

The European Union Strategy on Citizen Security in Central America: an ongoing definition process¹

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In June 2015, in parallel to the Second Summit between the European Union (EU) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), the heads of state and government of the member states of the Central American Integration System (SICA) met with the Presidents of the European Council and the European Commission (EC), the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The main aim was to review cooperation between both regions. In their joint communiqué, the parties recognised that 'citizen security' is essential in achieving social and economic development in Central America and the Caribbean. They reaffirmed their "support for the Central American Security Strategy (ESCA) as the tool to address regional security in the framework of the Management, Coordination and Information mechanism for regional Cooperation."² In its official information portal, the Council of the EU spoke of the way in which one of the results of the set of high-level joint meetings was "a *new type and a new focus* of cooperation", through the strengthening of aid for peace and security. According to the same source, "The EU is also discussing proposed lines of action of the EU strategy".³ The new chapter of the recent EU-CELAC Action Plan 2015-17 recognises the existence of a 'multisectoral and multidimensional approach' to security and

considers a set of measures for promoting the culture of peace and non-violence, which are still under discussion.⁴ Given its inherent dynamic character and the fact that international cooperation in the area of security in Latin America has been characterised by an intricate set of national, regional and international agendas, it is worth looking into the specific nature of the new type of focus being taken by the EU.

The global focus of the EU on conflicts and external crises

On a conceptual level, the focus of the EU includes all the stages of the cycle of a conflict or other external crises, ranging from early alert and preparation, prevention and rapid crisis response to crisis management and early recovery, providing stability and consolidating peace, all with the aim of "helping countries to get back on track towards long-term sustainable development".⁵ Within this focus, specific and deliberate mention is made of the link between the concepts 'security' and 'development'. According to the EC framework document entitled *The comprehensive EU approach to external conflict and crises* (2013), "Sustainable development and poverty eradication require peace and security, and the reverse is equally true: fragile or conflict-affected countries still remain the furthest away from meeting the Millennium Development Goals. The connection between security and development is therefore a

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² Summit of the Member States of the Central American Integration System and the European Union. High-level EU-SICA meeting, joint communication, 11 June 2015, Brussels. Available at

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/2015-eu-celac/>

The Central American Security Strategy was adopted on 8 April 2011 and is coordinated by the Central American Integration System (SICA).

³ EU-CELAC Summit, Bruselas, 10-11/06/2015. Official información available at <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/es/meetings/international-summit/2015/06/10-11/>

⁴ Paragraph 75 of the Declaration of the last EU-CELA summit, known as the Declaration of Brussels (2015), welcomes the EU's adoption of its strategy on citizen security in Central America and the Caribbean. Within the framework of this summit, the government of Nicaragua expressed, nevertheless, its rejection of the European strategy, believing that the Central American Security Strategy (ESCA) "is the only binding instrument for developing security in Central America on a regional level" (See Declaration of Brussels, paragraph 75). For a broad analysis of the outcomes of the 2015 summit, see HERNANDEZ, Juan Gustavo. "La Relación Estratégica UE-CELAC: Un balance pendiente". Brussels, ACT Alliance EU and CIFCA: July 2015.

⁵ European Commission. Joint communiqué to the European Parliament and Council. The comprehensive approach adopted by the EU on external conflicts and crises. Brussels, 11.12.2013 JOIN(2013) 30 final; p. 2.

key underlying principle in the application of an EU comprehensive approach."⁶ Furthermore, in the specific case of development aid, the EU and its member states act in accordance with guidelines such as those defined in the European Consensus on Development (2005) and the Agenda for Change (2012), inasmuch as, for instance, "CSDP crisis management instruments and crisis response measures under the Instrument for Stability (IfS) pursue mostly short-term objectives, whereas development instruments by nature are oriented towards the long term".⁷

In the document entitled *Action Plan. Implementing the Comprehensive EU approach to Conflicts and External Crises*, the EC outlines that for 2015, attention will be centred on the following initiatives on a global level: (a) capacity building to support security and development on the basis of the so-called, "Training and Equipping Initiative" currently underway;⁸ (b) planning done in advance which links together to a greater degree the activities of the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the EC, as well as those of the EU member states and other international bodies; and finally (c) rapid deployment - as in the case of Libya - or rather, bringing together new methods for joint action on field missions and/or of support staff in order to strengthen EU delegations.

In accordance with the EC Action Plan, country cases should include countries that do and do not have Peace and Security Missions in place, as well as places where joint planning efforts are already underway.⁹ One case in point is the European Strategy on Citizen Security for Central America and the Caribbean approved on 30 July 2014 by the Council of the EU.

While emphasising support for existing local approaches such as the Central American Security Strategy (ESCA), the EC outlines three main objectives for the region: (i) to develop a joint agenda for citizen security for the whole region;

(ii) strengthen the capacity of governments in offering quality public services; and (iii) fostering regional and international cooperation in operational activities with the aim of combatting insecurity in Central America and the Caribbean.¹⁰

Cooperation on citizen security in Latin America

In Latin America, cooperation in the field of citizen security encompasses a wide range of thematic priorities and is managed through a countless number of bureaucratic measures. In very general terms, citizen security includes a series of 'hard measures' - including attempts to curb transnational gangs, reducing the illegal smuggling of weapons, curbing people smuggling, money laundering and cybercrime. Likewise, citizen security also includes a set of 'softer measures' such as reforming the police and justice system, different and complex forms of support for local and community security, reducing youth and gender violence and other preventative measures for reducing the daily threats that citizens face. According to Muggah and Szabo de Carvalho, it is by recognising the ways in which transnational and local security intertwine in Latin America, as well as the people's explicit concerns for security and wellbeing that one will be able to differentiate 'citizen security' from competing paradigms such as 'international', 'national', 'public' or 'human' security.

It is therefore not by chance that in its Development Cooperation Instrument for Latin America 2014-2020, the EC earmarked 70 million euros for the dual security-development priority (the total amount earmarked for cooperation in the Latin American region is 805 million euros). This total amount includes the Regional Multiannual Indicative Programme for Central America, for a total amount of 120 million euros (40 million euros earmarked for the budget lines of Security and Rule of Law).¹¹ According to Muggah and Szabo de Carvalho, the predominant form of international cooperation in the field of citizen security in Latin America, measured in terms of material aid, includes the support of the United States (US) for strategies such as the Merida Initiative in Mexico and the Central

⁶ European Commission, *Ídem*, p. 4.

⁷ European Commission, *Ídem*, p. 10.

⁸ According to the Council of the EU, it is an initiative for allowing and supporting countries and regional organisations to take on the responsibility "of their own security". Somalia and Mali were affected as priority pilot cases, along with the strengthening of the regional architecture for Peace and Security in Africa. See FOREIGN AFFAIRS European Council, Background brief, Brussels, 6 February 2015; p. 4.

⁹ European Commission. Joint Staff Working Document. Taking forward the EU's Comprehensive Approach to external conflict and crises. Action Plan 2015. Brussels, 10.4.2015 SWD (2015) 85 final; p.5.

¹⁰ European Commission. Joint Staff Working Document, *Ídem*, p.7.

¹¹ European Commission and External Action Service. EU regulation n° 233/2014 of the European Parliament and Council, 11 March 2014, which establishes a Financing Instrument for Development Cooperation for the 2014-2020 period.

America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI). Although it is now labelled by US authorities as 'citizen security', this aid tends to reinforce the most traditional forms of understanding of security, centred on containing 'transnational threats' and prioritising national institutions over local ones. Within this framework, in the last two decades alone, the United States (US) has set aside more than 10 billion US dollars for offering support to a small number of countries such as Mexico and others in Central America, as well as Colombia and the Andean region. Although total spending has fallen over the last decade and despite it standing at rather modest figures in comparison with US defense spending globally - even comparing with the yearly spending of countries such as Brazil, Colombia and Mexico - US aid is equivalent to the total amount of aid from all other donors combined.¹² Muggah and Szabo de Carvalho maintain that this is maybe the reason why the focus on 'international threats', conceived through the lens of the domestic agenda of the US, has deeply influenced the debate on public security policies in Colombia, Mexico and many countries in Central America. It is in this way that the US has started to repackage this aid as 'citizen security' over the last few years.

Redefining the different state actors

Despite the supremacy of the US agenda and its money, a number of countries such as Canada and a few EU countries have also invested in implementing a set of measures to promote the citizen security agenda in Latin America. And although they may be concerned about 'hard' security priorities such as the flow of drugs to North America or Western Europe and even

¹² Robert Muggah and Ilona Szabo de Carvalho. "Changes in the Neighborhood: Reviewing Citizen Security Cooperation in Latin America". IGARAPE Institute, Strategic paper 7. March 2014, p. 3. According to the mapping of citizen security initiatives in Central American for the 2009-2013 period drawn up by the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), roughly 40% of funding comes from the USA alone. Of all the projects and programmes that have been implemented, roughly 90% are proportionally assigned for areas of Institutional Strengthening, Crime Prevention and Fighting Organised Crime. In the area of Institutional Strengthening, the USA is listed as the main donor, with an estimated 30% of the funding (185.2 million US dollars) followed by the IDB (27%) and the EC (12%). As for the Fight against Organised Crime, the US provides 71.41% of funding (361.1 million US dollars), followed by the government of Canada (6.84%) and the EC (4.98%). See Mapping of Interventions in Citizen Security in Central America, 2014. Available at <http://www.seguridadciudadana-centroamerica.org/Documentos.asp>

Russia, many of these very same governments have been transforming their citizen security programmes into 'softer' preventative strategies, both at sub-regional and local level, guided by geographic proximity and by their own geopolitical interpretations of transnational threats.¹³ For instance, the EU makes explicit reference to favouring **regional integration**, promoting an exchange of knowledge among the police, the legal system and other civil institutions. It also refers to strategies which tend towards reducing **socio-economic risks** which can give rise to crime and violence. Nevertheless, despite the alternative route to the US set out by the EU, total European aid to Latin America remains comparatively modest in comparison with the money set aside by the US for fighting drug trafficking and organised crime. In the words of Muggah and Szabo de Carvalho, "the overwhelming amounts of aid from the United States aimed at containing transnational threats continues. At the heart of this strategy are programmes such as the Merida Initiative, the Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI), Plan Colombia and the Andean Counterdrug initiative (recently renamed Andean Counterdrug Program)".¹⁴

As for Latin American state actor strategies, according to Muggah and Szabo de Carvalho, citizen security does indeed represent the last incarnation of the so-called link between security and development. This conception echoes analogous concepts implemented during the

¹³ Unlike the US, 'radicalism' and 'terrorism' are not listed as priority threats on the European agenda for Latin America. This is not the case for the European approach towards other regions in the world such as the Middle East and North Africa. It is also interesting to point out that in the case of the EU, climate change is considered a global threat, or rather, "a decisive global threat which, if not urgently addressed, will jeopardise not only the environment but also the economic prosperity of the world, development and on a wider level, stability and security". Conclusions of the Council of the EU on diplomacy on climate change, Luxembourg, 24 June 2013, paragraph 1.

¹⁴ Robert Muggah and Ilona Szabo de Carvalho, *Ídem*, p. 14. Researchers Caldentey and Casas maintain that despite the recent focus on 'security' in development cooperation in Central America, the EU has not 'securitised' its aid. In the words of these authors, "development aid that the EU offers for security and the rule of law is still subject to the objective of fighting poverty with a focus on sustainable human development and is in line with principles on Official Development Aid. Or rather, development aid for security which is what is outlined according to the concept of human security as stated by the UN". See "Security as a Pillar of the European Union's Cooperation for Development in Central America". Universidad Loyola Andalucía y Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana de México. 2015, p.8.

1990s such as 'human security'. Nevertheless, in the view of the aforementioned authors, "the concept of citizen security is a homegrown one, thought up from the historic and political realities of Latin America and the Caribbean".¹⁵ Therefore, 'progressive' notions such as citizen security **help to broaden the way in which security is understood** by governments and societies.¹⁶ In this way, many Latin American governments are seemingly focusing not only on repression in order to generate short-term results but also on preventative strategies designed to empower citizens and to promote long-term resilience. In this way, governments seek to overcome democratic deficits and to repair the relationship between the state and the citizen.¹⁷ However, despite the fact that generic categories are often subject to dispute as a result of rivaling interpretations of 'security' and 'development', what is clear is that international cooperation for security tends to be understood on the basis of the relationship between 'defense' and 'police', principally facilitated through regional and international bodies.¹⁸

In any case, it can be stated that in most Latin American countries, the current adoption of regional and national strategies and plans in the area of citizen security is forcing a re-calibrating of development aid strategies. Nevertheless, and

¹⁵ Robert Muggah and Ilona Szabo de Carvalho. *Ídem*, p. 13. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) believes that it is relevant to bear in mind that "the expression citizen security fundamentally came into being as a concept in Latin America during the transitions towards democracy, as a means of differentiating the nature of security in democracy compared with security in authoritarian regimes (Report on Citizen Security and Human Rights, 31 December 2009, Point 21).

¹⁶ "From a narrow concern on national and transnational threats and priorities, the focus has expanded to encompass more local issues as well. The result is a broader way of treating security that takes into account both international and local factors that affect security and wellbeing" (Muggah and Szabo de Carvalho, p.14).

¹⁷ *Ídem*, p. 4.

¹⁸ *Ídem*, p. 8. On this point, it is also worth pointing out the emerging role of South-South cooperation on citizen security. According to the mapping of initiatives in Central America drawn up by WOLA (2014, *Op. cit.*), South-South cooperation (non-monetary resources) stands at roughly 40, 616,286 US dollars. The main cooperating countries for the Central American region which offer non-monetary resources are Mexico (96%), Colombia (4%) and Chile. 91% of south-south cooperation is regional. This will be divided up with *99% set aside for tasks combatting organised crime and 1% set aside for institutional strengthening*. Support is provided for the region of Central America through the strengthening of the institutional capacities of the police and authorities in the security sector (our italics).

despite the obvious appetite for investing in activities linked to 'citizen security', **there is little consensus and clarity on what this really means**, especially in terms of the connection between 'security' and 'development'. As Muggah and Szabo de Carvalho maintain, there is even much less clarity surrounding who is behind investment in promoting citizen security and how investment is made.¹⁹ Political leaders nevertheless tend to distinguish between international cooperation for security - which is mainly restricted to discreet bilateral interaction, and international cooperation for development, which includes multilateral and bilateral aid given by a wide constellation of different actors. In this way, international cooperation for security tends to be understood on the basis of the relationship between police and defense forces, facilitated mainly by international and regional bodies, whilst international cooperation for development operates in the most traditional sectors of governance, education, health, livelihoods, and increasingly the prevention of violence and security. However, even these generic categories are often subject to controversy. This ambiguities, which seem to be only on a semantic level, complicate empirical measurements of the scale of international cooperation for security in Latin America and the direction it is taking.

Citizen security cooperation in Central America

In its document *EU Strategy for citizen security in Central America and the Caribbean (2014)*, the Council of the EU bases itself on the following categorical assumption: "insecurity makes daily life harder for millions of people and affects human rights, the rule of law and the economic development of the region". Furthermore, according to the document, insecurity represents a major obstacle to regional stability and cooperation.²⁰ According to the United Nations Development Programme report on human development in Latin America (UNDP 2014), the region is now stronger from an economic point of view with less poverty and more consolidated economies, "but its weak side is violence, crime

¹⁹ Muggah and Szabo de Carvalho. *Ídem*, loc. cit.

²⁰ Council of the European Union. Document based on the joint communiqué of the European Commission and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy entitled "Elements for an EU strategy on public security in Central America and the Caribbean" (doc. JOIN (2014) 21 final/2; 10108/1/14 REV1). Brussels, 30 July 2014, p.12.

and insecurity"²¹. Indeed, at the second CELAC Summit held in Havana in January 2014, the rulers of the region recognised that "crime and violence represent an obstacle for the full development of Latin America and the Caribbean", while also emphasising "the need to develop a vision of regional consensus on citizen security with a focus on human development".²² In the document of the Council of the EU entitled *Action plan: proposed lines of action of the EU Strategy on citizen security in Central America and the Caribbean* (2015), as well as mentioning a 'comprehensive' approach based on human rights within the framework of development cooperation, a proposal is made for renewed attention to be paid to the 'structural causes' of conflict, or rather, elements related to "social and economic inclusion, education, health problems linked to crime, the challenges of urbanisation, economic and political governance".²³ The EU also explicitly mentions the 2015 EU-CELAC Summit as a 'good time' to carry out a political evaluation of the strategy and the shared decisions adopted for the continent as a whole.²⁴

The US response to the growing threat of crime and violence in the region began by providing help to the efforts made by the Mexican government to aggressively tackle organised crime in the country, starting in 2007 with the Merida initiative with the framework of 'shared responsibility'. At that time, members of the US Congress and members of the Bush administration expressed growing alarm at the dramatic rise in violence and murder levels in Central America, while at the same time the region was becoming a hub for trafficking for mafias that were transporting cocaine from

Andean countries towards the US.²⁵ In order to tackle these threats, the Bush and Obama administrations, together with the US Congress, put together a plan named Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI). According to the Information Note from August 2010 from the US State Department, the five aims of the CARSI strategy are: (1) to create safe streets for the citizens of the region; (2) to disrupt the movement of criminal gangs and smuggling within and among Central American countries; (3) to support the development of strong governments in Central America, helping them to be capable and responsible; (4) to reestablish the effective presence of the state and to foster security in communities at risk; (5) to foster greater levels of coordination and cooperation in security and the rule of law within countries in the region.²⁶ In order to achieve these aims, the US government offered to work hand-in-hand with the recipient countries of the aid, in order to both increase efforts to outlaw drugs and to strengthen the capabilities of institutions in implementing the law, including the police and prosecutors as well as fighting crime and preventing community-level crime by providing help for youths at risk.

According to the American think tank Woodrow Wilson Center, there are some areas of modest success in the aforementioned CARSI programme. Among these areas, one can mention the work of the public prosecutor at the time in the specific and strategic prosecution of crime networks in Guatemala, the setting up of a special 24-hour court to deal with cases of domestic violence, the effective protection of victims and witnesses and finally the setting up and putting into operation of a National Unity against Gangs. In the case of Honduras, worthy of note are the efforts to put together grassroots community programmes for

²¹ UNPD. Regional Report on Human Development 2013-2014. Citizen Security with a human face: diagnosis and proposals for Latin America. November 2013, p. V.

²² Havana Declaration, Second CELAC Summit, 28 and 29 January 2014. Paragraph 66. Available at <http://www.rree.go.cr/celac/?sec=documentos&cat=cumbres&cont=849&id=26>

²³ Council of the EU. Action plan: proposed lines of action for the EU Strategy on citizen security in Central America and the Caribbean. N.º doc. prec.: 8521/15 COLAC 48 CFSP/PESC 1032 JAIEX 20. Brussels, 1 June 2015, p. 6.

²⁴ The Action Plan 2015-2017 approved in the recent EU-CELAC Summit included a chapter on Citizen Security that is quite general and confuses 'actions' and objectives with 'outcomes'. Among the planned outcomes (sic), there is an intergovernmental seminar with a biregional outlook, open to the public and private sectors, civil society and other stakeholders, and two seminars with a biregional focus. (p. 28-29). Action Plan available at <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/es/meetings/international-summit/2015/06/10-11/>

²⁵ It is estimated that approximately 80% of the cocaine which comes out of the Andes and which is destined towards the US passes through Central America. In the mid 80s, roughly 75% of the cocaine intercepted between South America and the USA was confiscated in the Caribbean and very little in Central America. In 2010, the opposite was true: roughly 80% was confiscated in Central America and less than 10% in the Caribbean. The Dominican Republic confiscated most of the cocaine intercepted in the Caribbean over the last few years while at the same time it is also a country of transit for the European market. See Transnational Organised Crime in Central America and the Caribbean: An Evaluation of the Threats. UNITED NATIONS OFFICE ON DRUGS AND CRIME, September 2012.

²⁶ The Central America Regional Security Initiative: A Shared Partnership. Fact Sheet BUREAU OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS. U.S. Department of State. August 5, 2010. Available at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/scp/fs/2010/145747.htm>

young people at risk and the creation of a special working group under the command of the public prosecutor which deals with age-old conflict in the Bajo Aguán region.²⁷ Notwithstanding, according to the American think tank, there is a range of significant weaknesses. These include the lack of impact analysis on most of the programmes, the creation of several special operative groups within the law enforcement authorities (such groups can have the effect of creating division on institutionality instead of strengthening the capacity of the police and prosecutors), and on a more structural level, the lack of commitment on programmes from recipient governments. However, above all, according to the aforementioned think tank, the CARSI programme **"does not reflect a comprehensive strategy for tackling critical security threats in Central America"**, meaning that it has had a very low impact on factors which have driven the rise of Central American migration since 2011".²⁸ At this stage it would seem too early to have enough complete information to carry out an in-depth assessment of European cooperation in the field of security in Central America and the Caribbean. Nevertheless, for the sake of this current argument, for now it is worth siding with Caldentey and Casas on the point that the European strategy is more in line with an approach based on 'human security' than 'securitisation' of aid.²⁹ We will now take a more detailed look at some of the elements that guide the implementation of the European strategy.

The EU sub-regional programme for Central America: Multiannual Indicative Programme 2014-2020

The European strategy in the field of security in Central America and the Caribbean is centred around the following four pillars: (1) applying the law; (2) preventing violence; (3) rehabilitation, reintegration and prison management; and finally (4) institutional consolidation. It also lists 14 priorities that have become project profiles. In applying the operative framework for cooperation for the 2007-2013 period, the EU has already offered resources for the implementation of the ESCA. Security is therefore one of the priorities of

cooperation in Central America, and the ESCA remains the main framework for future cooperation initiatives in the field of security within the framework of the indicative programme for the 2014-2020 period. In parallel, the EU takes part in the so-called Group of Friends for Security in Central America, which at the outset was a donor coordination mechanism with a strong political component, intended to back SICA and its member countries in the ESCA implementation process. According to the current Sub-Regional Programme for Latin America, support for the security sector and the rule of law, with an indicative earmarked amount of 40 million euros, encompasses considerations on the aim of contributing to a reduction in violent crime and impunity, whilst also respecting human rights and promoting a culture of peace. The guidelines for action which have been drawn in accordance with the three first pillars of the ESCA are (i) prevention: providing institutions and citizens with the capability and expertise to detect, prevent and respond to violence with special attention being paid to vulnerable groups such as young people, migrants and women; (ii) reinsertion and rehabilitation: pushing for mechanisms, procedures and protocols to be set up which aim to foster rehabilitation and social integration of those deprived of their freedom; and finally (iii) law enforcement: curbing organised transnational crime through the strengthening of regional (operational) cooperation, among other measures.³⁰ According to the document *Action plan: proposed lines of action for the EU Strategy on citizen security in Central America and the Caribbean*, the activities proposed are on the one hand structured around political dialogue and an exchange of information and on the other hand structured around cooperation programmes and projects. The lines of action are to be reviewed periodically, taking into account changes and lessons learnt in the different countries and sectors.³¹ These lines broadly include reform to the justice system and security structure (including the prison system and the policies that seek to foster rehabilitation and alternatives to imprisonment); support for consolidating police capacity through training or exchanging knowledge and best practice; support for developing national and regional capacities for

²⁷ The Wilson Center. Examining the Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI). 2014. Available at <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/examining-the-central-america-regional-security-initiative-carsi>

²⁸ The Wilson Center. Ídem, Op. Cit.

²⁹ Caldentey and Casas. "Security as a Pillar of the European Union's Cooperation for Development in Central America". Universidad Loyola Andalucía y Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana de México. 2015, p.8.

³⁰ European Commission. Cooperation Instrument for Development 2014-2020. Multiannual regional indicative programme for Latin America. Op. Cit.

³¹ Council of the EU. Council of the EU. Action plan: proposed lines of action for the EU Strategy on citizen security in Central America and the Caribbean. N.º doc. prec.: 8521/15 COLAC 48 CFSP/PESC 1032 JAIEX 20. Brussels, 1 June 2015, p.8.

compiling and analysing statistical data on crime; promoting economic growth, fostering professional training and an entrepreneurial spirit as a way of offering employment and alternatives to crime; help for victims of violence, through humanitarian aid where suitable; and greater involvement of organisations such as Europol, Eurojust and Frontex, within their respective areas of competence.³² The EU strategy also makes reference to strengthening coordination with other relevant partners, in particular the US and Canada, "since both countries are important partners working on this issue".³³ Indeed, both countries had previously adopted a global focus which, similarly to that of the EU, includes strengthening institutional capacity, prevention and reducing demand for drugs. The EU also hopes to strengthen debate on security in the region working with international organisations or relevant multilateral stakeholders who have considerable experience in the field such as the Organisation of American States, the Interamerican Development Bank (IDB), the World Bank and United Nations bodies.

Taking stock. Questions and future answers

Defining and implementing the European strategy on security in Central America is an ongoing process which is relatively recent, taking place in a dynamic context characterised by an intricate set of national, regional and international actors and agendas. On a conceptual level, the EU's focus encompasses an explicit relationship between the notions of **'security' and 'development'**, in accordance with the guidelines defined within the European Consensus on Development and its Agenda for Change, while also showing coherence with the principles drawn up within the Comprehensive EU Approach on crises and external conflicts. Furthermore, this strategy responds to the demands for linking together and harmonising to a greater degree the activities of the EEAS and the EC, as well as those of the EU member states and other international bodies. In terms of its implementation, the European strategy also includes plans for strengthening recipient governments through 'shared responsibility', including a set of 'hard measures' and 'softer measures' through official development aid with the aim of reducing insecurity and violence in Central America and the Caribbean. The attempts to strengthen regional integration are also included within the

scope of the proposal, as is the intention to address the 'structural causes' which give rise to crime and violent conflict. In its design and conception, especially regarding the considerations on long-term objectives such as 'resilience', the European strategy seems to broaden the most traditional or 'hard' interpretations of security, thus setting out an alternative path to the dominant understanding of security in the region which for many years has prioritised the 'war on drugs'.

Nevertheless, greater clarification is needed on *assumed* and *expected* results of what is being implemented, particularly in terms of the dual priorities of 'security' and 'development', particularly regarding the role of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and the expected benefits for them within the framework of the commercial pillar of the recently approved Partnership Agreement between the EU and Central America.³⁴ Important questions that need to be answered are the following: How can citizen security incorporate binding measures, both in a broad sense but also in a specific sense, in order to guarantee human rights such as the right to education, health, social security and work?³⁵ In a

³⁴ According to CEPAL, both in Latin America and the Caribbean and in the European Union SMEs represent 99% of the number of companies and generate between 40% and 80% of employment. Although significant progress has been achieved in entrepreneurial development and labour productivity in a wide range of smaller businesses, this progress "is still far from becoming widespread and far from changing the aggregate variables of the economies in the region" (CEPAL. *La Unión Europea y América Latina y el Caribe ante la nueva coyuntura económica y social*. Santiago de Chile, May 2015. p. 14). On the other hand, according to a study requested by the EC regarding income inequality at the sector level, "there is a risk that increased specialisation patterns and an orientation to export within some sectors, such as the FVN sector, may be of benefit to firms which are already more efficient and relatively large, while SMEs and small-scale (subsistence) farms may not be able benefit from the new opportunities and could even face a relative competitiveness erosion. (ECORYS. *Trade Sustainability Impact Assessment of the Association Agreement to be negotiated between the EU and Central America*. Final Report. Rotterdam, 18 September 2009, p. 79.

³⁵ The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights draws attention to the use of *different concepts* in the Americas when referring to the protection and guarantees of human rights in the face of crime and violence. In some cases a very broad definition is used, which incorporates guarantee measures for other human rights (such as **the right to education; the right to health; the right to social security or the right to work**, among others), whereas in other cases this definition is reduced to the interventions of the police forces and possibly of the justice system. (IACHR Report on

³² CONCLUSIONS OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EU. EU citizen security in Central America and the Caribbean. Brussels, 30 July 2014, p. 12.

³³ *Ídem*, p. 9.

similar way, what is the true meaning behind the statement of the United Nations which says that citizen security policy centred around 'human development' needs to encompass the fact that security is not the only value and nor is it a value which can be assured without any regard for equality?³⁶ With this in mind, the IACHR has already underscored its concern regarding the many institutional weaknesses in the region, not only with a view to solving the persistent problems of poverty, political inequality and social inequality but also solving the problems of crime and violence, the privatisation of security services and the intervention of the armed forces in circumstances of citizen security. The immense complexity of the problem of 'insecurity', along with inflated expectations of what can be achieved through specific development cooperation projects in a context of growing involvement of the private sector³⁷ means that we have to question traditional notions, including conventional notions which have historically guided the scope of aid for security and development in Central American and the Caribbean.

As the recent study of the American think tank Wilson Center concludes, aid for security **will not solve problems of insecurity**, but will help institutions to combat crime and organised crime in a more effective way.³⁸ As the study concludes, in the specific case of North American aid in El Salvador, setting up a programme for aid for the justice system with the intention of solving the problem of the death squads was one way of dealing with the problem without addressing the fundamental issue of the power structures in the region. The study argues that regardless of its

Citizen Security and Human Rights, 2009; point 19; our highlighting).

³⁶ UNDP. Report on Human Development in Central America 2009-2010, p. 8.

³⁷ Sandel, Toni and Hernández, Gustavo. "Aid for the Latin America Investment Facility: Clarity on private sector and focus towards SMEs needed. En: *Aid and the Private Sector: Catalysing Poverty Reduction and Development?* The Reality of Aid 2012 Report, p.48. According to the authors, These issues of the benefits arising from the economic and political leverage provided to the EU by LAIF can be addressed only through more substantive and coherent discussions on the overall purpose of blended financing mechanisms. There must be greater transparency in project selection criteria and accountability to society. As long as the definition of the private sector continues to be unclear and the political desire to support European companies hidden, there will be no clarity on best strategies to involve the private sector in poverty reduction initiatives".

³⁸ Eguizábal, Cristina. "The Regional Security Initiative for Central America". Wilson Center, Op. Cit., p. 42.

technical merits, the issue of whether or not the strategy has been able to address the central causes of violence persists.³⁹ Regardless of its transformations over the last few years which make it more similar to the guidelines of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation Development (OECD),⁴⁰ American aid for security did not provide the expected results. Therefore, the question of what the EU could contribute as *added value* in helping to resolve the serious problems of poverty, inequality, corruption and widespread impunity through the tools it has at its disposal grows in relevance. How is the US focus on aid for Economic Growth and Development in Central America different from the focus of the recently approved Partnership Agreement between the EU and Central America? In what way has the newly binding commercial pillar of the Partnership Agreement contributed to job creation and a reduction in inequality and poverty? What are the views on programmes and projects related to the security sector which have been implemented so far? How are new projects being put together on the security sector within the framework of the 2014-2020 indicative programme? What role will be set aside for civil society beyond that of monitoring and discussing policies? What does the new chapter of the EU-CELAC 2015-2017 Action Plan on citizen security contribute? These are all questions that need to be answered.

³⁹ In its own Regional multiannual indicative programme for Latin America 2014-2020, the EC warns that the region "is still the most unequal in the world", and that "economic growth has to a large degree been based on external demand for natural resources and raw materials". It also warns that "a series of *structural deficiencies* can stand as an obstacle to greater economic growth that creates more integration over the next few years. Among these, the lack of diversification can be cited" (Op. Cit, p. 4; our highlighting).

⁴⁰ According to Cristina Eguizábal (Op. cit, p. 39), three elements brought in by the Obama Administration transformed the focus of American aid, namely: 1) changes to the modus operandi of aid which brings it more in line with the OECD; 2) efforts made at a local level to include all actors; and 3) the strategy of seeing the Alliance for Growth as an initiative of the White House which bestows a unified framework on all American development aid. Such is the case for *The Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle*, an initiative launched in Washington in 2014 with the participation of the presidents of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, which has the following objectives: (i) to create more dynamism in the production sector; (ii) to develop human capital; (iii) to improve citizen security; and finally (iv) to strengthen government institutions.

