



"The Chairman"

Dear Member of the Implementation Group,

*dear friend,*

I would like to welcome you to this important and very new task of the European Security and Defence College.

As you know, we will meet on 19 February 2009 in the Borschette Centre to start our work on implementing measures to support and encourage exchanges of young officers during their initial education and training.

Our mission is particularly challenging. Its perspective is long term, since by its very nature their education will have an impact in the far future of our officers. However, some immediate results are also expected.

The initiative is inspired by the Erasmus programme which has already been adopted by Europe's universities, and has similarities as regards the academic part of the teaching in military academies and training centres. For this academic part, it follows the universities in its credit system and the exchange of instructors and professors. At the same time, it consists of developing exchanges in the vocational (i.e. basic military and professional) part of the training, where a wider variety of formats and solutions can be identified.

Administrative, legal and other obstacles will also be analysed, in order to identify the ways of dealing with them. The commandants of our academies and training centres are particularly concerned by these aspects and we have the mandate to offer them feasible and cost-effective options.

You are the actors in this initiative. Your Member State and defence organisation have designated you as an expert in the basic education and training of young officers, and expect your best efforts in finding options which are best suited to your respective national needs and education systems. At the same time, they recognise that there is a need to enhance human interoperability and the quality of personnel in Europe's armed forces, in a context where the complexity and unpredictability of the strategic/operational environment are increasing. This means that our young officers have to acquire a more complex and wider package of professional skills, while costs and the time spent on education also become relevant.

Your contribution will be essential for the progress of the initiative. Nobody else can have a clear vision of concrete possibilities and priorities in the way that you and your institutions can. The General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, in particular through the Secretariat of the European Security and Defence College, will offer its full and highly qualified support with both conceptual and practical aspects, in order to facilitate the work of the Implementation Group as much as possible. In annex you can find a draft work plan identifying the main steps towards implementing measures for your consideration.

However the results of the initiative will be in our hands!

We are all aware of the complexity of the problems and the initial difficulties we might encounter. But nothing new is ever discovered or achieved without risks and significant effort.

I am confident that in the future our young officers will remember that once upon a time a group of humble staff officials traced the path towards strengthening the interoperability of the European armed forces through changes in education in the military field, and for us this will be a major professional achievement and source of personal gratification.

I wish all of us every success in our work.

*with my warmest regards*

Cesare Ciocca