

EUROPEAN INITIATIVE FOR THE EXCHANGE OF YOUNG OFFICERS INSPIRED BY ERASMUS – QUO VADIS?

Colonel Harald GELL, PhD, MSc, MSD, MBA
Chairman of the Implementation Group

Abstract: In 2018 the 10-year anniversary of the Implementation Group for the “European Initiative for the exchange of young Officers inspired by Erasmus” will be celebrated. Within these few years the Implementation Group reached a lot – but is still far away from reaching the desired end-state. The present article describes the history of the Implementation Group and lists the future challenges with special focus onto the solved agreement for exchanges but still not adopted by 20 EU Member States. At the end the author gives some ideas for future elaborations and challenges to be managed to increase the Member States’ security.

Keywords: international Military Academic Forum, Implementation Group, Lines of Development, Common Modules, International Semester

1. Introduction

On 10th and 11th November 2008 the Council of the European Union (EU) adopted in their 2903rd Council Decision the foundation of an Implementation Group for the – at that time – named “European young officers exchange scheme, modelled on Erasmus” [1]. Other names for the same initiative – but meaning the same – are

- European initiative for the exchange of young officers inspired by Erasmus,
- Military Erasmus,
- Erasmus Militaire,
- EMILYO (Exchange of MILitary Young Officers),
- or just in short – “the Initiative”.

With reference to the European Security Strategy (ESS) 2003 and the Report on the ESS 2008 [2], the overall goals – referring to the European Union Basic Officer Education – were

- to synchronise and to harmonise the different education lines,
- to increase the intercultural competences of European Officer Cadets and
- to promote a European Security and Defence Culture

in order to facilitate future multinational cooperation and thus, to increase the European security.

In 2009 the first meeting of the Implementation Group (IG) – consisting of experts from the EU Basic Officer Education Institutions (BOEI) took place in Brussels [3] supported by the European Security and Defence College (ESDC). It was agreed to meet each other on a quarterly basis. The first meetings were dedicated to find the way of best practice. In addition to the IG meetings three larger conferences took place to push the goals of the Initiative forward. The first of these conferences was organised by the University of Defence (UoD) in Brno during the Czech presidency of the EU in April 2009 [4].



Figure 1: Conference of the Implementation Group in Brno in April 2009
Source: UoD Brno

Unfortunately, after the Polish presidency of the EU in October 2011, the larger IG conferences came somehow to an end – just the regular IG meetings continued. Therefore, some BOEI took the initiative to create something new, which was the creation of the international Military Academic Forum (iMAF).

At the very beginning of its work the IG had to define problem areas which were to be solved quickly – therefore the name “quick-wins” was used. On a later stage it seemed to be necessary to enlarge these problem areas which were re-named to “Lines of Development” (LoDs). The table hereinafter lists the current LoDs [5]:

Table 1: The Lines of Development of the Implementation Group

LoD No.	LoD Name	Description/Purpose
1	System of Equivalences	Facilitates recognitions between academic and non-academic education.
2	Development of Competences	The adopted document describes which competences an Officer Cadet should have – using common descriptors. Focuses onto SQF.
3	Development of IDL / E-Learning	Preparation for certain educations may be conducted via e-learning to be more efficient.
4	(Create an) IT-Platform	Sharing all types of information of the Initiative (www.emilyo.eu).
5	Supporting Develop Mechanism / Framework	How to deal with administrative and legal matters.
6	National Implementation of the Programme	Support of the Initiative by Superiors. Focuses onto information-flow (e.g. Wikipedia, Newsletter, information during other conferences).
7	Lifelong Learning	Possibilities of support by existing exchange programmes, such as the ERASMUS+ programme.
8	Common Modules	A Common Module is seen as to be important for all European Officer Cadets – either all services or a single service. After being adopted by all representatives of the Implementation Group, the Common Modules shall be integrated into the national curricula. In doing so – step by step – the European curricula will be harmonised.

In the meanwhile the IG has solved a lot of challenges and has reached a lot. For example – in 2009 just one Common Module (CM), the CM on European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), existed and was conducted in Portugal. In the meanwhile – as of May 2017 – some 24 Common Modules with 72 ECTS in total have been developed. Eight new Common Modules – focusing more onto Navy and Air Force education – are

in the developing phase.

The author will focus within the next chapters onto still – more or less – unsolved challenges and will introduce the visions for the future of the Implementation Group's work.

2. Challenges for the IG's work

2.1 Development of Competences

At the very beginning of the IG's work it was agreed to encourage BOEIs to recognise education parts which were conducted abroad to avoid double-education. For this purpose detailed negotiations and agreements are to be undertaken prior to the activities. To facilitate mutual recognition different avenues of approach may be used:

- Implement exactly the same education part into the own curriculum. In doing so, the education descriptions must be agreed on a bi- or multinational level. For this purpose the IG has developed the procedures to create the Common Modules, the question is just, how fast the BOEI can implement them, taking into account the accreditation and their circles?
- Almost all the education systems focus mainly onto special knowledge. Taking the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) into consideration, it is much more, in particular the knowledge, skills and competences which comprise all the learning outcomes [6].
- Within the IG – according to the EQF – descriptors with focus onto military education were developed. If now all the BOEIs use the same descriptors for their education parts, it will lead to similar or even the same learning outcomes. As a consequence, exchanges will be facilitated. The author even goes further when requesting even the same form for all education activities, because in using it, all the BOEIs are forced to integrate the necessary information according to EQF and ECTS.



Figure 2: Increase of intercultural competences during the CM on CSDP in 2017

Source: TMA Wiener Neustadt

2.2 Development of IDL / E-Learning

From the very beginning of its foundation the IG could use the IDL (interactive distributed learning) of the ESDC. Of course, the ESDC focuses with their e-learning onto its courses; that is why the IG is encouraged to develop its own e-learning for the projects if they are not covered by the ESDC and if e-learning fits to the didactical approach.

Projects – such as the Strategic Partnership (SPP) – give the frame and the necessary money for developing new e-learning modules. If new Common Modules are to be developed, the responsible institutions may think about developing e-learning too. In doing so, more and more e-learning modules could be available.

It has to be stressed, that e-learning should ascertain just the same level of knowledge prior to residential phases – it shall never replace them! The real outcome of the exchanges is the increase of competences based on interaction among the Officer Cadets and Students.

Common Module
Military Leadership A

e-learning content	lectures
Capabilities of Land Forces	Military Leadership
Operational Principles	Tactical Factors
Common MDMP	Principles of War
Task Organizations	Combined Arms Warfare
UTM Grid System	Display-Assess-Conclude
Operational Symbols	Military Decision Making Process
Used Formats	Reduction of MDMP
	Practical MDMP Training

Choose a topic

Add Info
Additional Information

Erasmus+ This material has been financed by the European Commission in the frame of the Erasmus+ Programme

Figure 3: Example of e-learning as preparation for a CM created for the SPP
Source: TMA Wiener Neustadt

2.3 Supporting Develop Mechanism / Framework

How to deal with administrative and legal matters is described in this adopted document which was established by lawyers during an IG conference in Stockholm in November 2009 and which was revised in 2015 [7]. This framework establishes the general conditions of the Initiative, dealing with the exchange of Officer Cadets, students and teachers between training institutions. In principle, the Officer Cadets from abroad should be treated in the same way as the own ones. In particular the following main issues are regulated [8]:

- **Principles of the exchanges:**
 - The BOEIs shall declare their intent to use the framework for exchanges.
 - Whenever possible, external funding – such as ERASMUS+ – shall be used.
 - If possible, credit transfer systems such as ECTS or the Users' Guide for

Workloads' Calculation of Non-Academic Basic Officer Education should be used.

- **Most important financial liabilities:**
 - The **sending institution** shall cover – unless otherwise provided – the pay and cash compensations owed to exchange trainees or exchange teachers; any charges resulting from the transfer from the sending state to the receiving state and vice-versa; charges resulting from repatriation; emergency or basic medical care, not borne by the healthcare services of the receiving institution and ensuring that exchange trainees and exchange teachers are in possession of a civil liability insurance, valid during the entire exchange, covering them on the territory of the receiving state.
 - The **receiving institution** shall cover the expenses linked to education; the supply of class material, documentation, computer equipment, access to documentation, laboratories, and Internet for educational purposes and research activities; the supply of accommodation, food, and access to social activities; transportation within the territory of the receiving state for educational purposes; the costs linked to possible national language courses; emergency medical care and access to military associations, to officers' clubs and their sport facilities and other services. **Everything – listed before – shall be provided under the same conditions as those provided to trainees or teachers of the receiving institution.**
- **Tutoring Staff:**
 - For day to day administrative issues, the receiving institution shall appoint a representative, who shall have the position of a “tutor”, for liaison with the sending institution.
 - The tutor is in charge of informing the exchange trainees or exchange teachers of the receiving institution's regulations, orders, instructions and customs, at their arrival, as well as assisting and advising them during the exchange period.
 - The tutor deals with the requests for leave of absence. The tutor is in charge of informing the sending institution about all important issues.
- **Subordination – Discipline:**
 - During the training period in the receiving institution, exchange trainees or exchange teachers shall follow the instructions of the receiving institution's director or commandant.
 - Exchange trainees or exchange teachers shall follow the receiving institution's regulations.
 - The receiving institution is not authorised to take disciplinary measures towards exchange trainees or exchange teachers. Any breach of discipline involving an exchange trainee or an exchange teacher shall be brought to the attention of his/her relevant national authorities without delay.
 - Under the responsibility of the receiving institution after the consent of the sending institution, exchange trainees or exchange teachers may be designated to carry out command duties within the framework of their training, and to this regard.
 - The receiving institution shall officially inform the sending institution of any medal, distinction, reward awarded to the exchange trainee or exchange teacher.

- **Working timetable – leave of absence:**
 - Exchange trainees and teacher use the working timetable of the receiving institution.
 - Exchange trainees or exchange teachers may take a leave of absence and stay away from their duty in accordance with the provisions in force in their receiving institution.
 - Exchange trainees or exchange teachers may benefit from the public holiday regulation in force in the receiving state.
- **Reports:**
 - Individual reports drafted by exchange trainees or exchange teachers, on their own initiative, or by order of their sending or receiving institution shall be transmitted to the sending institution and/or to the relevant national authority.
 - The receiving institution shall draft an individual evaluation report to the sending institution for every exchange trainee or exchange teacher at the end of the exchange period, if required by the sending institution.
 - The receiving institution shall draft an annual general evaluation report on the different exchanges that took place in that Receiving institution to be send to the ESDC secretariat by a date determined by the Chairman of the Implementation Group.
 - The ESDC shall report to the Political and Security Committee (PSC) once a year on progress achieved in the implementation of the initiative as part of the “General Annual Report on ESDC Activities” (GAREA).
- **Implementing arrangements:**
 - Member States wishing to participate in the initiative agree to establish implementing arrangements as necessary. These arrangements specify the exact conditions of each exchange and make reference to the present framework.
 - Amongst those conditions may appear, in particular, the terms and conditions of selection, the number of exchange trainees or exchange teachers, the duration of the exchange, the disciplines taught, the teaching language, the applicable status of forces agreement (SOFA), the jurisdiction, and the security clearance.
- **Dispute settlement:**
 - Any dispute shall be resolved by means of negotiation between the Member States concerned.
 - The Member States concerned shall inform the ESDC Secretariat of the disagreement in order to constitute a return of experience on the implementation of this framework.
- **Handling of weapons:**
 - The handling of weapons by exchange trainees or exchange teachers shall be governed by relevant national law and if appropriate included in the implementing arrangement.

In spite of a lot of existing bi- or multilateral agreements concerning exchanges, the existing framework focuses on the main mandate of the IG, the exchange of Officer Cadets and Students during their initial phase of education. An adoption by the respective EU Member State would at least give a huge support to the BOEIs when they arrange exchanges and they have to argue towards their higher echelons.

There are different possibilities to adopt the framework. It can be done via an announcement using an e-mail or a letter to the ESDC Secretariat or it can be done via a verbal statement in the meeting of the Steering Committee (SC).

Unfortunately – in spite of encouraging during all IG meetings – not many EU Member States – just eight ones – adopted the framework. The table hereinafter lists the current status as of May 2017 [9].

Table 2: Notification use of the framework

Member State	Notified use	Date	Form
AT	yes	1 st June 2010	Letter
BE	yes	20 th September 2011	Letter MITS 11-00516893
CY	yes	14 th June 2011	E-mail to ESDC Secretariat
GR	yes	18 th May 2011	E-mail to ESDC Secretariat
ES	yes	26 th January 2011	Declaration in ESDC Steering Committee
FR	-	-	Bilateral student exchange agreement with SNDC (now SEDU)
PL	yes	26 th January 2011	Declaration in ESDC Steering Committee
SE	yes	26 th January 2011	Declaration in ESDC Steering Committee & Bilateral student exchange agreement with St-Cyr

In the near future one of the main challenges will be to convince the other 20 EU Member States to adopt the framework in order to facilitate exchanges and support the BOEIs in fulfilling their strategy of internationalisation.

2.4 National Implementation of the Programme

Without any doubt, the internationalisation as such is part of quality assurance systems of higher education institutions (HEIs). Since all the basic officer education systems within the European Union are part – in different configurations – of the higher education, their strategies include international activities.

The problem is that in a lot of cases Commandants, Superintendents and Rectors are changing very fast and do not always receive up-dated information concerning the goals of the Initiative. That is why the IG members should use all possible means to inform them in order to take the right decisions for prioritising international activities. This can be done via the following avenues of approach:

- Sensitisation of the problems to the highest levels. This can be done during the European Military Committee (EUMC) conferences.
- Nomination of a permanent institution's representative to the IG. This IG member informs the Commandant, Superintendents and Rectors on a regular basis.
- Information briefings during conferences, such as the European Military Academies Commandants Seminar (EMACS), the Conference of Superintendents and/or the iMAF.
- Information platforms in the internet – such as Wikipedia – to have a fast and brief description available [10].
- Homepages such as the EMILYO homepage which contains all and up-dated information [11]. If anything is up-loaded onto this homepage, the IG members

receive a message.

2.5 Lifelong Learning

The Line of Development 7 was an initiative of the Czech University of Defence in Brno. In principle the civilian ERASMUS+ programme shall be used as well – among other possibilities – to finance the exchanges. This LoD 7 is going on well; at present time the challenge is just to find a way that the IG meetings can be financed via this financial source. Since 2016 the IG meeting last at least two days, the second day is – among other topics – dedicated to the ERASMUS+ issue. That is why it seems that in the near future the financial issue to participate in IG meetings can be solved. An additional annual meeting on a regular basis within the IG-frame is the LoD 7 meeting at the UoD Brno, which probably can deal with this financial issue as well.



Figure 4: The LoD 7 meeting at UoD Brno in September 2016

Source: UoD Brno

2.6 Common Modules and International Semesters

The idea of creating CMs was to implement similar or even the same modules into the national curricula, thus to harmonise the European Basic Officer Education (BOE) over the time. The Strategic Partnership Project under the lead of the Polish Military Academy of Land Forces (MALF) and including all the five iMAF-partners ascertains new CMs which are combined to an international semester with 30 ECTS. With these new CMs, 72 ECTS are available in total [12]. It is now up to the BOEIs to implement the international semester as such – or to implement a combination of CMs. In any case the steps forward to harmonise the European BOE will be done – and in the same way exchanges and mutual recognitions will be facilitated.

Since all the five partner of the SPP educate mainly Officers for Land Forces, it is logical that the main effort of the CMs focuses onto this service. The future challenge will be to encourage institutions from other services – such as the Air Force or the Navy – to develop international semesters for their services as well using existing CMs where they fit. The first steps towards this direction have still been done.

2.7 Visions for the Future – Quo Vadis?

The quality of close links in security matters always depends on actual security threats. The dilemma – the BOEIs are facing – is that we cannot wait until all these challenges and threats appear, because education – especially for future leaders – takes years. We

need a proper elaborated strategy, for military matters this means a planning for worst case scenarios. Within the European Union this means a close cooperation and coordination – also in military matters – and for the BOEIs this means an EU-harmonised education to prepare our future leaders best.

The CMs and the international semester are elaborations into the right direction, but the author would go some steps forward. Double and/or Joint Degree Programmes will increase the links between EU Member States concerning the educational issues – even on Bachelor level it is thinkable to introduce such programmes.

In 2015 EU officials requested more international semesters during the BOE; this request was by the way the initiation and the reason for developing the international semester of the SPP. In the same document the request for Joint Military Academies within the frame of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) was expressed [13]. PESCO allows a core group of countries to take systematic steps towards a more coherent security and defence policy without dividing the Union [14].

Joint Military Academies – in terms of combined Academies – shall not dissolve the national BOEIs, but within the frame of Double and/or Joint Degree Programmes the author sees possibilities for more effective and more efficient approaches. Combining more international semesters to at least one international year could be one of the options. The question is just: Which countries and which BOEIs are willing to take over the lead?

3. Conclusions

Within few years the Implementation Group reached a lot – but is still far away from reaching the desired end-state. The main elaborations for the future and the challenges are listed hereinafter:

- The entire education parts – meaning modules and classes of the national curricula – shall be described with learning outcomes, with knowledge, skills and competences, using the same descriptors. In doing so mutual recognition will be facilitated.
- Developing new modules shall go hand in hand with the development of e-learning, if it fits and if the respective e-learning material is able to provide the same knowledge of participants prior to residential phases. E-learning shall never replace residential phases.
- EU Member States shall be encouraged to use the framework for exchanges. This will help a lot when BOEIs have to argue towards higher levels.
- Commandants, Superintendents and Rectors are to be informed about the IG's goals on a regular basis, because without their will it is difficult for the working level. The annual conferences may be a place for that.
- The civilian ERASMUS+ programme may be used more often for the IG's goals, among them the financing of regular meetings.
- CMs and the international semester had somehow the focus onto Land Forces. It is now up to the IG to elaborate more events for other services – such as the Air Force or the Navy.
- Joint Military Academies within the frame of Double and/or Joint Degree Programmes shall neither dissolve nor reduce the importance of national BOEIs, but shall provide a closer cooperation and more efficiency.

Facing these challenges, the author invites all the European Union Basic Officer Education Institutions to go along with the IG's goals in order to provide increased security for all our countries.

References

- [1] COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION. 2903rd meeting of the Council – General Affairs and External Relations. Brussels, 10th and 11th Nov 2008, *Council Decision*, document 15396/08, passim.
- [2] EUROPEAN UNION. *Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy – Providing Security in a Changing World*. Brussels, 2008, document S407/08, passim.
- [3] IMPLEMENTATION GROUP. *Draft minutes of the 1st meeting*. Available from: EMILYO homepage. URL: <http://www.emilyo.eu/node/872>.
- [4] Ibid. *Draft minutes of the 2nd meeting*.
- [5] Remark of the author: All the documents which describe the Lines of Development are available on the EMILYO homepage. URL: <http://www.emilyo.eu/node/970>.
- [6] EUROPEAN COMMISSION. *Learning Opportunities and Qualifications in Europe*. Available from: <https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/content/descriptors-page>.
- [7] EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE COLLEGE. *FRAMEWORK regarding the European initiative for the exchange of young officers inspired by Erasmus*. Available from: <http://www.emilyo.eu/node/982>.
- [8] Ibid. Within the respective article.
- [9] Table created by the author based on the list “notification – use of the framework”. Available from the EMILYO homepage. http://www.emilyo.eu/sites/default/files/2016%2004%2026%20Notification%20use%20of%20framework_1.pdf.
- [10] Remark of the author: The Wikipedia pages are available in different languages, such as the Czech language. Available from: https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evropsk%C3%A1_iniciativa_pro_v%C3%BDm%C4%9Bnu_mlاد%C3%BDch_d%C5%AFstojn%C3%ADk%C5%AF_inspirovan%C3%A1_programem_Erasmus.
- [11] Remark of the author: All the information about the initiative is available on the EMILYO homepage. URL: www.emilyo.eu.
- [12] Remark of the author. The author up-loaded all the CMs’ module descriptions onto the EMILYO homepage. Available from: <http://www.emilyo.eu/node/988>.
- [13] BARNIER, M. *In Defence of Europe – Defence Integration as a Response to Europe’s Strategic Moment*. Brussels, 2015, European Commission, EPSC Strategic Notes as of 15 June 2015, issue 5/2015, p. 8.
- [14] EUROPEAN COMMISSION – EUROPEAN POLITICAL STRATEGY CENTRE (EPSC). PESCO: *Moving from Cooperation towards Integration*. Available from: https://ec.europa.eu/epsc/publications/strategic-notes/defence-europe_en#h3.

List of Abbreviations

BOE	Basic Officer Education
BOEI	Basic Officer Education Institution
CM	Common Module
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EMACS	European Military Academies Commandants Seminar
EPSC	European Political Strategy Centre
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ESDC	European Security and Defence College
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
ESS	European Security Strategy
EU	European Union
EUMC	European Military Committee
GAREA	General Annual Report on ESDC Activities
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
IDL	interactive distributed learning / e-learning
IG	Implementation Group
iMAF	international Military Academic Forum
LoD	Line of Development
LoDs	Lines of Development
MALF	Military Academy of Land Forces
PESCO	Permanent Structured Cooperation
PSC	Political and Security Committee
SC	Steering Committee
SOFA	Status of Forces Agreement
SPP	Strategic Partnership Project
TMA	Theresan Military Academy
UoD	University of Defence

Biographical Note

Colonel Harald GELL, PhD, MSc, MSD, MBA is the Chairman of the Implementation Group which has the task to implement the goals of the “European Initiative for the exchange of young officers inspired by Erasmus” on EU level. He is also the Head of International Office and Senior Lecturer at the Theresan Military Academy and is responsible for all international activities. He combined in some 100 publications, in 20 scholar books as well as in module descriptions and in 64 international conference-presentations the findings of years long stress research projects with findings of international exchanges to propose effective and efficient increasing of Officer Cadets’ military leadership skills and competences.