

Panel Chair



Vitalino Canas

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Regarding political bodies in Portugal, I carry out functions as a member of the Assembly of the Republic and as President of the Commission for European Affairs in the Assembly of the Republic. I also carry out other functions both on a public and a private level (I am a lawyer, an academic and a business consultant). I closely monitor security issues as an academic in two Portuguese higher education institutions for the security forces: the Institute of Criminal Sciences of the National Police and on the Training Course for Officers of the National Republican Guard. I monitor security projects in a very detailed way and I also closely observe any topics related to drugs policy. Based on this last point, ICOS invited me several years ago to assist them with their activities.

ICOS was interested in the work that I did when I was a member of the Portuguese government between 1995 and 2002, when I had the opportunity to monitor the Portuguese government's policy on drugs. In this role, I was able to develop some reforms for a new drug policy strategy in Portugal. This strategy has been implemented through several different approaches, among which is the decriminalisation of consumption. I understand that pretty much the same debate is taking place here in Brazil: to my



knowledge, everything that was established by the 2006 Law was actually really established through article 28 of the law.

This debate does not exist in Portugal and, if decriminalisation had truly taken place, there would have been some kind of initiative from the legislative. With regards to the drug issue, however, I have been watching the developments in Brazil with great interest. Brazil and Europe nowadays both have a very similar approach to these issues, especially regarding what they say about drug policy, the fight against drugs, and security issues. Brazil and Europe have followed their own independent paths, possibly without influencing or knowing about each other's approach. But it is true that both Europe and Brazil have developed similar strategies and approaches to policies in the fight against drugs and on new security policies. Thus, Brazil and Europe have taken on a multidisciplinary or multidimensional approach to antinarcotics policy that provides a clear contrast to policies focused solely on repression. Nowadays, when we look at different countries around the world, we can see that, generally, two main approaches are taken.

The first of these is known as a repressive approach. By this, it is understood that the drug phenomenon is fought mainly through

repression. The second is the multidisciplinary or multidimensional approach. This has been developed in Europe, Brazil, and a few other South American countries. This multidisciplinary initiative is essentially characterised by the following features: the phenomenon of drugs is fought on several fronts, all of which are equally important: a fight to prevent consumption, but also a fight to repress drug trafficking; a fight using public health policies to attempt to dissuade drug users; a fight through policies of risk reduction; a fight through information; and, finally, a fight through research.

Brazil has managed to embrace this perspective and I believe that as a result of this it is now one of the most progressive and innovative countries in the world, an example that I think other countries should know about and study.

I mentioned article 28 of Law 11,343 of 23rd August 2006, also known as the Law on Drugs. This article reflects a progressive understanding – right in my opinion – of how to regard people who consume drugs. These are people who should not be the subjects of stigmatisation of repressive action, or prison terms and so forth; they are ill, they require support, support from all of us and support from the state. It does not make any sense to apply prison sentences or stigmatising punishments to these people, and the outside world is increasingly realising this. Instead, a set of public health and support measures must be applied to dissuade the user from consuming drugs in the future. This is the philosophy behind the 1999 Portuguese law that I was responsible for.

However Brazil, because of its vast size, has taken significant measures that deserve our

full support. The country will be considered as a good example regarding this issue, and a lot of countries will increasingly follow suit. On the other hand, Brazil has an approach to security problems that can be summed up in the following phrase: we can be tough on crime, but also on the causes of crime. In other words, crime and insecurity naturally are addressed via the use of the security forces, but this must not distract from the need to create favourable conditions for economic and social development for the national community, local communities and individual citizens. To achieve this, it is necessary to start with young people and children.

ICOS has kept an eye on the activities being carried out in this area in Brazil with particular interest. We are monitoring with great interest the birth of PRONASCI (National Public Security Programme with Citizenship), which is based on an irrefutable principle: increasing security is achieved through promoting higher levels of citizenship and greater respect for the rights and freedoms of citizens. Security cannot exist without rights and citizenship. No one can fully enjoy their rights without security. Security does not stand in opposition to rights. Security and rights are inseparable.

The role of ICOS is to collaborate with the Brazilian authorities to achieve everything that is being worked on in Brazil and, where possible, to help the authorities gain more experience. We will bring the knowledge that we have gained in Europe, Asia and North America to Brazil, and we will take with us the knowledge that we acquire here. To this end, we intend to create a centre of expertise on public security; a centre located in Brazil that has a global perspective. Regarding PRONASCI, we would like to

work with the government and with other authorities and civil society bodies in a productive way.

This symposium is the first measure towards the aim of providing an exchange of knowledge and information, having brought policymakers, specialists and well-known academics together.