



DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EXTERNAL POLICIES
POLICY DEPARTMENT



**EUROPE AND
LATIN AMERICA:
COMBATING DRUGS
AND
DRUG TRAFFICKING**

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STUDY

EUROPE AND LATIN AMERICA: COMBATING DRUGS AND DRUG TRAFFICKING

Abstract

Two decades of cooperation between Europe and Latin America to combat drugs and drug trafficking have had a limited impact in terms of reducing drug consumption and production and have not led to better control of the criminal networks involved in the trafficking. Given this lack of decisive progress, fresh debate is emerging in Latin America on possible alternatives to the traditional models for tackling drugs, which are often seen as increasingly obsolete. These alternatives include measures such as decriminalisation and partial regulation of the drugs market. This study contains recent data on illegal drug consumption and production in the EU and Latin America, a general overview of the policies adopted in both regions, and analysis of the main bi-regional cooperation tools and main aspects of the current debate on drug trafficking. The study concludes with a number of recommendations on how to reform the current drugs and drug trafficking strategies and programmes pursued by both regions and with other partners.

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AUTHOR

Susanne Gratius (with support from David Palacios), Foundation for International Relations and Dialogue (FRIDE).

RESPONSIBLE ADMINISTRATOR:

Jesper TVEVAD
Directorate-General for External Policies
Policy Department
WIB 06 M 051
rue Wiertz 60
B-1047 Brussels

Editorial assistant: Sabine HOFFMANN

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1 DRUGS AND ORGANISED CRIME IN EUROPE AND LATIN AMERICA

Since the 1990s, Latin America and the European Union (EU) have sought to tackle the drugs problem on the basis of the principle of shared responsibility for reducing both supply and demand. Public security has also become a source of concern for both regions in recent years, owing to increased levels of violence in Mexico and Central America linked to the activities of the drugs cartels.

The nature of the debate on drug trafficking and the role of Latin America and the EU has changed. The 'war' on drugs and Europe's focus on harm reduction seem to have done little to significantly reduce drug production and consumption levels and/or to destroy criminal networks. In the light of the view that 'a drug-free world' is not possible and that the 'war on drugs' has failed,¹ alternatives to the current policies have been discussed in Latin America and the EU. These include decriminalisation and regulation of the market for certain drugs. For this reason, and in the light of the upcoming revision of the EU drugs strategy (due in 2012), cooperation between the EU and Latin America in this area needs to include an open debate on potential guidelines and alternative responses which are based on a more comprehensive approach to and new models for tackling the problem together.

The distinction between producer, consumer and transit countries is also less marked than before. Nowadays, both Latin America and Europe are regions where illegal drugs are consumed, produced and transited, and organised crime is present in both, albeit on different scales. Although the Andean region is still the main cocaine-producing region, many synthetic drugs and even some cocaine is produced in Europe. A higher level of development in South America has also led to a rise in the number of users of cocaine and its derivatives - there are estimated to be approximately 900 000 users in Brazil and 600 000 in Argentina.

Cocaine, which is mainly produced in Latin America, is the second most consumed illegal drug in the world, after cannabis. The European cocaine market has 4.5 million users, making it the second largest after the United States (US), where demand fell by 33 % between 1995 and 2009.² Whilst there has been a decline in cocaine use in the US, the number of European cocaine users has doubled in the last decade. Given that the EU is the fastest-growing cocaine market, cooperation with Latin America is key to reducing supply and demand and to combating criminal networks.

1.1 Drug consumption and drug trafficking in the EU

1.1.1 The European drugs market

The former distinction between consumer and producer countries of illegal drugs is disappearing. The EU is thus both a drug producer and consumer. Across Europe as a whole, there has been a significant increase in the production and consumption of synthetic drugs, to the extent that 110 new psychoactive substances were recorded in Europe between 1997 and 2009. Illegal drug production in Europe is focussed on cannabis and 'new drugs', such as amphetamines and ecstasy, which are mainly produced in the Netherlands and Belgium.

As regards 'traditional' drugs, the 2011 report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) states that Europe accounts for 30 % of all cocaine users worldwide. In 2009, approximately 123 tons of cocaine of an estimated value of USD 33 billion were trafficked into Europe, an amount

¹ War on Drugs, *Report of the Global Commission on Drug Policy*, June 2011, available at: <http://www.globalcommissionondrugs.org/Report>.

² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *World Drug Report 2011*, Vienna, 2011, available at: <http://www.http.unodc.org>

similar to that trafficked into the US (157 tons with an approximate value of USD 37 billion).³ If this trend continues, Europe could, in the medium term, become the world's major cocaine market, ahead of the US, where consumption was four times higher than in the EU as recently as the 1990s.

According to the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), Spain is the main entry point of cocaine and cannabis into Europe. It is also the country with the highest level of drug consumption in the EU, ahead of Italy, the United Kingdom and Germany, although this has fallen significantly in recent years to approximately 2001 levels.⁴

Spain is the main entry point into Europe for cocaine from Latin America and is also the European country where the most cocaine has been seized.⁵ Improved border controls in Latin America and better police cooperation between both regions led to a 50 % drop in the number of drug seizures in Spain and Europe after 2006. However, this reduction is also attributable to the existence of new entry points via western Africa, where the borders are more difficult to monitor and where traffickers can make use of existing cannabis networks in countries such as Morocco, the main entry point for cannabis into Europe (via Spain).

1.1.2 New and old drugs routes and organised crime

The main challenge facing governments and state agencies in their efforts to combat drugs is how to break up drug trafficking networks and tackle money laundering in what is a globalised world. In recent decades, the substantial increase in the number of sea, air and road connections, the emergence of new tax havens and the computerisation of financial transfers have laid the basis for the globalisation of the drugs market.⁶ In the EU, free movement of persons and fewer border controls have enabled drugs to be trafficked more easily across borders.

Almost 100 % of cocaine in Europe comes from Latin America, mainly from Colombia, Peru and Bolivia, which account for almost all cocaine production worldwide. Cocaine is trafficked into Europe through Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela and various Central American and Caribbean countries, notably the Dominican Republic, which is used by Mexican cartels for shipments to Spain, the main entry point of cocaine into Europe (see map in Annex II).

Cocaine was traditionally trafficked into Europe in shipments from Colombia that would arrive on the Galician coast of Spain. However, the route is no longer used because of an increase in the number of drug seizures. Today, 30 % of the cocaine consumed in Europe arrives via West Africa (Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and other countries).⁷ Weak State institutions in many African countries, high levels of corruption and poverty, and long, unmonitored coastlines have made this new route the perfect solution for Latin American cartels wanting to import their goods into Europe. However, the cartels have also established another route into Europe, namely by hiding the cocaine in containers on merchant ships travelling between South America, mainly Brazil, and the Balkan states or countries in eastern Europe.

Spain is a key country for those trafficking drugs into the European continent. Although the access routes are now via southern, rather than northern, Spain, it is still the main country of activities of

³ Ibid.

⁴ http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/WDR2011/The_coca-cocaine_market.pdf, p. 12.

⁵ European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), Statistical Bulletin 2011, available at: www.emcdda.europa.eu/stats11

⁶ Keh, D. and Farrell, G. 'Trafficking Drugs in the Global Village', in: Transnational Organized Crime, Vol. 3, No. 2, summer of 1997, pp. 90-110.

⁷ <http://cantomantenafarinha.blogspot.com/2011/05/la-ruta-de-la-cocaina.html>

intermediaries and distributors of cocaine. Spain has also seen increasing numbers of criminal drug trafficking networks operating within its borders; Italian mafia groups and Mexican drugs cartels have set up new teams in Spain to distribute cocaine and cannabis throughout the rest of Europe. It is therefore one of the EU countries that receives the most requests for cooperation and judicial assistance from other Member States.

1.2 Cocaine, drugs cartels and fragile states in Latin America

Although Latin America is still the world's largest cocaine producer, the cocaine market is much smaller now than it was in the 1990s and has been replaced, in part, by other drugs. In 1995, the value of the global cocaine market was approximately USD 165 billion; by 2009, its value was little more than half that figure, owing to falling prices and declining consumption in the US.

Between 2007 and 2010, the amount of land used for coca leaf production fell by 18 %, to a total of 149 200 hectares.⁸ Cocaine production also fell during this period. This downward trend was particularly apparent in Colombia; however, the same period also saw a substantial increase in coca leaf production in Peru and, to a lesser extent, in Bolivia (increased coca leaf production does not necessarily equate to an increase in cocaine production). The region has also become increasingly involved in the production of other drugs, such as marijuana and, more recently, cannabis, opiates and synthetic drugs which are mainly produced in Mexico (see Annex I).

1.2.1 Coca and cocaine production and consumption

Bolivia, Colombia and Peru account for almost all cocaine production in the world, with up to 1 000 tons produced every year. In 2010, the three countries together made up the world's main coca leaf growing area. Most of the coca leaf was grown in Peru and Colombia. The latter was also the main cocaine-producing country.⁹ Despite consistently falling demand over the last decade, the US is still the main market for cocaine trafficked via Mexico and, to a lesser extent, Central America or the Caribbean.

According to the latest report by the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) of the Organisation of American States (OAS),¹⁰ there are 8.4 million cocaine users in the Americas, of which 68 % are in the US, 29 % in South America and 3 % in Central America. These figures show that there has been a worrying increase in cocaine consumption in South American countries, especially in Brazil, where demand is the second highest in the Americas, followed by Argentina and Chile. Mexico is the only country where heroin use is high.

Colombia has been the most successful at reducing illegal coca and cocaine production, through an approach based on (forced) crop eradication and cocaine seizures. Between 1999 and 2010, the number of hectares of land used for coca leaf production in Colombia decreased by 50 %, and is now between 57 000 and 62 000 hectares (depending on the method used to calculate the figure). This downward trend is primarily due to the anti-narcotics policy implemented under Plan Colombia,¹¹ launched in 2000 and co-funded by the US, and to the policy of 'democratic security' devised by the Government of Álvaro Uribe (2002-2010). The policy includes efforts to ensure that there is a State presence in areas previously occupied by armed groups and drug traffickers and to reinforce activities to combat drug-related organised crime.

⁸ Op. cit., UNODC, *World Drug Report 2011*.

⁹ UNODC, 'Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia: Monitoreo de Cultivos de Coca 2010'. La Paz, September 2011.

¹⁰ CICAD, 'Situación actual del uso de drogas en las Américas y desafíos futuros' (Sr. Francisco Cumsille), OAS, Washington DC, 28 October 2011.

¹¹ Adam Isacson, 'Don't Call it a Model', Washington's Office on Latin America (WOLA), Washington DC, 2010.

Although a success in Colombia, the 'war on drugs' has mainly diverted coca cultivation and cocaine production to neighbouring countries: between 1999 and 2010, Peru saw the amount of its land used for drug cultivation practically double and there was also a significant increase in Bolivia. In Bolivia's case, the increase is partly due to the differentiated policy approach of Evo Morales' Government, which believes coca to be a sacred plant of the country's indigenous people and which has put an end to the 'prohibitionist model' and cooperation with the US that dominated the anti-drugs strategies of previous governments.

According to the UNODC, even though Peru has experienced economic growth in recent years, high levels of corruption and weak institutions have encouraged coca production and drug trafficking. The Shining Path guerrilla group, active in the 1980s and 1990s, has made a partial comeback and has been financing most of its activities through drug trafficking, like the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*) rebels and the Colombian National Liberation Army (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional*, ELN). Data from the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) indicate that the Shining Path controls 45 % of coca crops in Peru.¹² Pure cocaine production has also risen in recent years, to 325 tons, to the extent that it is now at a similar level to production in Colombia (Annex I).

Mexico is a major heroin and cannabis producer; Mexican cartels began their involvement in the trade of these two illegal drugs in the 1970s and 1980s before they began trafficking cocaine from Bolivia, Colombia and Peru. Today, 90 % of the cocaine consumed in the US enters the country via Mexico or Central America, whilst the Caribbean has become an important transit route for trafficking cocaine into Europe. The Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Panama and Venezuela are important transit countries for smuggling cocaine into the US and European markets. Money laundering activities mainly take place in certain Caribbean countries and, to an increasing extent, in Central America owing to its weak institutions and the presence of criminal networks.

1.2.2 Drugs cartels: from Colombia to Mexico

Mexico has replaced Colombia as the operational base of the main drugs cartels. The breaking-up of the Medellín and Cali cartels in the 1990s and the subsequent organisation of the traffickers into mini cartels in Colombia have played a part in strengthening the position of the Mexican cartels in the drugs trade since 2000.

There are currently seven main Mexican cartels (the Sinaloa, Gulf, Los Zetas,¹³ Tijuana, Juárez,¹⁴ South Pacific, ex Beltrán Leyva and the Michoacán Family cartels) and a number of smaller ones fighting for control of a market whose net revenue was USD 137 billion in 2009. Fighting between the main cartels and the widespread deployment of security forces under the Government of President Felipe Calderón have led to a dramatic escalation of violence in some Mexican states, which, according to the Mexican attorney general's office, cost 47 515 lives between December 2006 and September 2011.

Although the Mexican states most affected by the violence are those which border the US, the cartels also operate throughout most of the country. The Sinaloa cartel, which is thought to control 45 % of Mexican drug trafficking, is currently the largest group, followed by Los Zetas. Using violence on an

¹² <http://peru21.pe/noticia/1320372/peru-primer-productor-cocaina-pura>

¹³ Los Zetas, made up of former soldiers, operate in Mexico and Central America and are considered to be the most violent cartel. They originate from a group of hired killers contracted by the Gulf cartel.

¹⁴ The Juárez cartel was the first to participate, from the 1980s, in the trafficking of cocaine from Colombia.

unprecedented scale, both cartels battle for control of the drugs market and other criminal activities (people and organ trafficking, etc.).

1.2.3 Drug-related violence

Drug trafficking is one of the main factors behind increased criminal violence, particularly in Central America, Mexico and Venezuela, but also in Colombia and Brazil. In these countries, drug-related violence has the potential to undermine democracy, development and governability in a way that could sabotage the political, economic and social achievements of recent years. Latin America is the second most violent region in the world, with an average homicide rate of 25 per 100 000 people (a rate four times higher than in Europe). Organised crime groups, and drugs cartels in particular, base themselves in areas and countries where there is less of a State presence and where institutions are less stable and/or democratic.

Drug traffickers have the capacity to infiltrate all State institutions, including the police, judiciary and prison system, particularly in countries where the transition to democracy is incomplete¹⁵ and which are vulnerable to corruption and intimidation. This means that criminal networks operate primarily in countries that have weak State institutions with a long-held authoritarian and clientelistic tradition, and therefore pose a serious threat to democracy, public security and development. Deep-rooted inequalities in some Latin American countries, low levels of education and a large black economy are other factors which encourage the establishment of criminal drug-trafficking networks.

In Central America, the death toll from escalating violence which is partly caused by drug trafficking has now exceeded that of the civil wars. With a homicide rate of more than 60 murders per 100 000 people, El Salvador and Honduras, followed by Guatemala, were the countries most affected by public insecurity in 2010. Although this increasing violence has led some to question the current response to crime and drug trafficking, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala have still opted for a mainly hard-line approach.¹⁶

Drug-related violence is more prevalent in some Mexican regions than in others - in some states (Veracruz, the Federal District) it is responsible for fewer than 8 deaths per 100 000 people, whilst in others (Chihuahua, Guerrero, Sinaloa, Durango, Tamaulipas) it accounts for more than 70 deaths per 100 000 people. Approximately 70 % of drug-related deaths occurred in eight of the country's 32 states. Mexico has seen a dramatic increase in the levels of violence, from 2 766 homicides in 2007 to 16 603 in 2011. However, the homicide rate is still lower than that of Brazil, for example.¹⁷

Drug trafficking is one of many factors that have led to a public security crisis in other countries such as Venezuela. The capital, Caracas, has a homicide rate of 118 per 100 000 inhabitants, making it the second most dangerous Latin American city in 2010 after Ciudad Juárez, Mexico.¹⁸ Drug trafficking networks have also been operating out of Central America, an important transit area for cocaine. In an interview published on 23 June 2011, the former Colombian President, Ernesto Samper, warned that, without strong international support, Central America could end up becoming a sort of Vietnam in the fight against drugs.¹⁹

¹⁵ R. Benítez Manaut, *La nueva seguridad regional: amenazas irregulares, crimen organizado y narcotráfico en México y América Central*, Comentario FRIDE, Madrid, March 2009.

¹⁶ Raúl Benítez Manaut, op. cit., p. 4

¹⁷ L. Prados, 'México resiste entre dos fuegos', in: *El País*, Madrid, 5 February 2012.

¹⁸ Susanne Grätius, *The EU's Potential and Limits for Early Warning in Bolivia, Colombia and Venezuela*, International Alert, London, 2011.

¹⁹ <http://www.blogs.cnnmexico.com/aristegui/2011/06/23>

2 POLICIES AND TOOLS TO COMBAT DRUGS AND ORGANISED CRIME

2.1 EU strategies

2.1.1 Policy convergence

Although drug trafficking networks do operate in Europe and European drug production has increased, the EU's main problem is still drug consumption and EU policies are therefore mainly focussed on controlling demand for illegal drugs. The EU has been coordinating a drugs and drug trafficking policy for 20 years, which has led to the adoption of eight joint strategies or action plans. Whilst the EU views illegal drug consumption and addiction as a public health problem, it has adopted a public security and enforcement-based approach to organised crime. Its policy is based on the reduction of both supply and demand via 'a balanced and integrated approach'.²⁰

The result is that national strategies are increasingly oriented around the European model of 'harm reduction' (prevention, medical treatment and partial decriminalisation of drug use) and reflective of a differentiated policy approach. In 2003, the EU made 'harm reduction' a common principle for the drafting of the EU drugs strategy for the period 2005-2012, which was adopted in December 2004.

Since the mid-1990s, when, for example, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) was established (in Lisbon, 1993), there has been more consistency between the drugs policies adopted by the EU Member States. The role of the EMCDDA is to ensure that more information is available and exchanged regarding legislation and prevention and health policies. More generally, the joint prevention policy has had a positive impact on the health of drug addicts and has helped reduce drug-related crime. However, there has still not been a fall in consumption. In fact, demand for cocaine in particular has increased over the last 10 years.

Although drugs policies are still a national competence, the EU has managed, via the EMCDDA, Europol, Eurojust and the EU drugs strategy for the period 2005-2012 (implemented under two action plans), to ensure that the Member States share their information and experiences and that their police forces cooperate to a reasonable level. The EU Drugs Action Plan for 2009-2012 takes a comprehensive approach to tackling the drugs problem by prioritising coordination within the EU, reduction of supply and demand and international-level cooperation.

Although progress has been made, Member States still have different opinions on what their political priorities should be. Whilst the majority pursue policies that focus on prevention, medical treatment and the decriminalisation of drug consumption, others prefer an enforcement-based approach to drug consumption and possession through the imposition of criminal penalties. These differences make it difficult for the EU to adopt common positions in international bodies and in discussions with third parties, including Latin America. Nevertheless, the main approach adopted in Europe for reducing demand is decriminalisation of the consumption and possession of small quantities of drugs. This approach is particularly evident in countries such as Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, Portugal and the United Kingdom.

2.1.2 New challenges

Unlike its joint measures for controlling drug consumption, the EU's efforts to combat organised crime are a more recent development. One of the challenges the EU addresses in the action plan

²⁰ Council, *EU Drugs Action Plan for 2009-2012* (2008/C 326/09), Official Journal of the European Union, Brussels, 20 December 2008.

implementing the Stockholm Programme for the area of justice, freedom and security between 2010-2014, adopted by the European Council in December 2009, is how to couple its efforts to combat drugs with those to combat organised crime. One approach is to strengthen Europol and Eurojust, given that, for example, the number of drug trafficking cases submitted to Eurojust has tripled since 2004. The EU has also adopted five legislative instruments which enable it to confiscate the criminal assets of drug traffickers, but they have had only a limited impact, much like the current EU money laundering directive.²¹

The work of Europol and the use of border controls have enabled more drugs to be seized in the EU (see Annex I). In Europe in 2009, approximately 100 tons of the 217 tons of cocaine originally estimated to be destined for the European market were seized.²² Police cooperation and Europol have also helped the EU to control drug-related organised crime more effectively. However, there are still major gaps in its anti-narcotics work, particularly in countries where criminal groups are more prevalent, such as Italy, Spain and certain eastern European countries.

In the years to come, EU policies will focus on identifying and controlling new drugs, developing other preventive measures and practices to promote social cohesion, educating and providing treatment for young people in particular, and ensuring cooperation and training on border controls. However, no assessment has been made as yet to determine the effectiveness of these education and prevention policies.

One challenge that has become a major cause for concern in the EU is the trafficking of the precursor chemicals used to produce drugs such as cocaine and heroin. A series of such chemicals are required to convert opium into heroin. The chemicals are themselves converted into 'pre-precursors' to avoid discovery by the authorities. This is a major challenge, given that many precursors are available legally on the European market. International cooperation is therefore essential in order to successfully monitor the trafficking of these particular products.

In order to break up criminal networks and control the demand for drugs, coordination across the EU (given the absence of border controls between countries party to the Schengen Agreement) is absolutely essential. Efforts to ensure coordinated action and consistent policy approaches throughout Europe have had a positive impact, leading, amongst other things, to the development of joint policies and to drug seizures in the region. Almost all Member States are currently applying harm reduction policies and carrying out joint police operations against drug trafficking networks. Although similar efforts have been made in the Americas, national sovereignty issues and different approaches to the problem are still an impediment to effective cooperation across the Americas as a whole and between Latin American countries more specifically.

2.2 Responses in the Americas

Various cooperation initiatives are in place in the Americas, as in the EU, for tackling drugs and organised crime. However, joint policies have not been drawn up, as each individual country continues to pursue the solutions that it believes to be the most appropriate. Counter-narcotics strategies are also a politically sensitive issue in Latin America, in the light of the traditional emphasis, in US national policy and its policies towards the Americas as a whole, on measures such as crop eradication and penalties for drug possession. For this reason, there has not been a consistent approach to the problem in the

²¹ European Commission, *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, Towards a Stronger European Response to Drugs*, COM(2011) 689/2, Brussels, 2011, p. 6.

²² Op. cit., UNODC, *World Drug Report 2011*, p. 21.

Americas; some countries have chosen to focus on prevention and decriminalisation, whilst others have adopted what is essentially a hard-line approach.

2.2.1 The 'soft' approach of CICAD (OAS)

Since the end of the 1990s, the Organisation of American States (OAS) has been calling for greater policy convergence for combating the drugs problem. In addition to drugs-related cooperation projects, the Inter-American Observatory on Drugs and the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM) were created in 2000.

In May 2010, CICAD adopted the Hemispheric Drug Strategy, the main principles of which are consistent with those of the EU. The strategy lays down that 'the principle of common and shared responsibility is fundamental to strengthening hemispheric and regional cooperation in all its forms'²³ and includes actions aimed at reducing drug supply and demand. The OAS Member States have also made a commitment to promoting alternative development programmes and to cooperating in criminal investigations and arms control activities aimed at breaking up drug trafficking networks.

In June 2011, the OAS General Assembly approved the Hemispheric Plan of Action on Drugs 2011-2015, in which the Member States made a commitment, inter alia, to adopt measures to strengthen institutions, to reduce supply and demand, and to use the MEM to assess the policies that had been implemented.

This recent progress is evidence of greater policy convergence between Latin American countries and the US. The latter is gradually beginning to abandon its traditional emphasis on a war against drugs that prioritises enforcement and criminalisation. This change provides an opportunity for more coordination and cooperation, on the basis of the principle of shared responsibility. Efforts to strengthen judicial, criminal and police institutions and to tackle corruption and poverty also point to a shift towards a more European approach that seeks to deal with the causes of drug abuse and drug trafficking.

2.2.2 The war on drugs in the US: a paradigm shift?

Washington's traditional approach to drugs and organised crime has been to eradicate crops, to criminalise consumption and to use military force to crack down on drug traffickers. In Latin America, the anti-narcotics work of the US Drug Enforcement Administration, support for the military and police (primarily in Colombia), and the certification process (whereby sanctions may be imposed against countries that do not cooperate with the US in its efforts to combat drugs) were the main components of a US policy that has been met with substantial resistance in the region.

Between 1980 and 2008, the US spent more than USD 13 billion on counter-narcotics work in the region. Most of the funds were channelled through Plan Colombia, which received USD 7.3 billion of funding between 2000 and 2010.

Although the three main programmes supported by the US for tackling drugs and organised crime in Latin America (namely the Merida Initiative, Plan Colombia and the Andean Counterdrug Initiative) have included institutional and social measures, the programmes have tended to focus mainly on enforcement activities. Other smaller programmes include the *Central American Regional Security Initiative* (CARSI), which mainly targets Guatemala and Panama, and a similar programme for the Caribbean, the *Caribbean Basin Security Initiative* (CBSI), which focuses on the Bahamas, Haiti, Jamaica

²³ CICAD, *Hemispheric Drug Strategy*, OAS, Washington DC, 3 May 2010.

and the Dominican Republic. According to a report by the Congressional Research Service,²⁴ the results of this approach have been mixed: although the policy has been relatively successful in Colombia, drug production and trafficking have spread to other countries (Bolivia, Mexico and Peru). The report also states that 'baby cartels' have emerged in Colombia and that such armed groups are still involved in drug trafficking.

Since Barack Obama became President in 2009, there has been a shift in US anti-drugs policy towards a more European approach, with drug consumption beginning to be seen as a public health problem, rather than a security problem. For example, the Government has made a commitment, among others, to reduce drug consumption among 12 to 17 year-olds by 15 %.²⁵ At international level, the Government has adopted the principle of shared responsibility, by seeking to reduce both supply and demand. President Obama has also recognised his country's responsibility in relation to drug-related violence and the fact that demand for drugs in the US is fuelling the crisis, and has promised to pursue a new strategy based on prevention, treatment and education.²⁶

This important change is also beginning to be seen in the US anti-drugs policy towards Latin America. Funding for Plan Colombia has been reduced, and the focus of the US approach has moved from enforcement to institutional strengthening and social development. The certification process has also become less important as a diplomacy tool and sanctions mechanism.²⁷ Following Europe's example, the US is also promoting alternative development rather than forced eradication, the social and environmental impact of which has played a part in altering the traditional 'war on drugs' model that dominated in the 1980s and 1990s, when drug trafficking was considered to be the main security threat to the US. Efforts to strengthen legal systems and the police, as well as support for communities affected by drug-related violence, are evidence of a new US approach to drugs and drug trafficking which is facilitating enhanced international cooperation and coordination.

The Obama Administration believes Mexican drugs cartels to be the 'greatest organised crime threat to the United States'.²⁸ However, it has still not recognised its share of the responsibility for the violence carried out by such cartels, which source their weapons almost exclusively from the US. In any case, were it fears to be confirmed about the spread of organised crime at its southern border with Mexico, it could change its policy and even adopt measures for better arms control.

2.3 Policies in Latin America: between enforcement and depenalisation

Latin American drugs policies can be divided into what could be called a 'softer' strategy that is more in line with the European approach, on the one hand, and the ongoing 'war on drugs' advocated by the US, on the other hand. Although Central America, Colombia and Mexico are continuing to pursue hard-line policies against drugs and drug trafficking, little by little there is increasing acceptance in the region of an approach that prioritises harm reduction and comprehensive policies to tackle consumption and small-scale drug trafficking. Some countries are also considering whether to regulate the market for some drugs.

²⁴ C. Ribando Seelke (coord.), *Latin America and the Caribbean: Illicit Drug Trafficking and U.S. Counterdrug Programs*, Congressional Research Service, Washington DC, 30 April 2010.

²⁵ European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, *Annual Report 2011: The State of the Drugs Problem in Europe*, Lisbon, 2011, p. 20.

²⁶ Consideraciones del presidente Obama sobre América Latina, Santiago de Chile, 21 March 2011.

²⁷ Although President Obama decertified Bolivia and Venezuela in 2010, he lifted sanctions concerning the reduction of development assistance funding.

²⁸ C. Ribando Seelke, *op.cit.*

At regional level, the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) agreed in November 2011 to coordinate policies on prevention, supply and demand reduction, drug trafficking control and money laundering. There has also been agreement on similar initiatives in the Andean Community, the Central American Integration System (*Sistema de Integración Centroamericana*, SICA) and Caribbean countries.²⁹ However, the importance of national sovereignty in Latin America is a major barrier to the adoption and implementation of joint policies.

There has been a gradual shift in many Latin American countries from 'zero-tolerance' to 'European-style harm reduction' policies. In addition to reducing the number of drug-related deaths and number of addicts who are chronically sick, this new approach is helping to reduce the prison population, which, in most countries, fuels the drug trafficking problem and the associated spiral of violence. Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela, among others, are starting to adopt or have announced policies to depenalise the consumption and possession of small quantities of drugs.

In the Brazilian cities of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, the homicide rates and number of cases of drug-related violence have fallen. This positive trend is partly the result of social policies that are more focussed on Brazil's *favelas* (slums) and of a different approach to policing that involves working more closely with local people. Pacifying Police Units (or UPPs) are still present in Rio de Janeiro's main favelas and, in addition to their policing role, carry out social and infrastructure tasks.³⁰ 'Favela-tourism' and the promotion of investment in the poorest areas also point to a new policy aimed at including the favelas in the city as a whole and ensuring better control of drug trafficking.

Since Evo Morales became President in January 2006, Bolivia has pursued a differentiated policy approach that distinguishes between the cultivation of coca leaf, which is considered sacred by the country's indigenous communities, and the production of illegal drugs such as cocaine. Bolivia therefore rejected the forced eradication policy promoted by the US, a decision which led to the closure of the Drug Enforcement Administration's Bolivia office in 2008. Since then, under the slogan 'zero cocaine', the Bolivian Government has been focussed on carrying out cocaine seizures.

By contrast, anti-drugs policies in Colombia and Mexico are focussed on tackling organised crime. In Colombia, the policy has an important security dimension, given that it forms part of the country's efforts to root out armed groups under Plan Colombia and the democratic security policy which was launched by President Álvaro Uribe and continued by his successor Juan Manuel Santos. There have been close links between armed groups and drug trafficking in Colombia for decade; the FARC, the ELN and paramilitary groups are currently involved in the drugs trade. Although Colombia's policy of enforcement and criminalisation has been a partial success, it has also diverted the problem to other countries, mainly Mexico, and has led to the development of what are known as 'emerging criminal groups' (or BACRIM (*bandas criminales emergentes*) according to their Spanish acronym) which have replaced the big drugs cartels.

In Mexico in 2006, when Felipe Calderón declared war against the drug traffickers, the country had limited tools and resources to counter the economic and military strength of the drugs cartels (who benefitted from the free flow of weapons across Mexico's northern border with the US). Given that the Mexican police force was largely unprepared for such a war and hampered in its efforts by corruption problems, President Calderón was forced to deploy the army. Since President Calderón came to power, the Mexican Government has doubled its security budget (from approximately 150 billion pesos, the

²⁹ Including the creation of the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force against money laundering.

³⁰ S. Gratius and M. Valença, *Urban violence in Rio de Janeiro and Caracas: Local and European responses*, International Alert, London, 2012 (soon to be published).

equivalent of USD 118 million in 2012) and has increased six-fold the number of security force personnel (including a fourth of the army) involved in combating drug trafficking. As a result, violence between government forces and drug traffickers has escalated and has had serious public security consequences in the worst-affected areas. What is more, US support via the Merida Initiative, in receipt of USD 1.6 billion of funding over three years, has proven relatively ineffective, particularly given that the drugs cartels have an estimated annual revenue of USD 37 billion. Despite having captured a number of the major drugs bosses, Calderón's Government has not won the fight against drug trafficking and there is an increasing debate about possible alternatives to the current security strategy.

2.4 Impact of the policies

Many joint initiatives are in place and a high level of drugs-related information is exchanged in both Europe and the Americas. There is also coordinated police and judicial action against drug trafficking in the EU. However, despite specific progress, a cost-benefit analysis reveals that the results of anti-drug trafficking policies in Europe and the Americas have been limited. In the Americas, intensive dialogue about the issue has helped to increase information and governmental cooperation in the field, but there is still substantial room for improvement in terms of joint actions to tackle drug consumption and drug-related organised crime. Even in the EU, there are still differences between Member States that have hindered the adoption of common positions and policies.

According to the Global Commission on Drug Policy, an international body comprised of individuals who have held important posts in national governments and international organisations and reputed intellectuals, 'the war on drugs has failed' and enforcement policies have had a balloon effect³¹ by diverting the problem, in the case of Latin America, from one country (Colombia) to another (Mexico). Although there has been some harm reduction, the commission takes the view that the EU's coordinated policies and its alternative approach have failed to alter the patterns of drugs supply and demand. Furthermore, criminal networks have begun operating and extending their influence in areas beyond Latin America.

For many people, the wave of drug-related violence in Mexico and Europe's growing cocaine market highlight the need to find alternative strategies for dealing with drugs and organised crime. Current strategies have been based on two main approaches: a punitive hard-line response involving the army as a last resort and/or the adoption of 'softer' policies based on prevention, health and decriminalisation.

Experience in the EU has shown that its policy approach provides an alternative to the model which has not only dominated until now in the US, but which has also been reflected in the United Nations drugs conventions (1961, 1971 and 1988). The EU has created various tools - multiannual strategies, action plans and the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction - for the purposes of devising a genuine joint policy based on harm reduction. In general, the comprehensive approach adopted by Europe has tended to be more effective than hard-line responses, which not only redirect the problem elsewhere but have a series of negative secondary effects (insecurity, violence, imprisonment, risk of human rights violations, etc.).

However, neither of the two approaches has had a significant impact on the size of the drugs market and organised crime in Europe and Latin America. Rather, a lack of coordination and joint responses has made the policies less effective. Owing to the differences previously mentioned, coordinated responses

³¹ War on Drugs, *Report of the Global Commission on Drug Policy*, June 2011, p. 2, available at: [http:// www.globalcommissionondrugs.org](http://www.globalcommissionondrugs.org).

have not been pursued in Latin America or the EU. Instead, the responses still vary according to the government and/or the specific nature of the problem in each country.

3 DRUGS AND DRUG TRAFFICKING IN EU-LAC RELATIONS

3.1 Shared principles, joint approaches and priority areas

Since the 1990s, cooperation between Europe and Latin America to combat illegal drugs and organised crime has been based on the principle of shared responsibility for the reduction of both supply and demand. In all their joint declarations on the issue, both regions show that they consider illegal drugs to be a both social and security problem that requires a comprehensive policy response. The development assistance model has traditionally characterised cooperation between Europe and Latin America in this field.

Anti-drugs cooperation has been pursued on three levels. Firstly, given the need for a global response³² to the drugs problem, the United Nations and other multilateral bodies have played a role in facilitating joint action. Bi-regional cooperation is another component and has mainly been focussed on the Andean region, where most cocaine is produced. On the basis of cooperation or association agreements signed by the EU with certain countries and its two strategic partnerships (with Brazil and Mexico), bilateral action has also become more important in efforts to tackle drugs and organised crime.

The traditional north-south distinction is also starting to change, as Latin America is increasingly a region of drug users (as well as producers), particularly of cocaine and its derivatives. This development and the violence in Central America and Mexico also point to the need for a change in counter-narcotics policies that are very much focussed on development cooperation and EU-defined priorities. New cooperation tools and joint action need to be pursued to tackle drug consumption, drug trafficking networks and the emergence of new drug routes.

3.2 Tools

In comparison with development cooperation programmes, EU-Latin American cooperation on anti-narcotics work has assigned less importance to joint customs controls, enforcement activities and other police measures. Spain and the United Kingdom have been particularly active in this respect. The EU has also signed agreements with various countries in the region on the control of precursor chemicals and money laundering.

In the Action Plan agreed at the VI EU-LAC Summit, held in Madrid on 18 May 2010, Latin American and Caribbean countries and the EU agreed to strengthen and consolidate bi-regional dialogue on drugs, enhance cooperation on the control of precursor chemicals and money laundering and boost police, customs and judicial action.³³ Until now, apart from bilateral policies implemented by some Member States, the EU's main response to the drugs problem in Latin America has been development cooperation and, to a lesser extent, political dialogue.

3.2.1 EU-LAC dialogue on drugs

In 1995, the EU launched a specialised high-level political dialogue on drugs with the countries of the Andean Community of Nations. Then, in 1998, the Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism on Drugs

³² See, for example, Council of the European Union, *Note from the Presidency to the Horizontal Working Party on Drugs on the Bogota Declaration*, CORDROGUE 48, Brussels, 7 July 2011.

³³ See point 6, among others, of the EU-LAC Action Plan, in: Council of the European Union, *EU-LAC Summit, Madrid, 18 May 2010*, Brussels, 2010.

was established between the EU, Latin America and the Caribbean, and meetings have been held on 13 subsequent occasions. Currently under review, the dialogue has helped to ensure greater consistency between the positions adopted by EU-LAC countries to combat drugs, to set the priorities in this area and to launch cooperation programmes and bilateral agreements on the control of precursor chemicals and money laundering. Furthermore, drug-related cooperation has been an important part of the work of the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly (EUROLAT) and, previously, of the joint conferences of the European and Latin American Parliaments. The issue has also been discussed by other bi-regional bodies, such as the Rio Group and at EU-LAC Summits.

The Panama Action Plan and the Lisbon Priorities, adopted in 1999 and 2000 under the framework of the Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism on Drugs, established five priority areas for cooperation:

- demand reduction,
- judicial, police and customs cooperation,
- maritime cooperation,
- measures to tackle money laundering, and
- more robust legislation and institutional capacity-building.

In the Port of Spain Declaration, adopted in May 2007, both regions set out a series of specific measures aimed specifically at capacity-building and the exchange of information on drugs policies. They agreed, *inter alia*, to create a mutual technical assistance programme on capacity-building (police, customs, judicial action, prevention and treatment activities), called for the establishment of drug observatories and strengthened maritime cooperation and the control of precursor chemicals and money laundering. The Cooperation Programme between Latin America and the European Union on Drugs Policies (COPOLAD) emerged as a result of the declaration.

Joint action has traditionally focussed on alternative development and on cooperation to reduce the supply of and demand for illegal drugs. Until COPOLAD was created, there was little emphasis on coordinating policies or, in particular, on strengthening the institutional base needed for government responses.

3.2.2 Cooperation projects

Shared principles and action plans have been translated into a series of specific projects and legal instruments. Most of the EU's anti-drugs projects concern the Andean and Central American countries. As regards regional-level cooperation, COPOLAD was established in 2009 and is structured around four components, namely capacity-building to reduce both supply and demand, and the consolidation of national drugs observatories and the bi-regional dialogue mechanism. COPOLAD's main objective is to improve the pooling of experience on drugs policies in order to improve the coordination and effectiveness of such policies. However, funding for this objective is limited (only EUR 6 million).

Another project, under the framework of the Instrument for Stability, is the programme on the prevention of the diversion of drug precursors in the Latin American and Caribbean region (PRELAC), which is implemented by the UNODC. The EU has also committed EUR 20 million under the Instrument for Stability to a project which is seeking to boost judicial cooperation in tackling the criminal networks operating along the cocaine route (2009-2012). Another initiative, PRADICAN (Programme for combating illegal drugs in the Andean Community), is designed to strengthen the anti-drugs policies of the Andean countries.

Most of the projects are designed to reduce the drugs supply (102 of a total of 135,³⁴ compared with only 22 projects focussed on reducing demand). The resources allocated by the EU to tackling drug trafficking in Latin America are also relatively limited (approximately EUR 221 million for projects of varying lengths):

European Commission anti-drugs projects, 2010

Recipient	Millions of euros	Project description
COLACAO	1.2	Cooperation against cocaine trafficking from Latin America to West Africa (with UNODC)
Latin America	6	COPOLAD: defining anti-drugs cooperation strategies
Latin America	2.5	PRELAC: preventing the diversion of precursors in the Latin American and Caribbean region
Andean Community	3.25	PRADICAN: supporting the Andean anti-drugs plan
	2.55	DROSICAN: project to tackle synthetic drugs in the region (due to expire)
Bolivia	7	APEMIN II: sustainable development in coca-growing areas (due to expire)
	13	FONADAL: social infrastructure and local authorities in coca-growing areas (due to expire)
	26	Support for the Coca Integrated Development Plan
	10	Support for the Control of Coca Production in Bolivian Society
	9	PISCO: institutional strengthening to combat drug trafficking
Colombia	92	Peace laboratory in Magdalena Medio (I, II and III): alternative development, peace and stability (due to expire)
	26	Regional development for peace and stability: follow-up of the peace laboratories
	8.4	Regional development for peace and stability
Peru	10	Alternative development and State modernisation
Venezuela	3.3	Drug stop: support for the national plan to combat drugs
Total	221	

Drawn up by the author using data from the European Commission.

3.2.3 Alternative development

Since the 1990s, the main method supported by the EU for reducing the drugs supply in Latin America has been replacing coca crops with other agricultural products. Since 1990, the EU has also been granting special trade preferences to Andean and Central American countries under the scheme known as the Drugs GSP (Generalised System of Preferences), or 'GSP+' since 2005. These preferences have boosted exports: barring some exceptions, 90 % of agricultural products from the countries in question have had access to the European market under preferential conditions, thanks to the Drugs GSP.

³⁴ Of these 102 projects, 30 are focussed on alternative development (the area where most resources are used, with all the projects located in Peru, Colombia and Bolivia), 4 concern the diversion of precursors, and 68 focus on other supply reduction measures.

Now that the EU has signed free trade agreements with Colombia, Peru and Central America, among others, these preferences will no longer be relevant. This provides an opportunity to take a new look at the alternative development programme and to consider how to create new trade incentives for the export into the European market of agricultural products that could replace coca leaf crops.

For more than 20 years, the EU has been funding alternative development projects in various parts of Bolivia, Colombia and Peru. The results are mixed, given that coca and cocaine production in Bolivia and Peru has increased. Some critical reports conclude that the European projects do not have a notable impact in terms of crop eradication or the development of the affected areas.³⁵ One of the problems that has prevented the alternative development policy from having a more profound impact is the lack of infrastructure and marketing channels for traditional products (in comparison with coca and cocaine). Even so, it has served as an example of an alternative model to the eradication and militarised policy that focussed on criminalisation and enforcement. In fact, on the basis of European experience, the US has recently given alternative development a more central role, particularly in its policy towards Colombia.

3.3 Results

Projects currently being implemented and the mutual trust established during almost two decades of dialogue show that cooperation between Europe and Latin America in combating drugs has been positive. Thanks to a better flow of information between police forces, among other factors, Latin America has managed to intercept much more cocaine before it reaches the European market. However, despite these specific positive results, the increase in levels of consumption and drug trafficking shows that, in general, cooperation between the two regions has not managed to secure lasting progress towards eradicating the problem.

This conclusion is reflected, for instance, in the Joint Declaration from the XIII Meeting (25-28 November 2011) of the EU-Mexico Joint Parliamentary Committee, which states that 'drug enforcement policies have traditionally alternated between prohibitionism and harm reduction, without, however, achieving notable success, and that thoroughgoing assessment therefore needs to be brought to bear on those models'.³⁶

³⁵ M. Pi, 'La acción de la Unión Europea en la lucha contra la droga en la zona andina', in: A. Ayuso and S. Beltrán (eds.), *Hacia una zona andina de paz*, Fundación Cidob, Barcelona, 2007, pp. 167-193. p. 180.

³⁶ EU-Mexico Joint Parliamentary Committee, XIII Meeting of the EU-Mexico Joint Parliamentary Committee, Ciudad de México and Oaxaca, 25-28 November 2011, point 27, p. 4.

4 A NEW MODEL: TOWARDS GREATER CONVERGENCE BETWEEN ANTI-DRUGS POLICIES

The comprehensive drugs policy approach that dominates in the EU could become the new model for tackling the problem in the Americas and globally. At the same time as more countries are starting to adopt harm reduction policies, more and more people are voicing their opposition towards the 'war on drugs' strategy. Although this policy has been a success in certain countries, it has led to a vicious circle in others. In the light of what some see as the failure of the prohibitionist and hard-line model and the huge costs that it entails, a new global debate is emerging on greater policy convergence around what could be called the 'European model'. More and more countries in the Americas are starting to adopt a similar approach to the EU: decriminalising consumption, implementing public health and prevention policies, reducing both supply and demand, pursuing alternative development strategies and regulating the legal use of certain less harmful narcotic drugs, such as cannabis.

4.1 The 'European model' of harm reduction

European drugs policy is based on 'harm reduction'. In most EU Member States, drug addicts are seen as people who are ill, rather than as criminals. Not all of the countries have adopted this policy and legislation varies from one Member State to another.³⁷ However, Europe has long-standing experience of decriminalisation of drug consumption and regulation of certain drugs that are considered to be less harmful. Recent studies have confirmed³⁸ that decriminalisation and regulation have not led to an increase in the use of such drugs, but that medical treatment and control tend to reduce the number of addicts.³⁹

Following the traditionally more permissive approach taken by the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Luxembourg, Portugal, the United Kingdom and, more recently, France, countries such as Greece, Estonia and the Czech Republic have partly modified their drugs policies in recent years to reflect a more comprehensive approach that includes health considerations and the decriminalisation of small quantities of drugs. In Spain and the Netherlands, it is also legal to grow marijuana for personal use. However, this has not led to higher levels of consumption than in countries where the drug is illegal.

In the light of the limits of the prohibitionist approach (the US has the world's largest prison population owing to drug trafficking and consumption offences), California and some Latin American countries have adopted policies to decriminalise consumption and small-scale trafficking.

4.2 New global approaches from Latin America

A new debate has emerged in Latin America on how to tackle the drugs problem in a way that goes beyond a purely hard-line approach. This is reflected in the creation, in 2009 by a group of experts and former presidents, of the Latin American Commission on Drugs and Democracy. In its first declaration,⁴⁰ the commission questioned publicly for the first time the effectiveness of a 'war on drugs' based on prohibitionist and hard-line policies that have 'not yielded the expected results'. The commission recommended that Latin America adopt an approach that gives it a real influence in the international debate on illegal drugs.

³⁷ For more details, see: T.Blickman and M. Jelsma, 'La reforma de las políticas de drogas', in: *Nueva Sociedad* 222, Buenos Aires 2009.

³⁸ See, for example, E. Schatz, K. Schiffer et al., *The Dutch Treatment and Social Support System for drug users*, International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC), Amsterdam, January 2011.

³⁹ See War on Drugs, *Report of the Global Commission on Drug Policy*, June 2011.

⁴⁰ Latin American Commission on Drugs and Democracy, *Drugs and Democracy: Toward a Paradigm Shift*, 2009.

The Global Commission on Drug Policy was created on that basis. Its first report, published in June 2011, criticised the counter-productive effects of the prohibitionist model, namely the emergence of a huge global black market in drugs, and recommended that urgent reforms be undertaken of national and global drug-control policies⁴¹ to reflect Europe's focus on prevention and decriminalisation.

The conclusions of both commissions have influenced public opinion and there is now support for reviewing the tools and principles on which the fight against drugs and organised crime is based. In this respect, there is increased support for the idea that regulating the legal use of certain substances could be a way to reduce the illegal income of drug traffickers and the huge profits of the criminal networks. The Global Commission on Drug Policy takes the view that this method could be a more effective way to break up the drug trafficking networks and, as a result, the main source of violence in Latin America.

4.3 How to create an effective joint policy

Although drug trafficking is a highly globalised business, responses to it are mainly undertaken at national level. Given the global nature of the problem, such responses need to be pursued at international level if they are to be effective. However, until now, two approaches - prohibition and harm reduction - have dominated the international debate on drugs. The United Nations drugs conventions have also tended to reflect a prohibitionist and hard-line approach that is consistent with US anti-drugs policy.

The adoption of European-style policies in the Americas shows that the 'European model' is gaining ground. The US is also starting to place more emphasis on the reduction of both supply and demand. However, whilst health and prevention-based policies dominate the response to drug consumption, the war on drug trafficking is still ongoing in Central America, Colombia and Mexico, and has had huge human, economic and institutional consequences. Given that drug trafficking and public insecurity feed on one another, some parts of Latin America have begun to consider regulating the drugs market. Although opinion is divided on the issue, it is the first time that the legalisation of some drugs has entered into public and political debate. Nevertheless, as highlighted by a recent article on the topic, legalisation at global level is unrealistic, because it does not have the support of the US.⁴²

Given that the EU offers an alternative to the prohibitionist model and that Latin America is one of the regions of the world most affected by drug-related violence, both regions should be able to lead the way in a new debate and use their political dialogue on drugs to adopt joint positions at international bodies, particularly the United Nations. The EU has said that 'the drugs problem is experienced primarily at local and national level, but it is a global issue that needs to be addressed in a transnational context'.⁴³ Joint strategies are therefore needed, as well as greater coordination between the main countries affected, in order for anti-drugs policies to succeed.

A joint EU-Latin American drugs policy would also require close coordination and cooperation with the United States. Besides bilateral channels, the OAS, and CICAD in particular, would be the most ideal framework within which to pursue joint policies and action. The Hemispheric Drug Strategy is based on many of the same principles and values as the EU's policy, and the US also seems to be in the process of adapting some parts of its policy to reflect the model of shared responsibility advocated mainly by Europe and Latin America. An example of nascent cooperation in this area was the international

⁴¹ War on Drugs: *Report of the Global Commission on Drug Policy*, June 2011.

⁴² M. Kleiman, 'Golpes maestros en la guerra contra las drogas', in: *Foreign Affairs Latinoamérica*, vol. 11, No. 4, Mexico F.D., pp. 123-135, p. 128.

⁴³ Council of the European Union, *EU Drugs Strategy (2005-2012)*, Brussels, 22 November 2004, p. 3.

conference in support of the Central American Security Strategy, held in Guatemala in June 2011, and attended by representatives of the US, the EU and various Latin American countries.

Another important step in this direction is triangular cooperation with Africa to ensure better control of the cocaine routes from Latin America to Europe. Although resources are limited, the EU has approved a number of border cooperation projects between the three regions, of which the most recent is the cocaine route project funded under the Instrument for Stability. However, in addition to specific projects of this kind, it is vital to extend the political dialogue between Europe and Latin America to include countries in west Africa that have become important countries on the cocaine transit route into Europe.

The dramatic escalation in violence in Central America and Mexico and the presence of drug traffickers throughout the region as a whole show that criminal networks choose to operate from countries that have fragile State structures and weak democratic institutions that find it difficult to guarantee public security. The best method for tackling drugs and organised crime therefore continues to be the strengthening of transparent and democratic institutions and a professional public administration whose employees are paid decent salaries. Efforts to strengthen State infrastructure should include more investment in the judicial and criminal systems and in training and equipment for the police in its role as a force for 'democratic security'.

Until now, public security has not been a major focus of EU-Latin American cooperation. However, given that the EU is Latin America's main donor and that the violence is a threat to democratic progress and development, public security should be made a key element of bi-regional cooperation, particularly when it comes to the worst-affected countries. In the light of socio-economic progress across much of Latin America, the traditional focus on alternative development and European cooperation projects in the region is less appropriate than before. Aware of this change, both regions made a commitment, in the Bogota Declaration of 29 June 2011, under the framework of the Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism, to share knowledge, experiences and good practice, and to promote triangular projects with the new Latin American donors (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile).

In addition to strictly bi-regional cooperation, Latin America and Europe should work together to promote the adoption in multilateral bodies of new models for tackling drugs and drug trafficking. The EU has pioneered its own approach to combating drugs that is starting to be taken on board by other countries, including the US, and Latin America has promoted a new global debate. The two regions should therefore play a more prominent role in discussions at international bodies on drugs and organised crime. By working together, they could foster a more open international debate, free from taboo subjects, that would feature the arguments for and against the gradual legalisation of drugs such as marijuana, hashish or cocaine.

A policy of decriminalising certain drugs would reflect recent debate in Latin America. The fact that the drug trafficking war has now moved from Colombia to the US border also provides a new opportunity to reassess current anti-drugs policies. Little by little, the US is showing increasing support for the approach associated until now with the EU and Latin America: it has incorporated the principle of shared responsibility into its anti-drugs strategy and, in 2011, allocated more resources (under the Merida Initiative) to projects focussing on good governance, the strengthening of judicial systems and local communities. In principle, the policy of alternative development is also a more suitable response than crop eradication.

4.4 Conclusion and recommendations

Multilateral solutions are required in order to control the cross-border nature of drug trafficking and to reduce violence, given that the lack of a shared vision between the US and Europe on tackling drug trafficking has enabled the networks to expand even further.⁴⁴ According to current debate, one solution could be to remove the financial incentive for the drugs trade by legalising it. However, this would require courage and political will, not only to confront the traffickers but to refute the arguments that decriminalisation would lead to more drug addicts and more health problems. A recent study⁴⁵ estimates that the cost of legalisation would be less than that of the prohibitionist policy that is exacerbating the links between guerrilla groups, drug traffickers and violence in Colombia. Legalisation would have a similar impact on gangs in Central America, drug traffickers in Caracas and Rio de Janeiro, and on drug cartels operating in Mexico that have become the biggest threat to security in the Americas.

Given the substantial changes that have occurred in anti-drugs policies at global, regional and interregional levels, this report concludes with a series of recommendations on possible measures for improving the effectiveness and impact of cooperation between Europe and Latin America in this area. The report recommends:

- jointly launching a global debate on new policies to tackle drugs and organised crime, replacing the traditional prohibitionist model with one that includes regulation of the market for certain drugs which are considered to be less harmful;
- promoting the 'European model' for combating demand and drug consumption, which is based on prevention, the strengthening of institutions and alternative development;
- strengthening cooperation between Latin America, Africa and the EU (including through the provision of more resources) to make it impossible for drug traffickers to use the new cocaine trafficking routes;
- launching a fresh debate between Latin America, the EU and the US on policy coordination and the effectiveness of the European model of harm reduction compared with the 'war on drugs';
- identifying best practices for reducing demand and drug use in Latin American and European countries;
- promoting stronger links between EU anti-drugs programmes and projects, and public security policies (particularly in Central America and Mexico);
- increasing the number of institutional strengthening and capacity-building projects aimed at reforming judicial, prison, security and customs systems;
- assessing and monitoring the EU-Latin America drugs programme, including a review of the alternative development projects.

⁴⁴ International Crisis Group, *Latin American Drugs I and II*, Latin American Report 25, Bogotá, 2008.

⁴⁵ Transform, Drugs Policy Foundation, *A Comparison of the Cost/effectiveness of the Prohibition and Regulation of Drugs*, Bristol, 2009.

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ANNEX I: DRUG PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION IN EUROPE AND THE AMERICAS, 2010

Number of drug users between 15 and 64 years of age			
Regions	Cocaine	Cannabis	Opiates
European Union	4.3 - 4.7 million	28.7 - 29.2 million	1 - 1.1 million
Latin America	2.4 - 2.6 million	8.4 million	180 000 - 270 000
United States	5.0 - 5.6 million	22.5 million	1 - 1.6 million

Quantities of drugs seized (in kilos)			
Region	Cocaine ⁴⁶	Cannabis ⁴⁷	Heroin
European Union	99 291	745 738	1 401
Latin America	4.1 million	4.9 million	2 356
US	108 159	2.1 million	7 521

Amount of land used for drug cultivation (hectares)			
Countries	Coca	Cannabis	Opiates
Bolivia	30 900	n/a	n/a
Colombia	57 000 - 62 000	n/a	n/a
Peru	61 200	n/a	n/a
Mexico	n/a	17 500	19 500

Production in metric tons	
Countries	Pure cocaine
Bolivia	n/a
Colombia	350 - 400
Peru	325

Sources:

http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/WDR2011/The_coca-cocaine_market.pdf

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<http://peru21.pe/noticia/1320372/peru-primer-productor-cocaina-pura>

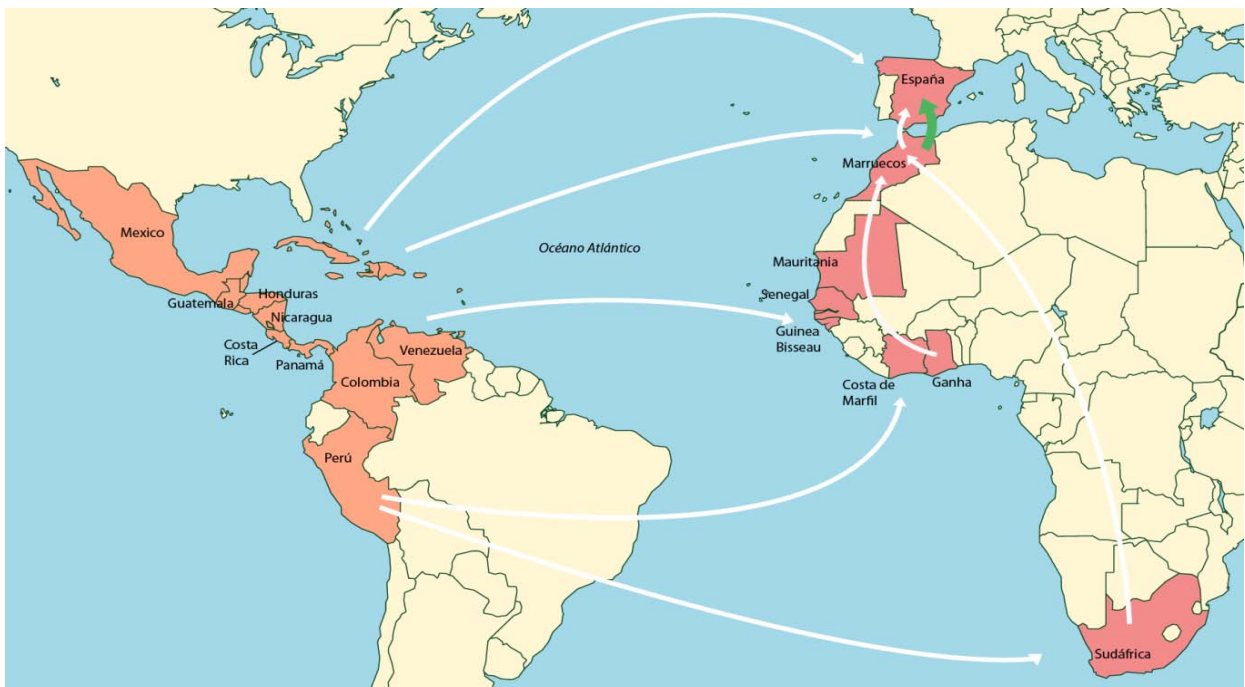
http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/WDR2011/The_opium-heroin_market.pdf

http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/WDR2011/Seizures_2011_Final.pdf

⁴⁶ Including seizures of coca leaf and base paste.

⁴⁷ Including seizures of cannabis herb, cannabis plant and cannabis resin.

ANNEX II: NEW AND OLD COCAINE AND CANNABIS ROUTES BETWEEN EU-LAC COUNTRIES



MAP 2: Cocaine and cannabis routes between Latin American and Caribbean countries and the US



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