



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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NOTE

From: Secretariat
to: Delegations

Subject: European initiative on exchanges of young officers inspired by Erasmus:
- SG/HR report on the state of affairs

The General Secretariat of the Council herewith circulates the SG/HR report on the state of affairs of the European initiative on exchanges of young officers inspired by Erasmus circulated today to Ministers of Defence.

Brussels,

Dear Minister,

At their meeting on 10 November 2008, Ministers of Defence launched the European initiative for the exchange of young officers inspired by Erasmus and asked me to draw up a report on its implementation as soon as possible in 2009.

I have pleasure in now sending you this report (in Annex), which reflects the significant progress already achieved in implementation since the start of the initiative in November 2008. We were seeking to implement and deliver concrete results as soon as possible, and we succeeded. This is due, in particular, to the interest shown by Member States and their readiness to actively engage and commit to the different projects contributing to implementation, entirely in line with the voluntary character of this initiative.

I have expressed my full support for the overall objective of this initiative launched under the French Presidency. It aims to strengthen interoperability of the armed forces and to promote a European security and defence culture through increased co-operation between Member States in the field of officer training. To facilitate this, Member States have agreed on a number of practical measures for encouraging and facilitating exchanges between their relevant training institutes and at the same time improving specific training on ESDP.

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The European Security and Defence College successfully took up the role assigned to it, of assisting the Member States with the implementation of this initiative through the ESDC Secretariat and the setting up of a special Implementation Group. Two official meetings of this group, one of them in the format of a working seminar hosted by the Czech Presidency in Brno in April 2009, and the start of sub-groups looking into special matters and issues, have been key for the progress reached so far.

The keys steps agreed by the Implementation Group include: the development and conduct of common ESDP training modules; a train-the-trainer seminar in Brussels with a one-week ESDP module as a pilot project in Portugal, the establishment of an information platform including a discussion forum for young officers; and the development of a legal framework document for the exchange of officers. In parallel, and with the support of the University of Liège, work has started on a detailed stocktake with the aim of creating a platform of in-depth information on the different national military educational systems, including the situation regarding existing exchanges between military academies.

Finally, we have to acknowledge that - although rapid progress has been achieved - full implementation of this initiative is a long-term project and includes the potential for further development on aspects which have yet to be identified. I would therefore like to express my support for the Czech Presidency's idea, proposed at the seminar in Brno, of tasking a sub-group to look into the entire military lifelong learning process, with a view to a more consistent way of training European military officers.

Yours sincerely,

European initiative for the exchange of young officers “inspired by ERASMUS”

Introduction

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. This IG meets in the format of a project-oriented configuration of the Executive Academic Board of the European Security and Defence College (ESDC).

During the first meeting of the IG in Brussels on 19 February 2009, the Group adopted the work plan as proposed by the ESDC Secretariat. This work plan includes the different actions/projects to be carried out during the following 12 months. Work started immediately on 5 practical projects that were identified as possible quick-wins, based on the possibility of starting work on them immediately.

In the second meeting of the IG, which took place in the format of a working seminar organised by the Czech Presidency, 6 main lines of developments were identified, looking more to the longer term.

I. FIVE PRACTICAL PROJECTS

Project 1 - Implementation of a common training module on ESDP

As part of the initiative taken under the French presidency, it was agreed to promote training and education in the field of ESDP. To this end, the PSC in its meeting on 14 October 2008 endorsed the "Standard curriculum for the Common Module on European Security and Defence Policy".

To support national military institutes who want to implement such an ESDP module during the training of their young officers, the following measures will be taken:

- (1) The conduct of a *train-the-trainer seminar* which aims at preparing relevant trainers, tutors and lecturers from national military academies to plan, programme and conduct such seminar.

The Belgian Royal Military Academy, supported by the ESDC Secretariat, will conduct a 2-day pilot seminar on 2 and 3 June 2009 in Brussels, inviting up to 3 participants from each Member State. The tentative programme includes an information part to update participants on recent ESDP developments and key elements of ESDP, and a more practical component including a practical exercise on programming such modules in various possible ways, including access to existing training tools and materials.

- (2) Access to the ESDC Internet-based Distance Learning System and other training material

At present, the ESDC Secretariat can make the existing Internet-based Distance Learning (IDL) training material available to national institutes conducting the common ESDP module, to be operated on their own technical platform, in full compliance with the current copyright provisions; these complete IDL training components cover the basic ESDP areas, as well as the curriculum of the common module. The ESDC Secretariat will also grant access to the ESDP knowledge base, comprising other existing training material, background information and reading files. When the ESDC reaches its full operational capability, in line with the Steering Committee recommendations of December 2008, the College will be able to provide teachers and students from the respective national institutes with access to the whole range of available IDL material operated on its own technical platform.

In addition, many Member States showed an interest in planning and conducting the ESDP standard module in the same week as other national institutes, using this co-ordinated conduct as an opportunity for the exchange of officers in the institutes involved.

In this context, Portugal announced that, with the support of the ESDC Secretariat, it will conduct the standard module as a one-week pilot project in September 2009. During this week, Portugal intends to invite young officers from all other Member States to participate in the pilot project.

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

Although the initial stocktaking undertaken by the ESDC Secretariat under the French Presidency already contained a huge amount of information, it was agreed that a more detailed stocktaking should be carried out. This was taken in hand by a researcher from the University of Liège, who already had previous experience with this subject. Member States were invited to send their input to the ESDC Secretariat, and to date 20 Member States have sent replies. A specific focus was placed on the learning outcomes of (competences developed by) the different training courses.

In order to make maximum use of the collected information as soon as possible, this specific projects aims to make the replies available to all Member States. The general idea was to make the replies accessible via the Internet on a password protected site. This would allow the Member States to start an initial manual comparison between the different national timetables and curricula.

The Bulgarian National Defence University has agreed to provide the server and the necessary administrative support. For this, they have created a dedicated website (<http://emilyo.nvu.bg>). The name "emilyo" is an acronym for **exchange of military young officers**. The website will be accessible in the near future under the URL <http://emilyo.eu>, as soon as registration of the domain name has been completed.

Project 3 - Creation of a dedicated forum for the exchange programme

Taking into account the age and background of the cadets in the various military training institutes of the Member States, the project aims at providing a forum accessible to all the students of these institutes in the European Union (and from outside), where they can exchange their experiences in their own institutes, during exchanges, on general topics, etc.

At the same time, the environment will serve the Implementation Group as a platform for the exchange of information (bulletin board) and open discussions (forum). This way of working has the distinct advantage, as against working with e-mail messages, that a visible trace will remain of all the topics treated.

Although it was originally set out as a separate project, the Bulgarian National Defence University has accepted to host this application on the same platform as the previous project. Therefore, from now on this project and the previous one will be treated as a single project.

The website that hosts both of these projects, although already accessible, is still largely under construction. Additional links to the different websites of Member States' military academies and universities need to be added. The different training facilities also intend to promote this website to their students and to add a link to it on their own websites.

Project 4 - Framework agreement covering administrative and legal aspects of the exchanges

In the Council Conclusions of December 2008 one of the measures that was decided was to identify ways of dealing with administrative, legal and other obstacles to exchanges. To address this challenge, the Implementation Group decided to create a subgroup of legal experts. This subgroup, presided by a Romanian Chairperson and comprising experts from 6 Member States, started work in March 2009 by making an inventory of the challenges and of the existing ad hoc solutions at national and European level.

The intention is to draft a common framework agreement by mid-May and finalise it by the summer of 2009. This document will be inspired by the existing documents in the European Life-long Learning Programme, more specifically in the ERASMUS sub-programme. It can then be used by the Member States as a basis for their bilateral agreements

The subgroup is to identify the most appropriate legal form for such a framework agreement.

Project 5 - Develop other common training modules

In the initial stocktaking, conducted in the summer of 2008, a number of other topics were identified by Member States to be covered by other common modules, similar to the module on ESDP, which was endorsed by the PSC in its meeting on 14 October 2008.

For this project, too, a subgroup was created with a French Chairperson and participants from 14 Member States. This subgroup has developed a detailed work plan for the coming months and has already identified four topics for which they will draw up a common curriculum. These topics are :

- Humanitarian Law – including the Law of Armed Conflicts, Maritime Law, and Legal Aspects in Crisis Management Operations - Peace support operations
- Leadership in a multinational context
- Communication (with the media)

France, Austria and Germany have each taken the lead for part of this project and other Member States are contributing to the work. The subgroup expects to be able to agree on the aim and objectives of the above mentioned curricula by the end of May 2009 and develop full Curricula and supporting training material in English by the end of 2009.

These curricula and the relevant training material will then be made available to all Member States. The Member States can then include these common curricula in their own Academic Programmes as appropriate, either as separate blocks or spread out over a full semester.

II. Future developments

In light of the positive developments with the first quick-wins, the IG decided to launch the following lines of developments with a longer term perspective .

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

Currently the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) creates a framework for identifying equivalences in the work done by students in the academic field. A similar system is used in the vocational education system (ECVET). A subgroup will study how these systems can be used or adapted in the field of military training. Since the academic aspect is fully covered by the ECTS, the work of the subgroup should focus on the vocational aspect of the training.

2. Comparison of courses based on competences

Based on the experience of setting up exchanges between military academies or with other (civilian) training actors, a subgroup will develop a process describing the best way to find a suitable match for an exchange student. The process can be used as a benchmark when setting up exchange programmes in the field of this initiative.

3. Develop IDL specific content

The Implementation Group will endeavour to develop specific training material to be placed within the ESDC's Intern-based Distance Learning system in support of the common training modules that are being developed.

4. Create a database

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.
- b) Provide a clearing-house function enabling training institutes and students to offer or request places for exchanges

5. Encouragement for national implementation of the programme

In order to encourage all parties concerned to implement the measures developed within the initiative, the IG will create a subgroup that will draw up and implement a comprehensive communication strategy.

6. Military Life Long Learning Programme

Consideration has been given to the need for stronger cooperation between all actors involved at national and EU level, in order to identify a wider range of opportunities, particularly concerning those required to resolve the financial issues. The general idea was also to have a more in-depth look to the entire Military Life Long Learning Process, with a view to a more consistent way of training military officers.

Finally, the IG considered developing supporting mechanisms, as mentioned in the Council statement. However, since work on the legal and administrative framework is still ongoing, the IG considered it was not yet appropriate to start work on this project. The idea will be reconsidered in due course.
