Internal Security Strategy: open and safe Europe

Security and defence of its citizens are of high importance in the EU. However, any EU security policy must also respect the values on which the EU is based, such as respect for fundamental rights. The EU's Internal Security Strategy (ISS) for 2010 to 2014 was created to answer those different needs. There have been three reports on its implementation. The last of these, published this year, not only evaluates the implementation of the ISS, but identifies possible future challenges to be tackled in the forthcoming internal security strategy for the 2015-20 period.

2010-14 Internal Security Strategy

The ISS did not create any new competences but integrated existing approaches to security, and took into consideration the Stockholm Programme. The strategy lists the main challenges for internal security (e.g. terrorism, serious and organised crime, cyber-crime, cross-border crime, violence and natural and man-made disasters). It aims at the establishment of a European security model, with a commitment to a mutually reinforcing relationship between security, freedom and privacy, and based on prevention, cooperation and solidarity between Member States, involvement of all EU institutions, and greater interdependence between internal and external security. It also sets up guidelines for action, stressing the importance of a comprehensive and proactive approach, prevention, cooperation, innovation and flexibility.

More specific internal security objectives for 2010 to 2014 were set out in a Commission communication of 2010: disruption of international criminal networks, prevention of terrorism and addressing radicalisation and recruitment, raising levels of security for citizens and businesses in cyberspace, strengthening security through border management, and increasing Europe's resilience to crises and disasters.

At the time of its publication, the ISS drew criticism for its generality and in particular for the lack of involvement of the Commission and Parliament in its drafting. In response to the second, 2013, report on ISS implementation, the Parliament adopted a resolution (2013/2636 (RSP)), which again called for greater involvement of the Parliament in formulating internal security policies, and criticised the report for failing to take into sufficient consideration fundamental rights when evaluating the implementation of ISS.

2014 Report on the 2010-14 Internal Security Strategy

The last report on the implementation of the 2010-14 ISS gives a positive evaluation overall of the strategy. Significant progress has been made in all the objectives, in spite of having to face several difficult challenges, such as lack of resources due to the economic crisis and the growing threat of cybercrime. Special importance is given to actions aimed at respecting fundamental rights when implementing the strategy.

For the future, the report suggests that the 2010-14 strategic objectives be renewed. It also stresses the importance of full cooperation between the Commission, Member States and the European Parliament, especially in the development stage of the new 2015-20 strategy. In accordance with this, the report notes three key documents for the development of the new strategy: the 2014 Commission communication, 'Open and secure Europe: making it happen' (COM(2014) 154), the aforementioned European Parliament resolution 2013/2636 (RSP) and the strategic guidelines of the European Council in the area of internal security. It also announced a conference for all relevant stakeholders, which took place on 29 September 2014. The Commission is expected to present a communication on the renewal of ISS in early 2015.

The reports show how challenges to security are evolving, and that the new ISS should take them into account. Among the more prominent are the growing trend of Europeans fighting abroad in groups affiliated with terrorism, the diversification of international organised crime, and the increased risk of large-scale cyber-attack. It is also vital to improve the links between EU's internal and external security policies.

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