

The international Military Academic Forum (iMAF) – a story of success

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As an old saying goes: “If you have success once, it could be by accident – if you have success twice, it could be by luck – if you have success three or more times in a row, it is by diligence and by efficiency.”

During the past years, the international Military Academic Forums (iMAFs) has been characterised by hard work, diligence, efficiency, and most important, by the valuable contributions of the iMAF participants and the organising institutions. Each single iMAF had valuable outcomes for the basic officer education, thus, we can state that iMAF is a story of success.

The basic idea for such a forum was born in Austria in 2007, when the Theresan Military Academy could welcome persons being responsible for the basic officer education from Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Lithuania, and Switzerland. But during this first “Military Academy Forum (MAF)” as well as during the following years, philosophical discussions took place rather than elaborations on concrete outcomes. This situation changed in 2013, when the present name “international Military Academic Forum” was invented and the participants focused much more onto the Officer Cadets’ needs. An iMAF agreement was established and five basic officer education institutions from Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Romania volunteered to organise future iMAFs in a rotating principle.

In 2014, 29 institutions sent 114 participants to the iMAF in Austria. The focus was set onto the elaboration of new common modules – some of them found their way into the national curricula and are conducted even nowadays on a regular basis.

In 2015, the iMAF was organised by the “Nicolae Bălcescu” Land Forces Academy in Sibiu/Romania with 105 participants from 24 institutions. The main focus was set onto the selection of modules for the international semester for land forces – consequently an Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership Project gave the frame to elaborate the details, which are available for all basic officer education institutions up to present time.

In 2016, the 4th iMAF took place in Wroclaw/Poland at the General Tadeusz Kosciuszko Military University of Land Forces. The question “*how to finance all the exchange activities*” was answered by the elaborations of 107 participants from 36 institutions. A publication with all the recommendations is still available on the EMILYO website (www.emilyo.eu).

The 2017-iMAF was carried out by the University of Defence Brno/Czech Republic with the main focus onto the faster implementation of the – in the meanwhile – existing – international semester for land forces. The 68 participants from 28 institutions recommended practical avenues of approach for the integration of the semester into the national curricula.

In 2018, 68 participants from 24 institutions came to the Faculty of Military Sciences and Officer Training at the University of Public Service in Budapest/Hungary for the iMAF. Potential necessary educations for Officer Cadets as a reaction to new threats were discussed.

In 2019, the iMAF returned to the Theresan Military Academy. The so far most iMAF participants – 128 specialists for the basic officer education from 47 institutions came to Austria – elaborated more details for other services than land forces at Reichenau-castle. On the one hand the main focus was set onto the Air Force, the Navy, and the technical semesters, on the other hand existing common modules were evaluated.

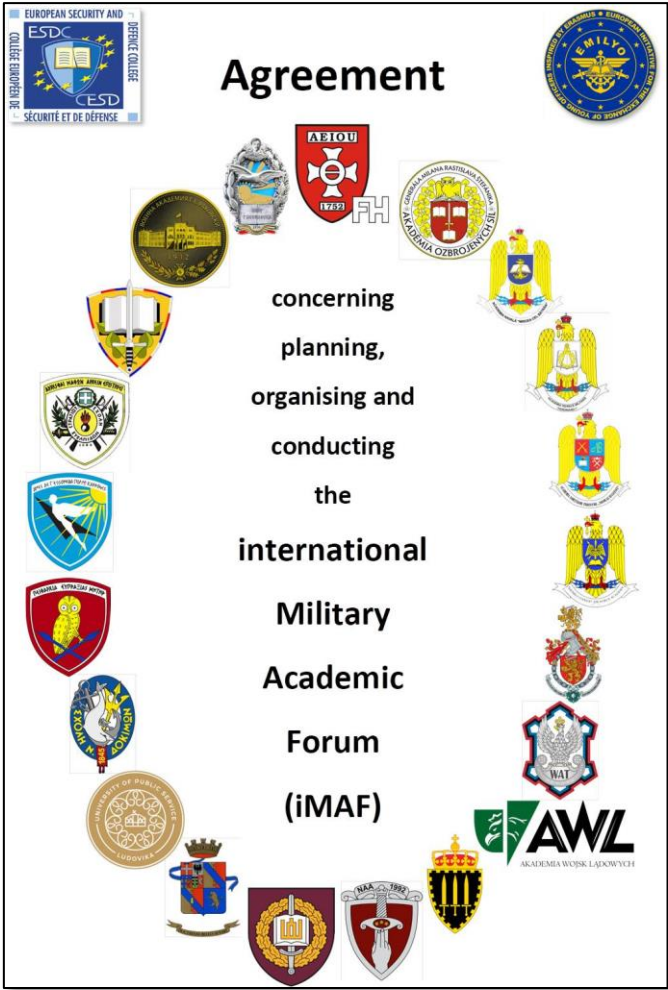


Picture 1: The 128 participants of iMAF 2019 in Austria.

Photo: Theresan Military Academy.

Unfortunately – because of the pandemic – no iMAF could be organised in 2020. But the time was ready and used to expand the number of potential organising institutions.

In 2021, a new iMAF agreement was established including 22 institutions, among them the European Security and Defence College (ESDC), which will co-finance future iMAFs. The agreement binds future topics much more to the elaborations of the “*European initiative for the exchange of young officers inspired by Erasmus*” – in particular to the challenges of the currently 15 existing lines of development (LoDs). By doing so, it is expected that the LoD-elaborations will come to much faster results.



Picture 2: The 22 new iMAF partners on the cover page of the new iMAF agreement.
Picture created by the author.

By using the new iMAF agreement, the Portuguese Military Academy organised the first iMAF after the pandemic in 2021. 69 participants from 29 institutions worked

within seven syndicates on needs for the lines of development. A further syndicate, composed of Officer Cadets, gave a feed-back concerning their experiences about exchanges. Such syndicates are important as well, can be seen as a kind of quality assurance system, and is the reason, why our main target group – the Officer Cadets and students – should always be involved in future iMAFs.



Picture 3: The iMAF participants at the Portuguese Military Academy in 2021.

Photo: Portuguese Military Academy.

Not to underestimate are the networking and socialising effects. Through time, a lot of bilateral (ERASMUS+) agreements were signed or initiated. But most importantly, the participants became friends, who are working for the same goal: **assure the best education for our future military elites!**