Towards a new European Agenda on Security

Security and defence of its citizens are of high importance in the EU. At the same time, any EU security policy must also respect the values on which the EU is based, such as respect for fundamental rights. Striking the right balance between the two has been the guiding principle of the EU's internal security measures. The protection and surveillance measures implemented so far were not able to prevent the recent terrorist attacks. The ongoing threats have led Member States and EU institutions to re-evaluate their internal security policies. This re-evaluation comes at a time when the EU is still in the process of agreeing a new strategy, to build on the efforts undertaken under the 2010-14 EU Internal Security Strategy. A sound EU Internal Security Strategy is crucial because it facilitates cooperation among Member States and ensures internal security issues are dealt with in a systematic manner.

Recent events

The terrorist attacks on the *Charlie Hebdo* newspaper and the subsequent killings in Paris have shown how severe the consequences of terrorist actions may be for EU citizens. The Paris attackers were born and raised in Europe, but were radicalised at some point in their lives. Some of them were trained abroad to a level which enabled them to plan and undertake their attacks to a high degree of professionalism. It is estimated that there are around 3 000 foreign fighters from the EU fighting in Syria, and since research has shown that 1 in between 15 and 20 of those who return to their home countries may be interested in carrying out terrorist activities at home, it means that the EU and its Member States have to deal with 150 to 200 highly trained and experienced potential terrorists who are EU citizens. The police are continuing to investigate the networks of the individual attackers in France, but the problem is much greater, as evidenced by the events in Belgium, Germany and Greece in the days since the Paris attacks.

Immediate responses to the Paris attacks

The French interior minister invited colleagues from Latvia (as holder of the Council Presidency) and Germany, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, the UK and Sweden (Member States seen as most affected by the issue of their citizens going to Syria to fight) to meet on 11 January, 2015 in Paris to discuss the issue and further course of action. Also present were the European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, representatives from the US and Canada and the European Counter-Terrorism Coordinator.

This meeting resulted in a statement in which the participants condemn the attacks, reaffirm their attachment to human rights, freedom of expression, tolerance and mutual solidarity, and make plans for further cooperation in the field of internal security in accordance with UNSCR 1377 and 2178 and the conclusions of the Justice and Home Affairs Councils of 9 October and 5 December 2014. This cooperation would in particular be aimed against radicalisation, especially on the Internet, and the work and movement of terrorist networks. The Member States will cooperate to act against the supply of illegal arms, are determined to fully use Europol, Eurojust and Interpol, and will, adopting a constructive approach together with the European Parliament, move forward towards establishing a European Passenger Name Record (PNR) framework, including intra-EU PNR. Detection and screening of movements of European citizens when they cross EU borders and the amendment of the Schengen Borders Code, as well as cooperation with the US and Canada, are among the priorities as well.

The topic will be addressed further at the informal justice and home affairs Council meeting in Riga on 29 January. This meeting precedes the European Council meeting on 12 and 13 February, at which Heads of

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State or Government will focus on the topic of counter-terrorism. The Foreign Affairs Council on 19 January also addressed to the external dimension of the EU's fight against terrorism.

The fight against terrorism and the strengthening of EU internal security will undoubtedly be among the most prominent topics of discussion in the coming weeks. But it should be remembered that these discussions are not new but follow up a broad range of actions that have been taken in this field in recent years.

2010-14 EU Internal Security Strategy

At the heart of the EU's action on internal security issues in the past few years has been the 2010-14 Internal Security Strategy. The Strategy reached the end of its life last year, receiving a final evaluation with the third and final implementation report, which also anticipates future challenges to EU internal security and possible ways of dealing with them based on experience. According to the recent Commission work programme, a new European Agenda on Security will be adopted in the coming months.

The ISS did not create any new competences but integrated existing approaches to security, and took into consideration the Stockholm Programme. The strategy listed 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 aimed 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 set up guidelines for action, stressing the importance of a comprehensive and proactive approach, prevention, cooperation, innovation and flexibility.

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. The Parliament adopted a resolution on 12 September 2013 on the second evaluation report on the ISS, 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 latest report on the implementation of the 2010-14 ISS gave a positive overall evaluation of the strategy. Significant progress has been made on 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. Particular 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 from 2013, 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, but this will clearly come under greater scrutiny in the light of the need to respond to the increased threats now felt by citizens.

The reports show how challenges to security are evolving, and that the new ISS should take them into account. Among the most prominent are the growing trend for Europeans to fight 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 links between the EU's internal and external security policies, respect for fundamental rights in internal security policies, synergies between security policy and other policies, such as research and innovation policy, and cooperation among all security stakeholders, including civil society, industry and the research community.