



Implementation Group

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Progress Report on the implementation of the European initiative for the exchange of young officers “inspired by ERASMUS”

Introduction

1. Subsequent to the Council's adoption of the European young officers' exchange scheme, modelled on Erasmus, on 10 November 2008, an Implementation Group (IG) was established in January 2009. This IG meets in the format of a project-oriented configuration of the Executive Academic Board of the European Security and Defence College (ESDC). Since the report of the HR of May 2010, the Implementation Group has convened in plenary three times in Brussels and other meetings at working group level took place. In addition to that, the Swedish Presidency organised a successful seminar in Stockholm on this topic.
2. Work has progressed significantly on the original five quick wins that were identified in the work plan of the implementation group. The detailed achievements on each of the quick wins are elaborated in Part I.
3. Work has started on some the additional six lines of development that were identified in the first half of 2009 and significant progress has been made. Considering the available experts from the Member States' side and the limited staff resources of the ESDC Secretariat to take the initiative forward, the Implementation Group decided to prioritise the identified measures and to move forward on those lines of development that are offering a more significant added value or representing an essential condition for further developments.

I. THE FIVE INITIAL PROJECTS

Project 1 - Implementation of a common training module on ESDP

4. The Belgian Royal Military Academy, supported by the ESDC Secretariat, successfully conducted a 2-day pilot seminar on 2 and 3 June 2009 in Brussels, inviting up to 3 participants from each Member State. The seminar aimed at preparing relevant trainers, tutors and lecturers from national military academies to plan, programme and conduct the common module on ESDP in their national training institutes. The seminar was highly appreciated by the participants and the ESDC Steering Committee decided to include this seminar as a regular activity within the academic programme of the College
5. The existing Internet-based Distance Learning (IDL) training material, developed by the ESDC, is made available to national institutes conducting the common ESDP (now CSDP) module, to be operated either on their own technical platform or on the ESDC's platform, in full compliance with the current copyright provisions. The ESDC Secretariat also grants access to the ESDP knowledge base, comprising other existing training material, background information and reading files. The current staff situation of the ESDC Secretariat does not permit to make the course available on a central server as a rule.

6. From the 7 to the 11 September 2009, the Portuguese Ministry of Defence organised through its 3 academies (Army, Air Force and Navy), the first occurrence of the common module on ESDP. The residential part was preceded by an IDL preparatory phase. Students who successfully completed the preparatory phase and the residential phase were attributed with 1.5 ECTS and a diploma supplement describing the content was attributed. In all, 39 cadets from 18 Member States participated in this highly appreciated and successful event. The quality of the module was validated by an external, independent evaluation performed by a researcher from the Belgian University of Liège, Mr Sylvain Paille. For this evaluation, he used a method that was inspired by the Kirkpatrick model, the same model that the ESDC uses for the internal evaluation of its regular courses.
7. Under its presidency, Spain decided to take the good example set by their Iberian neighbours one step further by organising three residential modules at the same time in the Academies of the Army, the Air Force and the Navy. Once again, the ESDC was asked to make its IDL content available, for the first time making use of the ILIAS platform that was made available for experimental purposes by the Romanian National Defence University. In total, 88 participants registered for the courses from 14 different Member States, equally spread over the three modules. Mr Paille was again contacted to assist in the evaluation process, but due to modules having place in three different places simultaneously, his role was this time more to supervise and coordinate the internal evaluation effort done by the Spanish organisers.
8. The Hellenic Air Force Academy (HAFA) intends to organize a CSDP seminar in Athens during November 2010 (15-19 Nov 2010), with the contribution of Hellenic Army and Naval Academies. An official announcement will take place during the next IG meeting in May 2010.

Project 2 and 3 - Provide password protected internet access to raw data of detailed stocktaking on the curricula of the national training institutes

9. The Bulgarian National Defence University has designed and has been hosting a website dedicated to the initiative (<http://www.emilyo.eu> – EMILYO is an acronym for Exchange of Military Young Officers). The basic objective of this website is to provide password protected Internet access to raw data of detailed stocktaking on the curricula of the national training institutes. Also, a forum has been set up to ensure the exchange of information and views on various relevant discussion topics. For the time being, the forum primarily serves the Implementation Group and its subgroups as a platform for the exchange of information and open discussions. There is also a section of the forum that is open to everybody interested in the initiative, specifically aimed at military school students from the European Union (and from outside) to share their experiences in their own institutes, during exchanges, on general topics, etc. Currently there are 154 members registered at the website and the forum, out of which 91 have full access to the uploaded information and the discussion boards.
 10. The EMILYO website is a useful tool for the functioning and the development of the initiative. The authorized users are recommended to take advantage of the full potential of the website.
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Project 4 - Framework agreement covering administrative and legal aspects of the exchanges

11. On March 2009 the work on quick win 4 - Framework Agreement for Administrative and Legal Challenges – has been initiated, having the following goals:
 - Identifying the requirements for a common set of documents;
 - Harmonization of the national perspectives;
 - Set-up of the needed agreements and their actual forms.
 These documents should be appropriate to carry out officer exchange programmes for the academic education and for the vocational training, taking in consideration and being applicable to the different existing systems in all MSs..

12. Having regard that on November 10th 2008, the Council approved the launching of the European Young Officers Exchange Scheme, modelled on Erasmus, the members of the subgroup 4 agreed that the legal/administrative documents should be inspired by the ERASMUS sub-programme of the Lifelong Learning Programme.

13. After an in-depth analysis of all possible forms of legal text, taking into account the particularities of each Member State's legislation, an agreement was reached regarding the legal framework for the initiative, which consists of the following documents:
 - A European legal framework with in its annexes:
 - Inter-institutional Agreement;
 - Learning Agreement;
 - Teaching Agreement.

14. The legal framework is meant to be the legal and organizational framework of the program, to which Member States can - on a voluntary basis - refer to when exchanging young officers. It consists of a strategic level document to be agreed by all Member States, whilst the three documents at the operational level (Inter Institutional Agreement, Learning Agreement and Teaching Agreement) will materialize concrete collaboration between two military education institutions. These documents were discussed in detail and brought to their final form on the occasion of the Conference on the European Initiative for the exchange of Young Officers, inspired by Erasmus, Stockholm, November 25 – 27, 2009 and in the meeting of the IG on 26 January 2009.

15. Having carefully considered all possible solutions for this framework and the advice of the Legal Service of the Council General Secretariat, the ESDC Steering Committee came to the conclusion that the best way ahead, was to adopt these documents in the form of a Steering Committee decision under silence procedure after the meeting on 24 February 2010 (ESDC Steering Committee Decision 2010/1 dated 10 March 2010).

Project 5 - Develop other common training modules

16. France was in charge of this subgroup and was supported by 14 Member States. The initial objective for the subgroup was to try to develop five new common training modules. The topics for these modules were selected from a list proposed by the Member States during the development of the stocktaking report in the summer of 2008.

 17. Austria took the lead on the project of a module on Peace Support Operations (PSO) and completed the task. Four sub-modules were developed :
 - (1) Basics for Crisis Management Operations (CMO) (2 weeks)
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- (2) Map exercise with topic CMO (1 week)
- (3) Tactical exercise without troops (1 week)
- (4) Course for CMO- techniques (2 weeks)

These modules are proposed twice a year and may be followed separately. Austria has put a link with more details on its website: www.miles.ac.at.

18. Two additional modules require expert advice before validation by ESDC:
 - (1) Humanitarian Law led by France
 - (2) Media communication lead by Belgium
19. Work on two other proposed modules will be further developed in the light of the work of a new Line of Development 8.

II. FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Development of a system of equivalences for the military part of the initial training

20. In parallel to and complementing the work done for the project 4/legal framework, the Austrian representative in the Implementation Group lead a subgroup that managed to develop a very practical way to give credits for the vocational part of training in the military universities and to transfer of these credits to the educational system of another Member State. In particular the system will allow reciprocal recognition of practical training activities, with significant benefits in terms of time employment of cadets/young officers. The concrete description of this system can be found on the Emilyo website and on the Austrian www.miles.ac.at website.
21. During its meetings on the 27 January 2010, the ESDC Steering Committee was informed of this system and in its meeting of the 24 February 2010, the Steering Committee agreed to adopt this system under silence procedure as part of a single decision together with the Framework Arrangement.

Comparison of courses based on competences

22. To complement the above mentioned system and to offer conceptual elements in support of / to facilitate the mutual recognition of training activities, the Implementation Group in its meetings in November 2009 and on the 26 January 2010 decided to give priority to the development of courses based on competences. Sweden, seeing the importance of this aspect, kindly accepted to chair a subgroup working on this topic. Further developments are expected soon.

Develop IDL specific content

23. Work on this project will take advantage of what was already done in the context of the project 1 (IDL support from ESDC Secretariat) and 5 (common modules). Concrete steps forward are expected from the next IG meetings.

Create a database

24. This database should in future provide two distinct functionalities:
 - a) Offer the possibility of finding one or more (best) matches to the training outcomes or competences that are provided in a military academy: the detailed stocktaking has clearly indicated that the development of such an application is not yet feasible, since most Member states either are still in progress of implementing a qualifications framework in the academic field, or use national qualification frameworks that do not allow direct comparison between the national systems. In this context, it become essential to see the first conclusions of the the line of development 2. This functionality will therefore be postponed until the conditions mentioned above have been reached.
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- b) Provide a clearing-house function enabling training institutes and students to offer or identify opportunities for exchanges: although it is estimated as being technically feasible, insufficient resources have been made available to take work ahead.

Encouragement for national implementation of the programme

25. In order to encourage all parties concerned to implement the measures developed within the initiative, the IG intends to create a subgroup that will draw up and implement a comprehensive communication strategy. Up until now, none of the Member States has agreed to take the responsibility for this development and the required expertise does not exist within the ESDC Secretariat to take the work further.
26. As a first step in this line, contacts have already been taken with the existing multilateral initiatives, i.e. the meetings of Commandants or Dean's of military Academies (EMACS, Conference of Superintendents, EUAFA) aimed to illustrate the activity of the IG and the context in which the whole Military Erasmus Initiative is moving. In particular the last 2 meetings (EMACS in Stockholm and UEFAFA in Pozzuoli, Italy – both in October '09) it was possible to send one representative from the ESDC Secretariat and the IG Chair. The IG Chair will also be invited in the next Conference of Superintendents at the Marineschule Mürwik, Germany in May this year. These meetings are already included in the IG workplan, to identify further synergies and coordination of efforts, and to create opportunities for debating the major issues and experiences with the national Institutions.
27. In concrete terms a strong support to the national implementation has been done by the two Seminars organised by the EU Presidencies, respectively in Brno, Czech Republic in April '09, and in Stockholm, Sweden in November '09. These seminars have been an opportunity not only for further developing the work of the IG (as already mentioned) but also to allow other actors/decision makers to better focus their attention on the major issues and progress of the Initiative.
28. In consideration of the urgent need to take the best of the various activities and start to identify specific strategies, the Implementation Group decided in its meeting on 27 January 2010 that this will become a priority for the next meetings.

Military Life Long Learning Programme

29. During the Seminar in Brno (April 2009) a new Working Group was established, in order to explore and effectively use the currently existing exchange programmes, more particularly the Erasmus programme, focused on accredited degree programmes. The Vice Rector for Public Relations of the Czech Defence University in Brno took the lead of this subgroup.
30. Letters from the Czech University of Defence Rector, addressed only to military training institutes that have an Erasmus University Charter (EUC), were distributed in December 2009 via the ESDC Secretariat, to request more information and assistance from the other Member States.
31. After evaluation of the replies and delivered information, a workshop will be organized in Brno, expectedly in June 2010. Possible activities from September 2010 will be proposed and further discussed.
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Develop other common training modules

32. The work on common modules was started originally as a quick-win from the start of the implementation of the initiative (see paras 19 to 23). The Implementation Group decided to continue to develop up to 5 new modules per year. The subjects for these modules can be proposed by Member States. Each module will follow the same process of creation, development and validation:
- Proposal of common modules and choice of the topics;
 - Meeting (by internet) of Member State experts led by the Member State who proposed the module ;
 - Presentation of the final module: the framework used will be the CSDP module and the general form proposed by Annexes IV and VII of the LOD1;
 - Validation of the module in silence procedure by the Member States;
 - Validation by the ESDC and notification to the Executive Academic Board and the Steering Committee.
 - The module is put on line on a dedicated website or via a link on the website Emylio;
 - The module takes the label of the European initiative and is placed under a “ESDC copyright”, so that it can be used by all Member States.

III. DETAILED STOCKTAKING

33. The Faculty of Law, Department of political Sciences of the Université de Liège conducted a detailed stocktaking in support of the Initiative. Preliminary findings have been made available to the Implementation Group in September 2009. The final report is currently in its final phases of redaction and the ESDC Secretariat will investigate if this report can be published by the Council Secretariat.
34. The preliminary results of the detailed stocktaking were indispensable for the work on several lines of development for the implementation of the Initiative. The full report provides a scientific basis to the further development of the work plan for the Implementation Group. In the future it should be included in the database (para 26) and regularly updated in order to offer a permanent conceptual reference to all exchange programmes and projects.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

35. Work on the implementation of the Initiative is well on its way. Two of the most important corner stones have been put into place early 2010. The Framework Arrangement and the system of equivalences for the military part of the initial training can be used by those Member States who so wish to facilitate their exchange programmes of young officers. Other very useful tools, like Common CSDP modules (including the IDL support and the train-the-trainers seminar), the web site and some standard curricula of modules on common topics, are already available in support of the Member States' Academies willing to further develop their exchange programmes. In the future among all, it should be important to better analyse the financial aspects related to the exchange programmes, as they are perceived as a relevant obstacle in the practical implementation of the Initiative, particularly for the instructors/teachers.
36. The Initiative would not have been developed so quickly without the support of the successive Presidencies and of the majority of Member States. Nevertheless, significant work remains to be done. The success depends on a number of aspects, including continued enthusiasm from the IG members, sufficient staff resources at the ESDC Secretariat to
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support the IG and to implement agreed reporting system, but most of all the continued support from the Member States to identify the necessary experts and to make them available for the projects and for participation in occasional meetings. In short, the support to the IG activities should be seen as a strategic investment not only for implementing the decisions of all Member States' Defence Ministries taken in their declaration in Nov. '08, but also for enhancing significantly the quality of and renovating the basic education of young officers at national level.
