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The EU's Role and Interest in Promoting Regional Integration
in Central America



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Abstract

As the EU's regional strategy paper for Central America states, the Union actively promotes and supports the Central American regional integration process in a wide variety of ways. In this working paper, we will critically analyze whether or not this truly is the case, and, if so, how the EU then shapes this support. We will argue that the EU indeed does so because of various strategic considerations and through various ways of financial and technical assistance, by negotiating a free trade agreement, and through region-to-region political dialogue and norm diffusion.

Keywords: Central America, regions, regional integration, interregionalism, EU, Latin America, EU external relations, norm diffusion.

Introduction

Since the 1990's, The EU has been actively involved in the creation and/or development of other regions around the world. It has done so in a wide variety of ways as will be shown below. But it will be equally argued that, surprisingly, the academic world has left this area of studies rather unexplored. With this working paper, we want to contribute to filling this research lacuna, by offering a case study on the EU's role and interest in promoting regional integration on the Central American subcontinent.

In order to do so, we have conducted over 40 expert interviews in both Central America and Europe (in particular Brussels) with diplomats of both groups of countries, experts of the ministries of foreign affairs, EU administrators who work on a daily basis on Central America and also administrators of Central American regional integration bodies and institutions like the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN) and the general secretariat of the Central American Regional Integration System (SICA) (See the annex for the list of interviewees). The interviews were semi-structured and, although encompassing other issues (notably Central American regional integration and EU-Central America interregional relations), they lasted on average one hour. The acquired data was then analyzed by using an online qualitative data analysis software tool called "Dedoose" and further complemented with data acquired through a literature review. The results are shown below.

We will argue that the EU actively promotes and supports regional integration in Central America and this mainly out of strategic considerations. In order to do so, the EU has three major tools/methods at its disposal: (1) financial and technical assistance, (2) negotiating preferential trade agreements and (3) engaging in group-to-group political dialogue. What follows are three parts. In the first part, we will have a brief look at the available academic literature on the EU's support for regional integration processes worldwide. This is followed by a brief overview of the Central American regional integration system as part two. Part three is where the above mentioned arguments will be formulated and explained, by focusing on the specific EU interest and role in the Central American regional integration process. At the end of this document, our arguments will be restated in the conclusion, while the annex provides some more insights in the applied methodology for this working paper.

Supporting Regional Integration around the world: clearly an EU priority

When studying EU foreign policy statementsⁱ, strategiesⁱⁱ, communicationsⁱⁱⁱ, development cooperation policies^{iv} and other official documents, there is no doubt that the EU *actively* promotes, supports and prioritizes the functioning of regional integration in its relations with third parties. As stated in the Treaty on the European Union^v, regional integration is seen as an important means to achieve peace and prosperity around the globe and is, especially since the 1990s, seen as a significant part of the Union's external policy^{vi}. It has even proven to be a *coherent* and *effective* aspect of EU external relations, in stark contrast to the often criticized Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) as it did not affect the Member State's national sovereignty nor strategic interests^{vii}.

For that, the EU, and especially the European Commission, could thus easily adopt this posture and strategy without being too controversial. Furthermore, according to Seco (2011), the EU has gone beyond declarations on this issue over the past twenty years^{viii}. It has constructed bi-regional relationships with more than twenty other regions^{ix} in the world through which diplomatic and political dialogues have been set up and agendas shared, and it has also signed a vast amount of free trade agreements with other Free Trade Zones in the world^x. Finally^{xi}, in the sphere of development cooperation, the EU has directed almost 10 percent of its total aid commitments towards regional cooperation and integration projects and programs^{xii}.

However, only occasionally dealt with in the academic sphere

Seeing the considerable attention and importance the EU itself has given towards the issue at hand, it is surprising to note that there is only (very) limited academic literature available on it. This led De Lombaerde and Schultz (2011) to state that: "In general, the literature on regionalism is vast and covers different methodologies, approaches, aspects and dimensions of the phenomenon. Hence, it is somewhat surprising to find that there is a research lacuna concerning the role of the EU as an actor that promotes regionalization."^{xiii}

It is thus surprising to see that this specific sub-theme of regionalization, the EU's promotion and contribution to regional integration worldwide, has not attracted much scholarly attention^{xiv}. What follows is a brief overview of the limited available

academic literature on the driving forces of the EU's choice to promote regional integration (the 'why?') followed by an overview of the available literature on the possible means/tools the EU has at its disposal to promote regional integration worldwide (the 'how?'). Particular interests will be directed to the theoretical insights of De Lombaerde and Schultz (2011), which will later on be used as the theoretical framework for our case study on Central America.

Three main reasons behind the EU's support

Based on the assessment of the EU's role in various regional integration systems around the world (amongst others: ASEAN, MERCOSUR, Andean Community, etc) De Lombaerde and Schultz (2011) conclude that the EU pushes for regional integration around the world for main three reasons: (1) out of economic interests (contributing to the creation of larger markets for goods and services), (2) for strategic considerations and (3) because of bureaucratic factors (including the search for legitimacy by the Commission)^{xv}.

In contrast, M. Farrell (2009) believes that the exact reasons for the EU's push and promotion of regional integration should be found elsewhere^{xvi}. In fact, she believes that for the EU, the promotion of regional integration is more of "a way to validate its own internal coherence on the international stage" and that "promoting regional integration allows the EU to pursue the larger goal of influence as an international actor." It is true that since it does not compromise national interests of EU member states, it allows the EU to be coherent and be *one* in international politics. This in turn strengthens its role as a global power^{xvii}. Finally, once the other parts of the world have decided to adopt their own regional integration scheme, they tend to look at the EU as an example, with its success in the European Continent, which strengthens the EU's identity even further.^{xviii}

When looking at the reasons why the EU pushes for - or at least promotes - regional integration in Central America, we will have a look at the three stated possible reasons from De Lombaerde and Schultz (2011) complemented by the possible reason of internal strengthening, which Farrell (2009) and Seco (2011) point out.

Toolbox for promoting regional integration

Now that we know why the EU actively supports regional integration systems

around the world, let us turn to the question of *how* it does so. Based on the analysis of the most important European policy documents regarding the EU's relations with other regions, G. Pietrangeli (2009) along with De Lombaerde and Schultz (2011) believe that the EU's approach is based upon three key elements: (1) encouraging political dialogue between the EC/EU and its partner regions at various levels; (2) ensuring development cooperation assistance; and (3) establishing or strengthening negotiations of region-to-region free trade agreements^{xix}.

Furthermore, they believe that the EU's approach depends on the given region and its type and depth of integration/cooperation systems. Quite often though, the cooperation tool is chosen and technical as well as financial support is directed towards the integration systems as outlined in the specific strategy paper and/or indicative programs. Finally, M. Farrell (2009) adds another interesting tool, which the EU applies or at least could apply in order to promote regional integration: the dissemination of ideas and norms. Farrell believes that by influencing the mind-sets of the elites who work on regional integration, the EU could considerably influence regional integration systems as well. This was also confirmed in one of the case studies conducted by De Lombaerde and Schultz (2011)^{xx}.

Limited impact

The academic world seems to agree on one particular aspect of the EU's contribution towards regional integration systems around the world: its limited impact. It seems that historical processes and cultural factors in the respective regions, and not so much EU support, determine the failure or success of regional integration systems^{xxi}. Also, various authors^{xxii} note that the EU's involvement in regional integration systems may well erode over time. It is argued that the more the EU is involved in "strategic partnerships" with emerging countries like South Africa, India and Brazil, the harder it becomes to actually "sell" and continue to support the idea of regional integration. In part three we will have a look at how these theoretical insights help to explain possible EU involvement in the Central American regional integration system. But before doing so, a brief overview of the current Central American regional integration process is provided in the following part.

The Central American regional integration process: a brief history and current institutional set-up

200 years of regionalism on the Central American Isthmus

Until 1821, Central America was under Spanish colonial rule and known as the “kingdom of Guatemala.” It was especially an interesting colony because of the large amounts of available indigo (dye). However, increased resentment towards colonial rule because of a serious downturn in indigo demand - and price - and a weakening of Spanish power led to the declaration of independence in September 1821. Heated debates about the future of the (former) Kingdom of Guatemala followed in order to decide whether or not to go for absolute independence or to be annexed with Mexico^{xxiii}. Finally, it was decided in a congress in July 1823 to establish the ‘united provinces of Central America’, which Mahoney interprets as the first step of Central American Regional Integration^{xxiv}.

However, the Federation of Central America did not last for long because of unrest from the peasantry which led to a division of the subcontinent into smaller political entities until the aftermath of the Second World War. In 1958, the subsequent integration move took place with the signing of a multilateral agreement on “Free Trade and a Central American Economic region,” which was very commercial in nature. Two years later, another economically-oriented treaty was signed, which created the Central American Common Market (CACM). However after the ‘football war’ between Honduras and El Salvador in 1969 and the civil conflicts of the 1970s and 1980s the Central American integration process stood still until the 1990s^{xxv}. In 1990, the presidents of the various Central American countries came together in Antigua, Guatemala, and decided to adopt a plan to re-launch regional economic as well as political integration^{xxvi}, which led to the signature of the Tegucigalpa protocol in 1992 and the creation of SICA, which are the foundations of the current regional integration system of Central America^{xxvii}.

Current institutional set up

Let us now have a look at the current institutional set up of the Central American Regional Integration system^{xxviii}. Figure 1 visualizes the four most important CA Regional Integration bodies as created by the Tegucigalpa protocol of December

1993: the Summits of Central American Presidents, the Central American Court of Justice, the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN) and SICA^{xxix}. The meeting of Presidents is for the Central American Regional Integration System, the supreme organ where all presidents of the member states meet every six months (or extraordinarily if requested). It defines the overall integration strategy and process and is the highest organ in which disputes from other ministerial councils are settled. Finally, the meetings of Vice-Presidents, who equally meet biannually, also advise the meeting of Presidents.

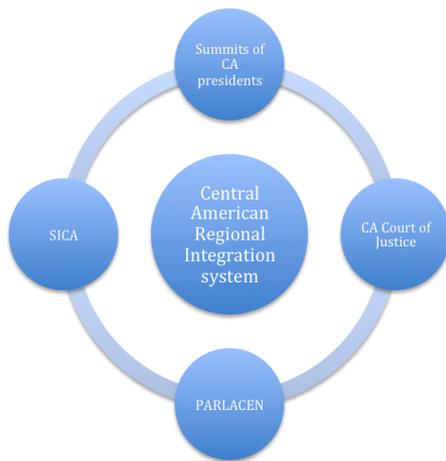


Figure 1 : Four essential CA regional integration bodies



Figure 2 : SICA and other advisory councils and experts

The Central American Parliament (PARLACEN) is by treaty constituted of 20 representatives from each member state, who are directly elected for 5 years. It does not have any legislative powers (yet), and serves mainly as a consultative and advisory body. The judicial arm of the system is represented by the CA court of justice, which is composed of two magistrates originating from each of the states that signed its statute and “guarantees respect for the law in the interpretation and execution of the Protocol of Tegucigalpa with amendments to the Charter of the ODECA and its supplementary instruments or acts pursuant to it”^{xxx}. Finally, the fourth important body of the Central American Regional Integration System is the SICA administration. This organization can be regarded as the (possible) spin-off from deeper regional integration and has the constitutive role to ensure the efficient execution of the decisions adopted in the Meetings of Presidents. Next, the General Secretariat (SG SICA), consists of an executive committee (CE-SICA), a consultative committee (CC-SICA), the Central American Secretariat for Economic

Integration (SIECA) and more than one hundred other secretariats and specialized institutions such as SECMCA, SCAC, SISCA, SITCA etc. that serve the same functions and goals but in different policy fields. Figure 2 visualizes this^{xxx1}.

Promoting Regional Integration in Central America

EU's interests in promoting Regional Integration

Before looking at the possible reasons *why* the EU would promote and support the Central American regional integration process, we should a priori ask ourselves if it truly does so. In order to find out, we asked all interviewees a simple yes/no question: *Does the EU support regional integration in Central America?* All interlocutors confirmed without hesitating^{xxxii}. Furthermore, if we look at the most important policy and cooperation documents of the EU regarding Central America, it soon becomes clear that it does indeed promote and actively support regional integration on the Central American Isthmus. The 2007-2013 regional strategy paper states its overall objective to "support the process of political, economic and social integration in the context of preparation of the future Association Agreement with the EU"^{xxxiii}. The previous regional strategy paper 2002-2006^{xxxiv} also stated support for regional integration as one of its three main priorities and allocated around €40 million of the total of €74.5 million of its budget towards the process of regional integration^{xxxv}.

The two mid-term reviews (2003 & 2010)^{xxxvi} along with the Environmental profile for Central America^{xxxvii} also put the support for regional integration as a (top) priority. All the documents stated that supporting regional integration could consolidate peace and democracy, enhance economic and social development and reduce vulnerability. But is this truly the reason why the EU supports the Central American regional integration process? Are there any other reasons why the EU is interested in supporting the Central American regional integration process?

As became clear after conducting interviews^{xxxviii}, the theoretical assumptions of De Lombaerde and Schultz (2011) and Farrell (2009) as stated above proved to be valid and help us to explain the EU's support. In the case of Central America, the EU supports the regional integration system mostly (1) out of strategic considerations. However, (2) economic interests, (3) bureaucratic factors as well as (4) its role in promoting its own model should not be neglected. The following figure shows how often each answer was mentioned during the interviews. We will

briefly discuss them before considering the issue of *how* the EU supports the integration system.

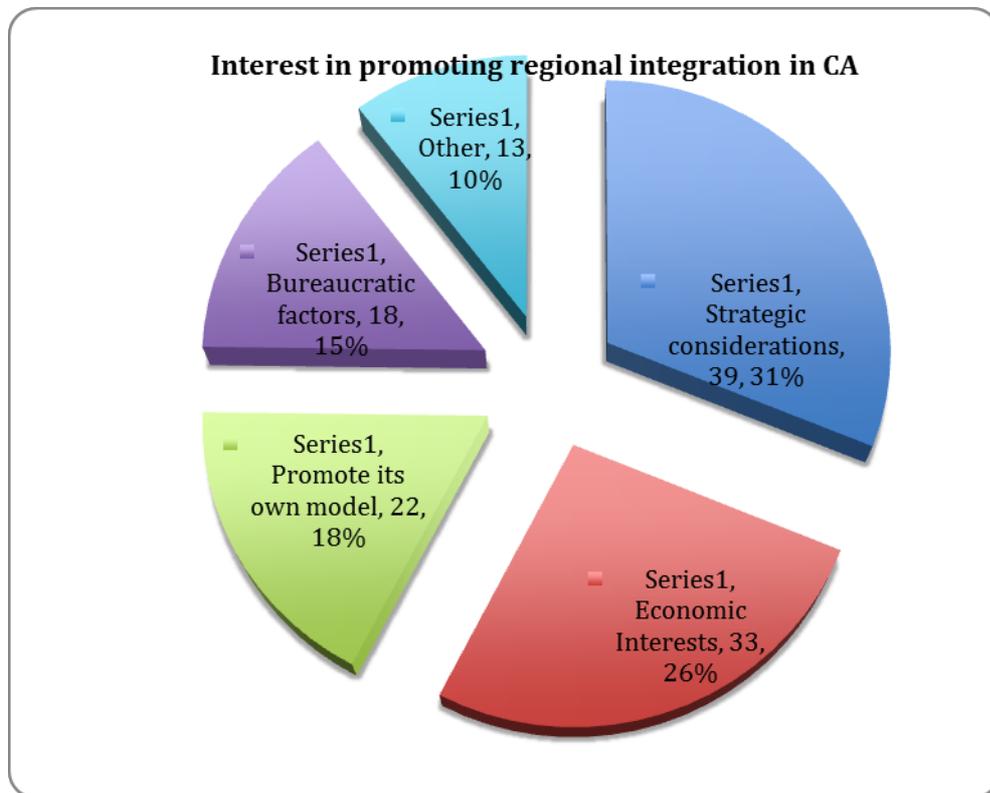


Figure 3: EU's interest to promote regional integration in Central America

Strategic considerations

As figure 3 shows, almost one third of all respondents believe that promoting the CA integration system is especially interesting from a strategic point of view. More precisely, the EU promotes and supports regional integration in Central America in order to ensure peace, stability and development, as it proved to be efficient and successful on the European continent itself. This is equally in line with the EU's overall aim of promoting liberal internationalism in its interregional relations with Central America^{xxxix}. Along with this, it was argued that the EU sees regional integration as the most effective approach to combat the transnational challenges that Central America faces^{xl}. By cooperating more, persistent problems such as illegal drugs trafficking, human security and money laundering could be better handled. Ensuring better disaster prevention and a coherent and effective response

to the challenges that global warming poses for the region, are - according to the EU - best dealt with on a regional level as well^{xli}.

In addition to better promoting liberal intergovernmentalism and combatting transnational issues more effectively, the EU also supports the regional integration process for political aims. As was mentioned in several interviews, the EU seeks a true "partner" and "like-minded" region to cooperate on global issues and share similar positions in multilateral negotiations and organizations^{xlii}. By supporting regional integration, it actively tries to achieve this goal as well. And, as the Central Americans could team up and form one region, it might also be of geo-strategic interest as it is located between two continents forming a bridge between two major oceans and important international maritime transport routes^{xliii}. Finally, ensuring the CA integration system succeeds also serves to enforce the EU's reputation as a global power since it enlarges its network of "partner" organizations while still being the frontrunner in regional integration.

Economic Interests

Next to strategic reasoning, economic interests also help to explain the EU's push for further regional integration in Central America. If Central America combines forces and became one region, it could become of great (er) economic interest for European companies and consumers^{xliv}. As the individual countries would not be of any considerable economic interest to the EU, they actually would not have any other choice but to integrate^{xlv}. Thus, for the EU, it is logical to support their integration system actively and considerably. Especially issues related to the common customs union, standardization of quality processes, simplification and harmonization of administration procedures as well as installing one fixed custom tariff for the same products coming out of the various Central American countries are of great economic interest for the EU.

Furthermore, as decided upon during the EU-Latin America and Caribbean Summit in Guadalajara 2004 and confirmed at the 2006 Vienna Summit^{xlvi}, the EU wants to install a Free Trade zone between the two regions. However, as various experts and policy makers confirmed during our interviews, the Central American counterpart is not yet ready for such a Free Trade Zone. They are not yet ready to compete and export to the big European market and the fear is that the "Mexican story"^{xlvii} will repeat itself. However, as for the EU creating such a Free trade Zone is of particular importance^{xlviii}, it has to make sure that the whole project will not

fail and thus support its counterpart to prepare for such an opening of markets. This was also explicitly stressed in the latest regional strategy paper, stating that the EU would support economic integration “in the context of preparation of the future Association Agreement with the EU”^{xlix}.

Bureaucratic reasons and “cross fertilization”

Next to this, the EU also supports the Central American efforts for pragmatic and bureaucratic reasons, which are similar to the ones that are at the heart of the Union’s interregional approach towards Central America¹. It is not in the EU’s interest to have various dialogues, programs and projects with different countries individually if it could be dealt with more efficiently on a regional level. If the EU could deal with one regional organisation, they would be able to achieve less duplication and more coordinated efforts. For that, supporting the simplification of the institutional landscape, but also empowering the most important ones (notably SICA, SIECA, PARLACEN and the regional Court of Justice), makes sense. It creates one interlocutor that is capable of effectively implementing the vast range of EU-led and funded programs and projects.

Finally, as Farrell (2009) clearly stated in her assessment, EU support for regional integration around the world also strengthens the EU itself and its model. As the EU’s own interpretation of regional integration is used as reference - and sometimes inspiration - for other regional integration processes around the world, its model is confirmed and strengthened. This was also confirmed during the conducted interviews, especially by the Central American scholars. Also, the EU’s own identity building process is strengthened, as it is seen from the outside as a success and as a united region. We can thus speak of a true “cross-fertilization” as supporting and strengthening the Central American regional integration system, which not only helps Central Americans but also benefits the Europeans in their respective regional integration processes. Let us now turn to the question of how the EU then promotes and supports the Central American regional integration system.

Means of influencing the process

The EU has three major tools/methods at its disposal to actively promote and support the regional integration process in Central America: (1) through financial and technical assistance, (2) by negotiating preferential trade agreements and (3)

via a group-to-group dialogue. As will be argued below, in particular the first two means facilitate the EU's goal to support CA regional integration, and to a lesser extent the group-to-group political dialogue does so as well. Next to these three main tools, there is one other means that also contributes to the EU's willingness to influence in the integration process of Central America: the diffusion of EU norms in order to create a true *regional* political and administrative elite along the same norms and values that (pro-) EU administrators and politicians share.

Financial and technical assistance

The vast majority of the interviewees believed that the most important tool for the EU to contribute to the Central American integration process is through its role as *development partner*. By providing financial and technical assistance to regional development projects, the EU has a considerable impact in shaping the Central American regional integration system. It can do so by applying one of the many methods as described in the EC's regional strategy paper for 2009-2013^{li}. In brief, it does so through three different approaches: contributing to better regional governance in its broadest sense, supporting the economic regional integration process and empowering regional institutions.

Let us start with the first method: contributing to regional governance in its broadest sense. As briefly mentioned above, the EU believes that the shared (transnational) challenges of the various Central American countries should be handled at the regional level, through regional integration. Through its development cooperation instrument (75 million euros), the Central American^{lii} as well as Latin American regional programs^{liii}, but also specific EC thematic budget lines^{liv} and the various CA country programs, the EU wants to actively support and enhance regional governance. In that sense, there is a complex landscape of various EU-led and funded projects on issues like drugs trafficking, crime prevention, customs cooperation, transitional justice, law enforcement, education, youth unemployment, rural areas development, HIV/AIDS, good governance, promotion of human rights, food security, natural disasters preparedness and so on in order to support regional governance. It is believed that, from a functionalist point of view, *if* the Central American regional institutions and cooperation schemes function properly, this could serve as a motor for further regional integration^{lv}.

Secondly, the EU actively contributes financially as well as technically to the Central American economic integration process and allocated 44 million euros for the period 2009-2013 to it^{lvi}. Here too, various projects^{lvii} are created to this end which

focus on (amongst other things) enhancing intra- and extra-regional trade, services and investment, intellectual property rights, harmonization of standards and custom duties, technical barriers to trade, initiatives regarding fiscal policy and taxation, standardization of labor legislation and other harmonized and common policies that would contribute to the creation of a common customs union^{lviii}. Similar to what was argued previously, it is also believed that if Central American politicians and especially citizens would experience the benefits of a customs union and common market and the benefits of a true free movement of goods, services and persons (also referred to as the *Schengen experience*), they would in turn be convinced that regional integration is exactly what is needed on the Central American Isthmus and strive for more (political) integration too.

Thirdly, due to criticisms on the malfunctioning of the current Central American regional integration institutions, notably PARLACEN, SICA and the Court of Justice^{lix}, it also makes sense that if the EU wants to contribute positively to the CA integration system, it should also work on institutional reform and capacity building. To this end, it created the so-called PAIRCA program in 2003 (renewed in 2007) with a budget for 21,5 million euros (in 2007, 15 million euros in 2003). The principal aims of this program are to collaborate on the reforms of the CCJ and PARLACEN and strengthen the general secretariat of SICA as well as SIECA. It does so mostly through financial support of personnel, proper equipment and the setting up of information systems, but also through organizing sessions on how best to transform the institutional set-up to work more efficiently in the 21st century. It also envisages including civil society more in the institutional set up, and this especially by assisting the consultative committee of SICA, which is composed of civil society representatives to assert/empower themselves more. There is also another smaller program called ADAPCCA, which mainly focuses on supporting the design and application of CA common policies within these institutions.

Now, next to these three major areas of engagement of the EU, there is also one other area that should be mentioned: the EU's role in regional border security and border zone development. As we have seen, there are significant inter-state border issues that hamper further Central American regional integration. By creating projects (notably in the Gulf of Fonseca^{lix}) to enhance cross-border cooperation and exchange, be it economically, culturally or socially, the EU tries to provide a solution for these issues. Finally, it needs to be stressed that European cooperation and contribution towards Central American regional integration is not merely driven by EU funds and projects. Several EU member states - notably Spain, but also Germany and The Netherlands - have also set up their own projects to support

regional integration. Especially noteworthy is the Spanish Fund for Cooperation with SICA, which allocates a considerable budget and personnel to assisting their Central American counterparts in their regional integration project^{lxi}.

Negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement

The second most important way through which the EU has been able to contribute to deeper regional integration in Central America is through the negotiations and signing of the first bi-regional Association Agreement in the world. At the Vienna summit in May 2006, both groups of countries decided to launch negotiations for such an Association Agreement (AA), which culminated in the agreement and signature in Madrid 2010^{lxii}. Through this agreement, the bi-regional relations between the EU and CA were enhanced on three different fronts: development cooperation, political dialogue and trade. However, most experts^{lxiii} and interviewees tend to agree that the AA was especially important in the trade area as it would create a truly Free Trade Zone between the two regions and replace the former system of GSP+. The EC trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht even mentioned a possible increase of 20 per cent of trade between the two regions while stressing other positive impacts for the Central American development^{lxiv}. But how exactly has this agreement positively contributed to the CA regional integration process? As was made clear from the beginning in 2006 (and earlier) the EU would not start negotiations for free trade agreements (let alone association agreements) with individual Central American countries. It stressed the importance of the regional integration system and made clear that it was only with a *CA region* that it would be interested to negotiate and sign such an agreement. As the possible benefits for such an agreement were considerable, the Central American counterpart came to terms and decided to work more intensely on their integration system^{lxv}. In that way, strongly encouraging the Central Americans to form one block and to negotiate as *one* had proven to be a new impetus for further regional integration on the Central American Isthmus.

But the leverage of a possible free trade agreement (and more) was not only used in order to have the Central American counterparts to negotiate jointly and speak with one voice - it was also used to push for deeper regional economic integration. As the EU set various conditions for an enhanced and more complete Central American customs union before agreeing upon a Free Trade Zone, it also considerably impacted the CA integration^{lxvi}. Finally, now that the AA is signed, the EU also supports the (economic) regional integration efforts so that the AA could

come fully in place. With the program PRAIAA (2012-2016), the EU has made 10 million euros available for projects and efforts to better implement the AA^{lxvii}. An important share of that budget is allocated towards furthering economic integration in Central America^{lxviii}.

Political dialogue

A third tool that the EU uses in order to enhance regional integration in Central America is the conduct of a bi-regional political dialogue. By establishing and sustaining political dialogues with the Central American *region* instead of with various countries individually, it also reinforces the concept and identity of the Central American region itself. As Central America as a region is recognized by the EU which is its biggest development cooperation provider, second biggest investor and third biggest trading partner, the *region* will considerably grow in importance and assert itself more. Through the creation of various bi-regional platforms at different levels as prescribed in the Association Agreement^{lxix}, the EU further empowers the CA *region*. Also, by requesting the status of observer organization within SICA, the EU supports that organization as it shows its interest and importance in/for it by doing so.

Influencing by its very existence and diffusing norms and values

Finally, some interviewees also stressed that the EU equally influences the Central American integration system by just *being itself*. That is to say, several high-level Central American administrators as well as politicians who were actively working on deepening the Central American regional integration system (or at least making it more effective), tend to look to the EU as a prototype or good practice as how regional integration should look like. By taking a closer look at the European example of regional integration, the Central Americans try to find solutions to difficulties and malfunctioning of the Central American integration. While this is a rather passive way of *contributing* towards the functioning of the Central American integration process, the EU also (but in a limited and somewhat *hidden* way) actively *diffuses* its governance model and values and norms through the organization of seminars, workshops, etc.^{lxx} It also financially supports the recently created Master's program in Regional Integration, which is organized by three big Central American universities and where the EU is closely looked at as a model.

Finally, even though the argument was not put forward very often by the interviewed experts and diplomats, two scholars have pointed out a final EU tool to influence the Central American regional integration process: creating a like-minded political and administrative *regional elite* by organizing and sponsoring various seminars, workshops and even full-fledged academic programs on Central American regional integration^{lxxi}.

Conclusion

Drawing^{lxxii} upon the information gathered through various expert interviews in Central America and Brussels, this working paper argued that the EU has a clear role in the Central American regional integration system. By using De Lombaerde and Schultz (2011) theoretical insights on the EU's role in regional integration schemes worldwide, we argued that the EU supports and promotes regional integration in Central America because of strategic considerations, complemented by economic and bureaucratic interests.

As it was expressed in various interviews, the EU sees a regional integration system on the Central American Isthmus as the best way to ensure peace, stability and development. Next to this, we equally argued that the EU regards regional integration as the most effective approach to combat the transnational challenges such as illegal drugs trafficking, and money laundering, among others. Helping Central America overcome these problems thus naturally implies supporting and strengthening its regional integration system.

This working paper also discussed the ways in which the EU thus actively supports and promotes regional integration on the Central American subcontinent. We argued that it mainly does so in four different ways: (1) through financial and technical assistance (development cooperation), (2) by negotiating preferential trade agreements (especially the recently signed Association Agreement), (3) via a group-to-group dialogue (but limited) and (4) the dissemination of European norms and values (not always consciously). Finally, it needs to be stressed that according to the available academic literature the EU's influence in other regional integration systems is rather limited as their successes and/or failures are more determined by the specific historical processes and cultural factors of the respective regions at hand. Whereas we have argued that the EU has indeed a role to play in the Central American regional integration system, it thus needs to be evaluated how effective and/or influential the EU has been.

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N.A. De Flers, N.A. and E. Regelsberger (2004) "The EU and Inter-regional Cooperation", in C. Hill and M. Smith (eds.), *International Relations and the European Union*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 317-342.

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European Commission (2007b) *Andean Community. Regional Strategy Paper 2007-2013*, E/2007/678, European Commission, Brussels.

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European Commission (2008b) *Regional integration for development in ACP countries*, 604 final/2, European Commission, Brussels.

European Commission (2011) "Action Fiche for Central America" [online] available at http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/documents/aap/2011/af_aap_2011_centram.pdf [Accessed 9/12/2013].

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B. Gaens (2008) *Europe-Asia interregional relations: a decade of ASEM*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd, Burlington.

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Annex: Methodology and list of interviewees*

In order to work with all the extracted information gathered from the interviews and analyze it as efficiently and thoroughly as possible, we decided to use a qualitative analysis software tool called "Dedoose". This program allowed us to compare the given answers to the (research) questions and draw general conclusions about our research topics. What follows is a brief description of the way we had to proceed in order to analyse our findings. First, we added all our transcripts of interviews as "media". We then set up our coding scheme: by looking at our theoretical frameworks, which possibilities could come out as answers during the interviews? For example, when asked about the means through which the EU might influence the Central American regional integration process, answers in the trend of the following three answers could pop up: (1) through financial and technical assistance, (2) by negotiating preferential trade agreements and (3) via a group-to-group political dialogue.

In that sense, we have set up a whole set of 'codes' or 'indicators' that could be given to the questions/topics of concern for our paper. The full coding scheme can be provided upon request. Once we had our codes or indicators and our media, then we analyzed all interviews one by one and started 'coding' them. What we have done is we looked at the answers to the various questions and then labelled them as an indicator for example of the argument of "group-to-group political dialogue," etc. While doing this for all the interviews and all the responses to all questions, we have come up with a large amount of "excerpts" or arguments for one hypothesis or another, and in that sense, we were able to look at which answer was given most often to which question. We were also able to compare the given answers by different 'type' of interviewees (Central American administrators vs. European Diplomats, Central Americans vs. Europeans etc.) in order to analyze the complex issues at hand more. Next to this, the created "excerpts" which were labelled and grouped, could also be shown separately and thus used for a more in depth analysis as well. Finally, the excerpts could also be used to write parts of the actual paper and to quote some interviewees. For a visualization of the entire process, please contact the author by e-mail. The results of the analysis of the interviews were then combined with the knowledge acquired from secondary academic reading materials and primary sources which then led to this paper.

Please find below the list of interviewees used for this paper.

Name	Country	Organization	Function	Date of the interview	by e-mail
Sergio Acosta	The Netherlands	Embassy of Honduras	Minister Counselor	10/12/12	
Noëlla Put	Belgium	Ministry for Foreign Affairs	Desk officer Central America	4/01/13	
Filip David	Belgium	Ministry for Foreign Affairs	Director External Relations of the EU	4/01/13	
Frank van de Craen	Belgium	Ministry for Foreign Affairs	Director Latin America and Caribbean desk	4/01/13	
Christian Meeùs	Belgium	Europe-Central America Chambre of Commerce (EURACEN)	President	7/01/13	
Alfonso Gahona	Belize	Ministry for Foreign Affairs	Director of International Affairs	16/01/13	
Ayesha Boyland	Belize	Ministry for Foreign Affairs	Diplomat EU affairs	16/01/13	
Jackie Brown	Belize	British High Commission	Deputy High Commissioner	16/01/13	
Richard Van der horst	Belize	European Commission Technical Office	Project Manager	17/01/13	
Allan Ramos	Honduras	City of Puerto Cortes	Mayor	20/01/13	
Edgardo Dumas	Honduras	British Honorary Consulate San Pedro Sula	Honorary Consul	21/01/13	
Patty Recarte	Honduras	British Honorary Consulate San Pedro Sula	Administrator	21/01/13	
Selvin Lopez	Honduras	University of Honduras (UNAH)	Professor International law and Judge	21/01/13	
Sylvanie Jardinet	Honduras	European External Action Service Delegation	Attaché for cooperation and trade	22/01/13	
Lisa Marcela Arias	Honduras	European External Action Service Delegation	Communications officer	22/01/13	
Jose Ruben Mendoza	Honduras	Belgian Consulate	Honorary Consul	22/01/13	
Luis Velasquez	Honduras	Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Center for Geopolitical Studies	Director General	23/01/13	
Juan Merino Cubillo	Honduras	Embassy of Spain	Deputy Ambassador	23/01/13	
Carsten Schneider	Honduras	Embassy of Germany	Counsellor	24/01/13	
Bernard Monot	Honduras	Embassy of France	Counsellor	24/01/13	
Allan Suazo	Honduras	Ministry for Foreign Affairs	Director Regional Integration	25/01/13	
Luis Asena	Honduras	Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Center for Geopolitical Studies	Diplomat	25/01/13	
Peter Versteeg	Honduras	European External Action Service Delegation	Head of Delegation	28/01/13	Yes
Luis Padilla Vassaux	Guatemala	University Rafael Landivar	Professor regional integration	28/01/13	
Jacques Remmerswaal	Guatemala	Embassy of the Netherlands	Counsellor	29/01/13	
Michael Fabri	Guatemala	Embassy of Germany	Deputy Ambassador	31/01/13	
Laurent Estrade	Guatemala	Embassy of France	Counsellor for Economical affairs and Trade	31/01/13	
Rubén Najera	Guatemala	SIECA	Project Director	31/01/13	
Hector Marroquin	Guatemala	Embassy of the United Kingdom	Prosperity Officer	1/02/13	
Gilberto Valdez	Guatemala	PARLACEN	Special Advisor	1/02/13	
Antonio Dal Borgo	Guatemala	European External Action Service Delegation	Attaché for security, justice and election programs	1/02/13	
Carlo La Face	Guatemala	European External Action Service Delegation	Attaché for trade and regional integration programs	1/02/13	
Carlos Monterrosa	El Salvador	Central American University	Program Director Centra American Regional Integration	4/02/13	
Jorge Umana Garcia	El Salvador	Ministry for Foreign Affairs	Director for Regional integration and CA relations	5/02/13	
Remy Ulinares	El Salvador	European External Action Service Delegation	Cooperation attaché	5/02/13	
Vincente Cano	El Salvador	Spanish Fund for the support of SICA (AECID project)	Senior Advisor	6/02/13	
Irene Diaz	El Salvador	Spanish Fund for the support of SICA (AECID project)	Project management	6/02/13	
Carlos Echeverria	El Salvador	General Secretariat - SICA	Director of Communications and Public Relations	6/02/13	
Edgar Chamorro Marin	El Salvador	General Secretariat - SICA	Executive Director	6/02/13	
Walter Leiva	El Salvador	General Secretariat - SICA	Communications officer	6/02/13	
Xavier Sales	El Salvador	Embassy of the United Kingdom	Attaché	8/02/13	
Philippe Vinogradoff	El Salvador	Embassy of France	Ambassador	8/02/13	
Thomas Le Vaillant	Belgium	European Commission DG TRADE	Coordinator Central America	5/03/13	
Luz Habed Castellon	Nicaragua	EEAS Central America Delegation	Regional projects desk officer	8/03/13	Yes
Kenneth Bell	Belgium	EEAS Mexico and Central Amrica	Head of Division	18/03/13	
Francisco Duenas Leiva	Belgium	Embassy of Costa Rica towards the EU and Belgium	Ambassador	21/03/13	
Dolores Romeo	Belgium	European External Action Service	Responsible for EU-CA associate agreement	18/04/13	
Ivo Gombola	Nicaragua	EEAS Central America Delegation	Deputy Ambassador	28/04/13	Yes

* DISCLAIMER : the views expressed by the interviewees do not represent (per se) the views and opinions of the organizations/countries they work for or represent.

ⁱ See for example H. Van Rompuy (2010) “Speech of the President of the European Council, at the closing ceremony of the EU-LAC Summit (PCE 97/10), Madrid, 18 May 2010” [online] accessible at http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/114523.pdf, [Accessed 14/12/2013].

ⁱⁱ See for example Council of the European Union (2003) *A Secure Europe in a Better World. European Security Strategy*, Council of the European Union, Brussels ; or European Commission (2007) *Regional Programming for Asia. Strategy Document 2007-2013*, Revision 1, European Commission, Brussels and European Commission (2007b) *Andean Community. Regional Strategy Paper 2007-2013*, E/2007/678, European Commission, Brussels.

ⁱⁱⁱ European Commission (1995) *Communication on European community support for regional economic integration efforts among developing countries*, COM 219 final, Brussels; European Commission (2005) *Proposal for a Joint Declaration by the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission on the European Union Development Policy. ‘The European Consensus’*, COM 311, Brussels and European Commission (2008) *Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Regional Integration for Development in ACP Countries*, COM 604 final/2, Brussels.

^{iv} European Commission (2006) *The European Consensus on Development*, 46/01, European Commission, Brussels and European Commission (2008b) *Regional integration for development in ACP countries*, 604 final/2, European Commission, Brussels.

^v Art. 21 (1) states that: “The Union shall seek to develop relations and build partnerships with third countries, and International, regional or global organizations which share the principles referred to in the first Subparagraph”, Art. 21 (2e) also states to: “encourage the integration of all countries into the world economy, including through the progressive abolition of restrictions on international trade”.

^{vi} Farrell, M. (2009) EU policy towards other regions: policy learning in the external promotion of regional integration, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 16(8), 1165-1184.

^{vii} Ibid.

^{viii} M. H. Seco (2011) “Decoupling Trade from Politics: The EU and Region-Building in the Andes”, *Working Papers*, Vol. 11, Instituto Affari Internazionali, Rome, p.20.

^{ix} N.A. De Flers, N.A. and E. Regelsberger (2004) “The EU and Inter-regional Cooperation”, in C. Hill and M. Smith (eds.), *International Relations and the European Union*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 317-342.

^xFor an overview of all trade agreements, please go to the website of the Commission’s DG Trade at European Commission (2013) “EC Regional Trade Agreements” [online] accessible at <http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/html/111588.htm>, accessed on [Accessed on 17/12/2013].

^{xi} For a complete overview of the European support to regional integration processes, please have a look at G. Pietrangeli (2009) Supporting regional integration and Cooperation Worldwide: An overview of European Union approach in P. Lombaerde and M. Schultz *The European Union and world regionalism. The Makability of Regions in 21th Century*, Ashgate Ltd, Burlington, 9-44.

^{xii} M. H. Seco (2011) “Decoupling Trade from Politics: The EU and Region-Building in the Andes”, *Working Papers*, Vol. 11, Instituto Affari Internazionali, Rome, p.20.

^{xiii} P. De Lombaerde and M. Schulz (2009) *The EU and world regionalism: the makability of regions in the 21st century*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd, Burlington, p.1-2.

^{xiv} With the possible exceptions of two case studies: B. Gaens (2008) *Europe-Asia interregional relations: a decade of ASEM*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd, Burlington. And T. Lenz (2008) "Problematizing the EU's model export to Mercosur: strategies and motivations", *paper presented for GARNET conference on the European Union in International Affairs*, Brussels. However, as with other case studies, the lack of comparison with other inter-regional interactions gives us less insight on the overall EU's strategy to advance regionalism.

^{xv} P. De Lombaerde and M. Schulz (2009) *The EU and world regionalism: the makability of regions in the 21st century*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd, Burlington, p.288.

^{xvi} M. Farrell (2009) "EU policy towards other regions: policy learning in the external promotion of regional integration", *Journal of European Public Policy*, 16(8), 1165-1184.

^{xvii} Also stated in M. H. Seco (2011) "Decoupling Trade from Politics: The EU and Region-Building in the Andes", *Working Papers*, Vol. 11, Instituto Affari Internazionali, Rome, p.20.

^{xviii} Nevertheless, there are also various regions that firmly reject any explicit attempt to replicate the European experience (Fawcett and Hurrell 1995; Hurrell 2007; Gamble and Payne 1996; Telo` 2007; Soderbaum and Shaw 2003).

^{xix} G. Pietrangeli (2009) Supporting regional integration and Cooperation Worldwide: An overview of European Union approach in P. Lombaerde and M. Schultz *The European Union and world regionalism. The Makability of Regions in 21th Century*, Ashgate Ltd, Burlington, 9-44. And P. De Lombaerde and M. Schulz (2009) *The EU and world regionalism: the makability of regions in the 21st century*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd, Burlington.

^{xx} Which was surprisingly on Central America too, cfr infra.

^{xxi} P. De Lombaerde and M. Schulz (2009) *The EU and world regionalism: the makability of regions in the 21st century*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd, Burlington.

^{xxii} See for example Pietrangeli (2009) as well as De Lombaerde and Schultz (2011).

^{xxiii} P. Abrahamson and G. City (2009) "European Union influence on Central American integration: the case of the coming association agreement", *The EU in the Global Political Economy*, Brussels, p. 295.

^{xxiv} J. Mahoney (2001) *The Legacies of Liberalism: Path Dependence and Political Regimes in Central America.*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.

^{xxv} P. Abrahamson and G. City (2009) "European Union influence on Central American integration: the case of the coming association agreement", *The EU in the Global Political Economy*, Brussels, p. 296.

^{xxvi} M. S. Gutierrez (2004) *Conozcamos mas de Centroamérica*, Estado de Nacion, San José.

^{xxvii} SICA stands for "Sistema de integracion Centroamericana". Please have a look at their website at <http://www.sica.int>.

^{xxviii} For a more detailed analysis on how the evolution of this proces, have a look at R. Sanchez (2009) *The politics of Central American Integration*, Routledge, New York. And P. Caldente and José

Rodriguez (2010) *El SICA y la UE : La integracion regional en una perspectiva comparada*, ETEA, Cordoba Spain.

^{xxix} The Tegucigalpa Protocol (1993) can be found online at http://www.sice.oas.org/Trade/sica/PDF/TegProtODECA91_e.pdf [Accessed 9/01/2014].

^{xxx} SICA (2014) "SICA bodies and institutions" [online] accessible at http://www.sica.int/sica/instituciones_en.aspx?IdEnt=401&Idm=2&IdmStyle=2. [Accessed 9/01/2014].

^{xxxi} For a complete overview, start at the SICA (2014) "Homepage" [online] accessible at <http://www.sica.int/> [Accessed 9/01/2014].

^{xxxii} With the notable exception of two British diplomats in the region.

^{xxxiii} European Commission (2007d) *Regional Strategy Paper for Central America 2007-2013*, European Commission, Brussels, p.19.

^{xxxiv} European Commission (2002) *Central America Regional Strategy Paper 2002-2006*, European Commission, Brussels.

^{xxxv} The 2002-2006 Regional Strategy priorities were: (1) Support for the process of regional integration, implementation of common policies and institutional consolidation; (2) Strengthening the role of civil society in the regional integration process; and (3) Reducing vulnerability and improving environmental management.

^{xxxvi} European Commission (2007c): "MID TERM REVIEW RSP- Central America 2007-2013 and Regional Indicative Program 2011-2013", [online] available at: http://eeas.europa.eu/ca/docs/2010_midterm_ca_summary_en.pdf [Accessed 13/12/2013]

^{xxxvii} See European Commission (2007d) *Regional Strategy Paper for Central America 2007-2013*, European Commission, Brussels.

^{xxxviii} See annex.

^{xxxix} J. Selleslaghs (2014) *managing global interdependence on the Central American Isthmus: EU-Central America interregional relations*, W 2014/1, UNU-CRIS, Bruges.

^{xl} For more details, have a look at J. Selleslaghs (2013) *A survival technique in the 21st century: Regional Integration in Central America*, W 2013/13, UNU-CRIS, Bruges, p.9.

^{xli} Ibid.

^{xlii} Such as the UN. For more details and examples, have a look at J. Selleslaghs (2014) *managing global interdependence on the Central American Isthmus: EU-Central America interregional relations*, W 2014/1, UNU-CRIS, Bruges.

^{xliii} See below for more economic reasons.

^{xliv} Because of economies of scale, a bigger market of almost 50 million habitants, etc.

^{xlv} For more details on the specific interregional economic interests of the EU in Central America, please have a look at J. Selleslaghs (2014) *managing global interdependence on the Central American Isthmus: EU-Central America interregional relations*, W 2014/1, UNU-CRIS, Bruges.

^{xlvi} Here both groups of leaders decided to open the negotiations for such an agreement.

^{xlvii} A. Arroyo Picard (2001) "Resultados del Tratado de Libre Comercio de América del Norte en México: Lecciones para la negociación del Acuerdo de Libre Comercio de las Américas" [online] accessible at <http://www.hacienda.go.cr/cifh/sidovih/uploads/Libro/Resultados%20del%20TLC%20firmado%20entre%20Mexico%20y%20Estados%20Unidos.pdf> [Accessed on 11/12/2013]

^{xlviii} European Commissioner for Trade Karel De Gucht went to the region too where he confirmed that if the Free Trade Zone would become a reality, trade between the two regions could grow with up to 20%. For more, please have a look at the impact analysis conducted by Ecorys (2010) "Trade Sustainability Impact Assessment of the Association Agreement to be negotiated between the EU and Central America" [online] accessible at http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2010/april/tradoc_146042.pdf [Accessed 17/12/2013].

^{xlix} European Commission (2007d) *Regional Strategy Paper for Central America 2007-2013*, European Commission, Brussels.

ⁱ J. Selleslaghs (2014) *managing global interdependence on the Central American Isthmus: EU-Central America interregional relations*, W 2014/1, UNU-CRIS, Bruges.

ⁱⁱ As we can read in the EC's Regional Strategy Paper for Central America 2007-2013 (2007d, p.27), there are various possibilities and means for development cooperation: promotion of policy dialogue; institutional capacity building and training of personnel; encouraging cooperation and mutual assistance between national authorities, including by means of cooperation networks and harmonization of the legal frameworks; support for the formulation of common regional policies, projects and programs to support implementation of those common policies; support for the efforts of civil society; direct transfers of know-how from the EU institutions and other relevant European organizations; identification of synergies and multiplier effects between the different initiatives being promoted in the region (from micro to macro); promotion of exchanges and dissemination of information and experience and best practice between the Central American countries with the EU.

ⁱⁱⁱ Regional programs include PRESANCA which focuses on regional food security and nutrition, PPDDHAC which focuses on democracy and human rights, but there are also regional programs for vulnerability reduction and environmental management that focus on institution building for CEPREDENAC, CCAD and CRRH who are responsible for disaster prevention, the environment and management of water resources.

ⁱⁱⁱⁱ EC regional programs for Latin America from which Central America can also benefit include ALFA, Alβan (higher education), @lis (information society), URBAL (cooperation between cities and local administrations), AL-Invest (private sector), ALURE (rational use of energy), OBREAL (the Observatory of EU-LA relations) and EUROSocial (social cohesion).

^{liv} There are actually five on-going projects financed through thematic lines with a total amount of €23 million. The details per budget line are the following: (1) Food Security/ Food Facility: PRESANCA II (€13 million), PRESISAN and PRESISAN II (€5 million) and PRIICA (€5 million), (2) European instrument for democracy and human rights: "Rural Young building alternatives to the migration in Central

America" (€615,373), (3) Environmental and Natural Resources Thematic Program (ENRTP): "Strengthening local capacities to adapt to climate change in the Gulf of Fonseca" (€1.3 million), and "Conservation and effective management of marine biodiversity in communities of the tri-national ecosystem in the Gulf of Fonseca" (€1.4 million), (4) Instrument for Stability (IFS): "Supporting the fight against illicit accumulation and trafficking of firearms in Africa and CA" (CASAC II, €2.3 million); "Supporting the fight against illicit accumulation and trafficking of firearms in CA and neighboring countries" (€1.2 million); "Supporting the implementation of security strategies in CA in fighting and preventing crimes related to small arms and light weapons and armed violence" (€ 812,500), and (5) "Support to the participation, monitoring and impact of women network in Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador for a secure CA" (€ 811,520).

^{lv} For more on this issue, please have a look at J. Selleslaghs (2013) *A survival technique in the 21st century: Regional Integration in Central America*, W 2013/13, UNU-CRIS, Bruges.

^{lvi} European Commission (2007d) *Regional Strategy Paper for Central America 2007-2013*, European Commission, Brussels.

^{lvii} And notably the large scale PRACAMS with a budget of 23,5 million euros. For more, go to EEAS (2013) "List of regional projects" [online] accessible at http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/nicaragua/projects/list_of_projects/21513_es.html [Accessed 9/12/2013].

^{lviii} For a full overview, have a look at the Regional Strategy Paper for Central America 2007-2013.

^{lix} For a full overview of the Central American regional integration system with its strengths and weaknesses, please have a look at J. Selleslaghs (2013) *A survival technique in the 21st century: Regional Integration in Central America*, W 2013/13, UNU-CRIS, Bruges.

^{lx} The so-called GOLFONSECA project for which the EU contributes 20 million euros. For a full overview, please go to European Commission (2011) "Action Fiche for Central America" [online] available at http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/documents/aap/2011/af_aap_2011_centram.pdf [Accessed 9/12/2013].

^{lxi} For more see A. Marcos (X) "Fondo Espana-SICA" [online] available at http://www.femica.org/areas/red/documentos/29%20AECID_Angel_Marcos.pdf [Accessed 9/12/2013].

^{lxii} It still needs to be ratified by all parliaments at stake though before it can enter into force. As of the moment of writing (december 2013), four countries have ratified it so far: Nicaragua, Guatemala, Costa Rica and Honduras.

^{lxiii} As E. Lizano, F. Ocampo and R. Echandi (2009) have stated in their valuable work *Las oportunidades y los desafíos del Acuerdo de Asociación. Un puente para el crecimiento*, Inter-American Development Bank, San José.

^{lxiv} For a detailed impact assessment please have a look at the one Ecorys (2010) "Trade Sustainability Impact Assessment of the Association Agreement to be negotiated between the EU and Central America" [online] accessible at http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2010/april/tradoc_146042.pdf [Accessed 17/04/2013].

^{lxv} For a detailed analysis on how this was the case, please have a look at P. Abrahamson and G. City (2009) “European Union influence on Central American integration: the case of the coming association agreement”, *The EU in the Global Political Economy*. Brussels, 293-314.

^{lxvi} EU negotiators asked especially for more coherence and harmonization regarding customs duties, competitiveness policies, etc. For more, see *ibid*.

^{lxvii} For more details, please have a look at Euralert (2014) “DCI — technical assistance services for the regional program to support Central American economic integration and the implementation of the Association Agreement (Praiaa project)” [online] available at <http://euroalert.net/en/contracts.aspx?idl=1664523> [Accessed 12/01/2014].

^{lxviii} For more information, please have a look at : European Parliament (2013) “Cooperation with Central American 2002-2013” [online] available at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/dcam/dv/7-cooperracion_ue_calitvine_/7-cooperracion_ue_calitvine_es.pdf [Accessed 12/12/2013].

^{lxix} See part I of Council of the EU (2010) “EU Central America Association Agreement” [online] accessible at http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2011/march/tradoc_147661.pdf [Accessed 12/12/2013].

^{lxx} Especially in the framework of the PAIRCA program.

^{lxxi} See J. Caballero (2011) “Normative Europe: Changing Values and Attitudes in Central America”, in: P. De Lombaerde and M. Schultz *The EU and world regionalism: the makability of regions in the 21st century*. Ashgate Ltd, Burlington.; F. S. Carillo, P. Caldentey del Pozo and J. J. R. Rodriguez (2010) *La integracion centroamericana: una experiencia de formacion de funcionarios*, Fundacion ETEA, San Salvador.

^{lxxii} Especially but not solely: we equally conducted a thorough literature review of both primary as well as secondary sources in Spanish and English.