**Corina Crețu,** *Member of the Commission***.** – Mr President, honourable Members, in the light of all your interventions, it seems we all agree that there is strong consensus about the fact that cohesion policy programmes have been of key importance for the economic and social progress of Northern Ireland. This also means that the implementation of programmes has been successful overall. In particular, the Peace and Interreg (European Territorial Cooperation) projects have demonstrated that cross-border cooperation is not an abstract concept: it is part of the daily life of citizens and it provides a space for people to come together and forge new partnerships. I liked very much what you said – that peace is very easy to destroy, but very hard to build, and we should not take it for granted. I thank you very much for all your interventions.

We will have the opportunity later today during the debate on Mr Hetman’s report to discuss further the importance of ensuring strong cohesion in border regions, but we have here a first taste with Northern Ireland. It is undoubtedly one of the most telling examples of what cohesion policy has helped to achieve in border regions and beyond. There are countless examples where European funding has made a real difference to citizens, businesses, researchers, schools and local and regional authorities, and this report recognises that cohesion policy is one of the keys that can unlock our social, economic and cultural transformation. We must strive to defend it, and make every effort to further increase its effectiveness. This is why, as I said, the Commission has proposed a balanced budget beyond 2020 which preserves cohesion policy as a policy which is both strong and for all the regions.

I trust that the findings in your report will underpin your reflection on the future of cohesion policy and that you will give the negotiation of the legislative packages the highest priority so that a new legislative framework can be adopted a soon as possible. This is together with the negotiation of the MFF. We will also respond to the question from Mr Nicholson on how this peace+ programme will be implemented in the future. Let’s see how the Brexit negotiations turn out. Thank you once again for all your contributions.