will weaken freedom of movement and competition.

The situations are very different between the various European Union countries but the greatest problem is not the posting of workers but implementation of that directive. We can all do more in our countries. For instance there is no minimum wage in Sweden where the wage rules are a matter for collective agreements not subject to the approval of the authorities. Unfortunately, as there is no mandatory disclosure of the rules, it is difficult for foreign workers to know about them. We have several proposals to improve the situation and hope our Parliament will support us, but the positions are divergent.

In any case, we feel it is unnecessary to amend these directives.

Ms Dilek Kolat, member of the Bundesrat's Committee on Employment, Integration and Social Policy (*interpretation from German*). I wish to thank in turn the French National Assembly's European Affairs Committee for this invitation to discuss a very important and most topical issue.

The city of Berlin and other Länder are behind a resolution adopted on 22 April by the Bundesrat. The Bundesrat hailed the European Commission's proposal, while considering it does not go far enough. With twenty years hindsight with respect to the directive and the German act, we feel it is necessary to revise the texts so that the protection of local and foreign workers progresses and so that unfair competition is prevented.

As Germany is among the five countries where 80% of postings are made, this is no tiny challenge for my country. As Minister of Labour of the Land of Berlin, I am familiar with cases of fraud, circumvention or infringement of rules by employers. Some cases of exploitation are serious and some sub-contracting chains are barely transparent at all.

The Bundesrat hails the proposals made. After twenty-four months therefore, the labour law of the host country should apply, as should the social protection rules.

For the calculation of the total length of posting, the European Commission proposes that 'in the event of the replacement of posted workers performing the same task in the same workplace, the overall length of the posting periods of the workers concerned should be taken into

consideration, with respect to workers posted for an effective period of at least six months'. We feel that this effective period is too long: in reality, these postings last on average four months. Let's therefore choose a four month period if we want the envisaged measure to be effective.

Furthermore, let's not just take into consideration the collective agreements governing the building sector. We have already taken measures to this end in Germany in 2014 with the Act on the strengthening of collective autonomy, and have integrated all the different economic branches and sectors

There is also a need to clarify the issue of the minimum pay rate. In 2008 and 2009, some Länder acts were repealed. Companies tendering for government procurement should commit to respect certain standards and comply with collective agreements. The safeguarding of the internal market is at stake. Work standards should also be harmonised.

Can the European Commission elaborate a little more on the envisaged timeframe? When will the dialogue phase begin?

Ms Brigitte Van der Burg, chair of the Dutch House of Representatives' Social Affairs and Employment Committee (*interpretation from English*) Thank you for having organised this meeting so that we can debate on this important topic. I am speaking as the chair of the Dutch House of Representatives' Social Affairs and Employment Committee. The Dutch Parliament considers the posting issue to be a priority. We have made an agreement with the Dutch government so that it keeps us informed, in particular on some of the European Commission's work.

The majority of parliamentarians are in favour of this proposal, but some points are worth clarifying. The issue of the circumvention of rules by some employers is of particular concern to us. In the Netherlands, such circumvention, which always aims at avoiding social charges, is forbidden, but how can we prevent companies from using posted workers for periods of under six months so as to evade the rules proposed by the Commission? As for the implementation of the law of the host country after a certain length of time, couldn't it be imagined that, for periods of over twenty-four months, a job be held successively by several employees with short term contracts? In the Netherlands, many organisations have expressed the concern over the Commission proposal in this respect. We are therefore very interested in the viewpoint of the other parliaments and the European Commission.

Last, we believe that this proposal for a review of the 1996 directive should apply to the transport sector. It is not just a matter of laying down rules but also of applying them. That's very important.

Ms Katalin Csöbör, member of the Hungarian National Assembly's European Affairs Committee. Thank you first of all for having placed this important topic on the agenda.

The freedom to provide services in all the EU Member States is a cornerstone of the Single Market. Regulating the work conditions of posted workers is therefore essential for correct operation of the Single Market. The Hungarian National Assembly, which I represent, adopted last week a motivated opinion on the proposal to revise the posting of workers directive.

What are our main concerns?

The current rules provide that companies posting workers must respect a hard core of the

legislation in force in the host country, including minimum wage rates. It is important to note that the directive does not prohibit companies posting workers from paying more than the minimum wage rate. Furthermore, wage gaps between the Member States are mainly due to their different economic development.

The main innovation proposed by the Commission is the reference made to to pay and no longer to the minimum wage rate. The jurisprudence of the Court of Justice of the European Union has shown on many occasions that the minimum wage rate notion is a source of confusion, but pay is an ambiguous notion of which the legal meaning is not clear. And the introduction of a notion whose exact meaning cannot be established unambiguously is contrary to the principles of subsidiarity and legal clarity. As for imposing the principle of equal pay for equal work with a view to reducing the wage gaps between the Member States ... it isn't possible to reduce by a legal means what could be reduced only by economic development. It is contrary to the principles laid down by the Lisbon Treaty in the social policy field.

In the opening statements it was said that posting concerns 1.9 million European workers in 2014 or 0.7% of the total number of jobs in the EU. The proposal for a review is therefore contrary to the principles of necessity and proportionality. We therefore hope that the European Commission will take account of the motivated opinions already given by the fourteen national chambers.

Chair Danielle Auroi. Thank you, dear colleague, for having spoken in French. I wish I could express myself as well in Hungarian! This effort should be hailed.

Mr Alain Vasselle, member of the French Senate's Constitutional Acts, Legislation, Universal Suffrage, Rules of Procedure and General Administration Committee. Thank you, Ms chair, for this splendid meeting initiative, on an issue leading to heated debates in France and elsewhere.

Posted work inevitably poses the question of the competitiveness of our companies as pay and social protection conditions are not the same in our various countries. This situation cannot go on indefinitely and the European Commission is right to address once more this directive.

This brings me to two questions. The real basic issue is not so much pay – the reference could be the SMIC (minimum guaranteed wage in France) – as the level of social protection. How can the same level be offered in all the countries? Just previously, our Hungarian colleague pointed out that economic development conditions determine the possible level of social protection. Countries whose economy is the strongest can offer high-level social protection to their employees, not those whose economic development is less advanced. How can a level of social protection like that applying in our country be imposed on countries and on companies which cannot provide it?

My second question concerns the implementation of the subsidiarity principle. On listening to you, dear colleagues, I have the feeling that this notion is defined differently from one country to another. The European Commission would do well to define it very clearly once and for all and tell us how it should be applied in all the EU countries. Otherwise, we will always meet difficulties in implementing European law or transposing directives in our national legal systems.

Mr Kalle Palling, Chair of the Estonian Parliament's European Affairs Committee (*interpretation from English*). I am repeating remarks that have already been made: why review a directive whose transposition deadline has not expired and whose effects we don't know. This is not the right way to draft laws. Let's not impose new obligations before the directive enters into force

and before its enforcement has been studied. The freedom to provide services and the free movement of people are at stake. We cannot therefore support this review.

The issue is not so much that of wages – in most cases wages are equal or almost – as that of workers' other rights. And if we want to speak of fair competition, we must speak of fair competition between services and between companies, not between trade unions whose voice counts more in some countries.

I agree with our Swedish colleague according to whom it is above all a matter of implementing the present directives rather than finding new bureaucratic rules which could hinder the freedom to provide services and the free movement of people. We could do more in our countries rather than change things at European level.

Mr Christophe Premat, member of the French National Assembly's Cultural Affairs and Education Committee. In turn, I hail the determination to review a directive that is indeed a problem and which, bringing competition to bear on wages, distorts fair economic competition.

The pay issue has already been widely discussed but, once we have settled it, we will face that of the competition arising between social protection systems. This rejoins the question of corporate social responsibility, addressed this morning. Some companies use posted workers, create subsidiaries and cut the tie with these subsidiaries which become local companies. Employees thus find themselves in very tricky situations. I tried to solve several cases myself. As an MP for the French living abroad I can precisely measure the impact of such a directive on individuals who have migrated for economic reasons and who then find themselves in a complicated situation, without knowing where to turn.

We must make headway with the fairness issue. In autumn, the Stockholm Agenda prioritised the issue of fair mobility. With the review of this directive, we have an opportunity to continue in that direction. In a way, such practical questions make Europe advance because they oblige us to introduce harmonisation, step by step. This is indeed the spirit of the European institutions, which should allow us to surmount the crises we are crossing in an honourable and positive way.

Ms Danielle Auroi. The issue of posted workers is like trying to square the circle. While we all agree on some principles – such as equal pay for equal work – reality poses a problem as with equal pay for men and women. European Union competences, subsidiarity... Where is the red line? What do we mean by that? These matters are very complicated, especially as we all understand the issue of posted workers differently. Would follow-up or control by a service provide clarity that would reassure each and everyone? It's the circumvention of rules and abuses that have demonised the posting of workers whereas the directive set out precisely to defend them.

Also, while we have spoken about the building and public works sector and the transport sector, what about the agri-food sector? We have not spoken about it at all.

I therefore give the floor to the European Commission's representative so that he can answer your questions on the new proposal for a directive.

Mr Jackie Morin. I shall report to Mrs Thyssen on all the contributions made to the debate today by the various speakers.

Does the proposal for a review promote the internal market or does it adversely affect it?

The Commission is involved in promoting the internal market and the freedom to provide services. This supposes, on the one hand, absence of discrimination against non-national providers of services – they must have access to the European market – and also fair rules for national service providers. We feel that this proposal is in keeping with the spirit of Article 57 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which sets forth the freedom to provide services, but under the same conditions as those applying to nationals. The goal is not about establishing different systems of rules for national service providers and the others, but of having a non-discriminatory approach.

The pay concept was introduced by the Commission with the idea that conditions were not to be imposed on external service providers that are more binding than those generally imposed nationally. That's why reference is made to the general mandatory components of pay, laid down by law or collective agreements. Today, reference is made only to minima – often seen, moreover, as maxima by those using posted workers. In addition to these minima, a certain number of mandatory components will now have to be respected, such as, for instance, possible pay premiums to which Sunday or weekend work, or risk-taking activities, can give rise, or such as the rules on promotion or the payment of a thirteenth month. These are all components integrated in the pay notion.

The European Commission has however ensured with the greatest care not to intervene in the definition of what pay is, which is a matter for the Member States. This point no longer appears in an article but in the twelfth recital of the proposal for a directive amending the directive of 16 December 1996. It is stated there very clearly that 'it is within Member States' competence to set rules on remuneration in accordance with their law and practice.'

Why this length of two years? The rationale has been to say that there is no definition of the length of posting as long as the length of the work. In contrast, a question arises: what legislation applies to the posted worker after a given length of time? As regards social security, there is a two year limit: when the posting is scheduled for over two years, the legislation of the country of work applies. The same rationale has been followed again as regards work conditions: when the posting is scheduled to last over two years, the legislation of the country of work applies to the posted worker. Reference is made here to the lengths of work which shall be notified in advance in accordance with the new directive 2014/67. It will thus be very easy to know if the work is scheduled for over two years or not, and therefore determine which rules will apply to the workers concerned.

It is planned that, under some circumstances, the same job can be held by several successively posted workers. The Commission thus wanted to introduce a clause preventing the two year rule from being circumvented, by stating that, should the same work be performed by several successive postings of workers for a total period of over twenty-four months, each worker being himself posted for over six months, the rules in force in the country of work would apply. Obviously, this six month period can be debated at the political level.

I have taken good note of the remarks on subsidiarity. In this respect, the European Commission will have to substantiate the decision it will take, whatever it be, after the re-examination it will have to make following the motivated opinion of the parliaments. And a statement will have to be made by the Commission on the action taken on the motivated opinions.

Ms Karima Delli. The debate is complex. We would have to spend a week together to effectively deal with it, but a consensus appears to be forming on some points.

Many people are for instance asking why not shorten the two year period? We could propose choosing a twelve month period instead.

Similarly, the controls must be strengthened. Everyone agrees on that. But how? Nobody agrees on that! It does not come under the competence of the European Commission, but would each Member State play the game of controls when it's also its national economy which is at stake? I had put forward the idea of a European body of inspectors. The debate deserves to be re-opened. And why not entrust the task to customs officers, since transport is particularly concerned?

Everyone agrees in saying that the security of workers must be strengthened, so, dear colleagues, let's get cracking! That's what the European project is about.

The countries brandishing the famous yellow card are all thinking about the minimum wage issue. I wish to return to that. We are all aware of the diversity of economic situations; the introduction of a single minimum wage in the European Union is not for tomorrow. Moreover there is no single minimum wage in all the countries. As for the risk that the European Commission impose a European minimum wage... My dear colleagues, the European Commission does not at all have that power; please stop thinking that some European bodies have powers which the treaties do not give them!

Having said that, while we are all committed, in this hall, to the European project, we must think about harmonisation in the European Union. This implies calling for minimum social benefits. We must work on that. We all want convergence towards the highest social standards to put an end to social dumping and guarantee workers a decent life. But what do we call a decent life at work? Take a look at hauliers, whatever their nationality. They live in their truck, sleep there and eat there, whatever the weather. Is that a decent life at work? Without mentioning their housing conditions... We must define criteria protecting health and also the safety of these workers. Otherwise, who will be responsible in the event of a problem?

Mr Juncker said so: it's the Commission of the last chance. I am part of the generation which will not abandon the European project. Social dumping is Europe's poison. If we are not capable of all binding together, affirming loudly and clearly that nothing can be achieved any more without Europe, the sole relevant level to settle crises, whatever their nature, if we are not capable of defending social harmonisation and a social Europe, whereas that's what citizens want, then in a few years the European project will come to an end. For my generation, it will be really destructive.

We cannot afford not to have a strong Europe, a social Europe. At the same time, we are making the political Europe. Without making compromises, we will hear the eurosceptics and extreme-right always shouting louder, and it will be the death of the European project. I won't let this happen.

Mr Gilles Savary. Thank you, dear colleagues, for this extremely interesting debate. I think it was a very good initiative.

Quite often, in international debates, the same words are used, without putting the same things behind the words. I would therefore like to return back to what in fact disunites us.

Owing to the total subsidiarity of social law, there is no internal labour market. There is indeed a market for goods and services but, for want of the same labour law, the internal labour market is an erroneous belief. There is no European minimum wage, no European paid holidays, no European social security, and social charges and the operating modes vary from one country to another. What can be said, on the other hand, is that men and women move freely in an internal market of goods and services and are free to find employment there. The same applies to

companies; the right of establishment is very clear. No company providing services is therefore banned from setting up in France with a view to proposing there workers from other European countries. This is done in accordance with French conditions, without distorting competition.

The real issue, since we are not capable of making social Europe tomorrow morning – the same standards for all – is that in reality no Member State wants it: all are calling for application of the subsidiarity principle to the social systems. The real issue is the posting of workers when it is conceived as a second labour market on which workers from a country are proposed to another under different conditions. It is indisputably a factor of imbalance of the internal market and imbalance of competition. We could no doubt bring this matter before the Competition Directorate-General and no longer address this issue as a purely social matter: we cannot resist low cost competition because we are not subject to the same rules of the game. And if, tomorrow, workers from Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan were to go to Bulgaria or Poland? Neither could Bulgarian or Polish companies resist this competition.

The rules of the internal market and competition are made to reach greater efficacy and better quality services, but competition cannot be based on a race to the lowest social bidder – in terms of competition, it would be a distortion of competition. Yes to the internal market, yes to competition, no to distortions of competition entailing the use of unfair means and different rules of the game. True competition entails the same rules, same charges and let the best man win! It's not: different rules, different charges, and the let the cheapest win!

Placement posting is to blame: labour that does not have constant and regular work is taken, recruited to be sent to another country, because it is cheaper, to exercise a job which is not even that of the home company since it is a temporary work agency. The link with the job at the sending company is essential: that has been the foundation of posting since the dawn of time. With the abandonment of this link – masons being sent by temporary work agencies and no longer by masonry companies – posting has turned into the recruitment of low-cost workers who are then sent to other markets to compete through the cost of their work. With the abandonment of this link posting is abused. This abuse has brought us problems today, especially with public opinion, because it undermines the image of all types of posting. It is very dangerous.

I'll now turn to subsidiarity because I have noted some uncertainty among us. A certain number of colleagues believe that subsidiarity stands for national sovereignty, but that's not the case. Subsidiarity is the principle according to which an issue is addressed at the most effective level for dealing with it. In many fields, we feel this is the national level and so the Commission is encroaching uselessly on national prerogatives. In the name of subsidiarity, we are therefore asking that it refrain from interfering, which it frequently does. It's a shame, on the other hand that we can't manage to address issues like immigration or refugees at European level. Subsidiarity should allow European regulation. However these questions are in the process of making Europe explode! When these international issues are addressed at national level, each State tends to become a competitor of the other because each tries to see its own interests. But in these fields, subsidiarity would like us to say to Europe: 'It's up to you to do the work'!

Similarly, it appears to me that the subsidiarity principle means that the issues of illegal work and hyper-mobile workers are to be addressed at the European level. France is crossed by trucks from all over Europe, driven by workers paid 191 Euros a month, who sleep at night on motorway services because there is a shower in the service station. In reality they are doing disguised work because they keep the truck at weekend and don't receive a weekly day off – because they are far from home and that's the arrangement. We don't know how to manage this

matter at the sole national level. Admittedly, if we protest, countries will retort that they are free to have their trucks driven by the drivers they like, at the tariff they want, to go from Belgium to Spain or from Spain to Germany, but a European regulation is needed. Let's try and agree on the relevant level to address the issue, in accordance with the subsidiarity principle, but, to my mind, it's the European level.

I'll now refer to a seldom addressed question. In France, our pensions, our health care, and our hospital expenses are funded by tax charges on labour income. As the number of workers not paying these charges in France rises, the funding of our social protection system declines. At a pinch, all workers could be foreign workers, on cost grounds, and there would no longer be a social security. We cannot sweep this issue under the carpet. Massive posted work empties social coffers.

I'll finish with transport. France has taken legislative measures unilaterally and it is no longer possible to require that the weekly day off be taken at the workplace. In other terms, it is forbidden to oblige truck drivers to remain in their cab and live there, sometimes in a temperature of 45° in the shade. This is a real situation I know because I have followed up many controls. These drivers cannot go home because it would be too expensive, and they cannot live anywhere else because a hotel room is not paid for them; so in fact they don't have their day off.

We have many difficulties in monitoring compliance with this legislation – those who insist on these practices can rest assured – but we really need a European legislation. These workers cross borders several times a week and it is thus very complicated to establish posting. Newish ideas are needed, like those developed for the merchant navy by the International Maritime Organisation and by the International Labour Organization. Let's find a *modus vivendi* and let's define a minimum set of social rights for these hyper-mobile workers crossing borders all year long. This concerns hauliers but also airline workers.

I hope we can continue this dialogue.

Chair Danielle Auroi. Our debates have been extremely rich. If we wished to detail all the points addressed by each and everyone, as said by Karima Delli, we'd spend all week doing so, and our goal doesn't stretch to holding a conclave. We have nevertheless debated in all sincerity on how we, each and everyone of us, consider this issue of posted workers. We have in particular underscored the gap between the reality of the directive and the incredible circumventions of the applicable rules. The European Commission's new proposal aims at putting an end to that, even if it does not totally address the subject – nobody performs miracles.

Thank you all for the quality of your statements. Even if we haven't settled everything, we have made things progress. We have also clearly shown there is a link between the two subjects on the agenda today, because these totally illegal circumventions are very often due to subcontractors of companies otherwise entirely legal.

I thank this afternoon's speakers. They made most relevant, well-informed proposals and suggested new avenues to us, allowing us to pursue our analysis. A number of us will meet again moreover on 13 and 14 June in the Hague for the big COSAC meeting bringing together all the national parliaments and the European Parliament. Our thinking on today's two topics will have matured and our positions will have perhaps drawn closer. In any case that's my wish.

I wish you all a pleasant journey back.

We gathered earlier all the proposals made this morning. Most of you have already signed the text proposed to them this morning. I wish to thank them for doing so.

I also thank, on behalf of us all, the staff of the National Assembly's European Affairs Committee, who have done a tremendous job, our administrators and also our interns, who are extremely efficient, in particular Charles-Édouard Roehrich, to whom we wish a very happy birthday (Applause).

The session closed at 16:35

Members present or excused

European Affairs Committee

Meeting of 18 May 2016 at 14:15

Present. - Ms Danielle Auroi, Mr Jean-Luc Bleunven, Mr William Dumas, Ms Chantal Guittet, Mr Michel Piron, Mr Gilles Savary

Excused. - Mr Kader Arif, Ms Seybah Dagoma, Mr Yves Fromion, Ms Marietta Karamanli, Ms Audrey Linkenheld, Mr Jean-Claude Mignon

Also attended the meeting. - Mr Serge Bardy, Mr Jean Bizet, Ms Michèle Bonneton, Mr Jacques Cresta, Ms Pascale Gruny, Ms Sophie Joissains, Mr Christophe Premat, Mr Alain Vasselle.