



## The European Union and the Colombian Conflict: The EU's Impact in Fostering Peace

Leonard FRIED (DE) – Supervisor: Antje HERRBERG

### Abstract

The European Union (EU) increasingly supports peacebuilding activities around the globe. It pursues a positive and maximalist approach to peacebuilding that implies a wide range of activities and functions that both precede and follow formal peace accords. While the EU has a decisive impact in fostering peace in its own territory and the immediate neighborhood, it is unclear how successful it is in supporting conflict transformation far away from its borders, where incentives such as accession and association are absent. In Colombia, the EU has been supporting peace since at least the early 2000s. From 2012 until 2016, the Colombian government negotiated a peace agreement with the main armed group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), putting an end to 52 years of conflict. The EU was not an official party to the negotiations, but supported the peace process by facilitating contacts between the conflict parties and by providing technical advice and expertise. Moreover, in 2015, HR/VP Mogherini nominated an EU Envoy to the Colombian Peace Process, and in 2016, the EU announced the setting-up of a Trust Fund for the post-conflict period. Hence, the main question this thesis explores is which impact has the EU had in fostering peace in Colombia. For this purpose, the theoretical framework of Diez, Stetter and Albert is adapted in order to measure the EU's compulsory, enabling, connective and constructive impact in overcoming conflict in Colombia through political support, trade, development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. This thesis draws on the insights gained from seven interviews conducted with EEAS and European Commission officials and one member of a NGO active in Colombia. The findings mostly support the proposed hypotheses: the absence of accession and association perspectives significantly limits the EU's leverage in Colombia. However, the EU has been able to exercise a connective impact by bringing different actors together and thus facilitate constructive dialogue between various sectors of society. The EU's impact in fostering peace is higher in the areas of political support and development cooperation than in the areas of trade and humanitarian assistance. To expand its pacifying impact in Colombia and elsewhere, the EU should increase the coherence between different policy fields, improve inter-institutional coordination, incorporate sanctioning mechanisms for human rights violations in trade agreements, raise the funds for humanitarian assistance and promote its peace mediation and facilitation capabilities more actively.