

A Small Step for Capability, a Significant Leap for "Military Erasmus".

The European Security and Defence Policy Seminar, Lisbon 2009

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Resumo

Um Pequeno Passo para as Capacidades, um Passo Significativo para os "Erasmus Militar": O Seminário de Política Europeia de Segurança e Defesa, Lisboa 2009

O primeiro Seminário de Política Europeia de Segurança e Defesa teve por objectivo criar um forte impacto na educação e no reforço da identidade Europeia de jovens militares dos Estados-Membros da União Europeia, especialmente, os que frequentam Academias Militares. Esta iniciativa teve origem na Presidência Francesa da União Europeia no segundo semestre de 2008 e a finalidade era a constituição de um "Erasmus Militar". No primeiro semestre de 2009, Portugal ofereceu-se para conduzir o curso piloto, o que recebeu o aplauso da maioria Estados-Membros da UE e o apoio do Alto Representante para a PESD.

Abstract

The first European Security and Defence Policy Seminar was meant to have a strong impact on the education and strengthening of the European identity of young military Officers from European Union Member States, especially the ones who came from Military Academies. The initiative had its origin in the second half of 2008 under the French Presidency of the Union. The goal established was to achieve a "Military Erasmus". In the first half of 2009, Portugal offered to host the pilot course, which received a laudable response from the majority of EU Member States and was supported by the High Representative for the ESDP.

“Focusing on the initial phase of our officer training and education seems very small step but any measures taken promptly to improve our human resources responsible for implementing CFSP/ESDP will impact over time and help to make Europe more effective”

Javier Solana, EU High Representative for CFSP
(Council of the European Union, 2009, p. 4)

Introduction

The weaknesses of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) have provided plenty of “food for thought” in political, military and academic circles. One of the most discussed issues is the military capability, alongside the interoperability shortages between European Union (EU) member states armed forces. The focus of this discussion has been centred on hard issues such as the lack of material resources, but not much has been written regarding the soft issues such as the human resources (*i.e.* the capability and the “interoperability” issue between military personnel).

The first issue we would like to address are two general questions: what is and what makes a capability. According to the EU Military Staff and the European Defence Agency, a capability is defined as the integration of manpower, equipment, performance, sustainability, deployability, readiness, doctrine, interoperability and training (European Defence Agency, 2006). Therefore, the training area, alongside the doctrine, is a crucial element of a capability, interacting and providing interoperability.

On the capability development - related with the European Defence Industry - the European Defence Agency (EDA) is fully committed, and is making a significant effort in persuading EU Member States (MS) to deepen their defence procurement and industry development. EDA has also been making some efforts regarding the doctrine area. Still, its “area of responsibility” is the Defence Industry one.

On the other hand, the European Security and Defence College (ESDC), established in 2005, has as one of its tasks, providing strategic-level education related to the ESDP. The ESDC is also the key provider of ESDP-related training. In this context it was only natural that the ESDC immediately embraced the initiative of fostering EU MS Armed Forces initial education and training, including an introductory module on ESDP.

The framework intended to foster EU MS was started by the French presidency of the Union, and it was named “initiative for the exchange of young officers in their

initial education, inspired by Erasmus". In this article we will address the goals of this initiative and the impact and outcomes of the pioneer Lisbon Seminar.

1. The initiative for the exchange of young officers in their initial education, inspired by Erasmus

1.1 Contributing to the enhancement of a European culture of Security and Defence

During the second semester 2008, the French EU Presidency proposed an initiative to boost the exchanges of cadets between the European Union military higher education institutions and creating an especially dedicated working cell within the it's Ministry of Defence's (MoD) structure. From September 2007 to June 2008, the so-called "military Erasmus" cell studied the possible added value of such an initiative for the Member States and their military institutions. It developed a questionnaire to be sent to the MS in order to proceed to a stocktaking of the military education in Europe Union and to ask the military institutions about their expectations related to such project. The Council Secretariat conducted this stocktaking phase and based on this, drafted a series of recommendations with the goal of improving the European interconnection of the educational systems.

The General Affairs and External Relations Council with the Defence Ministers endorsed these recommendations expressed in the Declaration of November 10th 2008 (Council of the European Union, 2008). The initiative was intended to enhance a European culture in the field of security and defence, based on the fostering of a conscience of common identity and shared goals among the concerned actors.

In this sense, it is important to distinguish two main directions that make use of the initiative for acting on the ESDP acculturation stimulating two correspondent aspects of an emerging security and defence culture: a formal direction and a normative one.

The formal direction is meant, in our understanding, to familiarize students to the role they might accomplish in the European defence learning context. Although European armed forces may be involved in various forms of multinational operations such as United-Nations missions or NATO operations, flexibility shall be outlined as a major asset of the European officer's nature. At the institutional level, that suggests, notably, the launching of a debate within the military institutions on the conditions concerning the usage of languages such as English; adaptation of ECTS system to vocational training; or the use of cooperation instruments such as the

Erasmus initiative. The recommendations outline some of these points, as explained above, upon stressing the mobility challenges. Through exchanges of knowledge and values, the initiative would trigger a first step towards “Europeanization” of the defence education and consequently and hopefully stimulating the emergence of a European culture of defence.

The normative direction deals with the amount of knowledge of the students related to the European defence issues, which the recommendations encourage to raise. In that sense, this point is subject to debate only at the national military institutions level (i.e. amount of courses related to such issues, importance of these teachings in the curricula - compulsory or not - ECTS attached, time organisation, etc.).

Alternatively to these two main directions followed by the initiative, a third one might be outlined, which can be named as a “crossover” possibility. It gathers both the formal and normative directions in providing an adequate European environment to a specific ESDP education. A practical implementation of this idea might be developed through projects of combined professional educations, a point that is mentioned in the recommendations. The organisation of common academic modules by partner institutions, a distinct possibly under the aegis of the ESDC, would provide the students a common knowledge in a common environment. Accordingly, academic resources might also be rationalized and optimised, with common values arising from these social interactions. This specific possibility would then combine both the two approaches mentioned above and constitute an important symbol for the emergence of a European security and defence culture. The experimental Seminar on the ESDP organized by Portugal and specially addressed to cadets, was an on-site realisation of this particular aspect of the initiative.

1.2 The European Union support to the creation of a common ESDP training

As early as February 2009, the possibility of organizing common modules on ESDP for the European cadets was defined as a priority by the implementation group of the initiative. A specific sub-group was created and a research process was started to support the requirements of the several military institutions, in order to spread knowledge related to ESDP issues. Four points were particularly emphasized concerning the tasks given to this sub-group.

The first one was to give to the potential lecturers the information about the developments of the ESDP, the material and resources they would need when planning and organising training modules for the cadets, under the format of a

“Train-the-trainers” seminar. The second one was to investigate the possible needs to create and access to Internet-Distance Learning material of the European Security and Defence College, as a support to the organisation of such modules. The ESDC volunteered to enable the European military educational institutions access to its material upon respect to the copyright rules applicable to this instrument. The third point consisted on investigating the possibility of organizing this kind of seminar simultaneously in several institutions in such a manner that will have a maximum impact on the most ample number of future officers. The fourth and last point required more thinking and group work. It consisted in developing training material to be provided to the willing host institutions, supporting their projects of seminars. This training material was to be based on the model of the ESDP Orientation course periodically organized by the ESDC, but had to be adapted to a cadets’ audience and to be regularly updated to correspond to the latest developments of the ESDP.

As such, the goal was not to limit the ESDP modules to the combined dimension of the cultural outcomes (*i.e.* spreading knowledge of the EU policies in a European environment) but encompass also the possibility that such modules be nationally given at the same time in several institutions. It was also clear that the ESDC would extensively support the organisation of these ESDP modules in all its aspects. Therefore, Portugal decided in April 2009 to organise a one-week seminar in September in its three Academies (Navy, Army and Air Force) and to invite cadets from all the EU Member States to participate. The pilot "Train-the-trainers" Seminar was organised and held in Brussels in early June, hosted by the Royal Military Academy of Belgium, under the aegis of the ESDC, as a first visible materialization of the objectives set for the working sub-group.

The Portuguese organization team of the forthcoming seminar was thus invited to participate in this pilot training, which consisted in the completion of the Internet Distance Learning (IDL) modules, presentations of the latest developments in the field of ESDP and group thinking related to the organisation of the seminar. However, at this time, the training material to be issued by the sub-group and described in its objectives was being finalised and was not available to the Portuguese organisers¹. Thus, they developed a project, which was a pilot one regarding the objectives assigned, with a proper academic coherence ratified by the European Security and Defence College.

1 The training material was finalised and made available during the summer 2009. *A posteriori*, this material approached the main themes that were chosen by the Portuguese organisation.

2. The Lisbon seminar:

Since the first stages of the Initiative, Portugal immediately embraced and supported it, alongside with all EU MS. During the Czech presidency of the EU and in the Brno Seminar (April 21st to 22nd), Portugal formally declared that it was available to conduct the pilot project of developing a European Security and Defence Seminar in September 2009. The Portuguese Minister of Defence (MoD) assigned the task of developing such project, with the collaboration of the ESDC, to its three Military Academies.

The coordination and the outline of the Seminar kept in mind the Standard Curriculum approved by the ESDC on October 14th 2008. The Seminar was organized in two parts: an e-learning module, using the available IDL platform, with the Autonomous Knowledge Units (AKU) 1 (History and Context of ESDP Development) and AKU 2 (European Security Strategy), giving students the possibility of having some previous knowledge of ESDP matters; and a residential part in Lisbon, from September 7th to 11th. The Seminar awarded 1,5 ECTS Credits to its participants.

The ECTS awarding was easy to the Portuguese Military Higher Education Institutions, because all Military Academies are perfectly integrated in the Portuguese Higher Education System and are integrated in the Bologna Process.

The participants inscription in the Seminar was centralized in the ESDC, using the ENLIST System². The Portuguese Minister of Defence (MoD) and the three Military Academies asked for external evaluation, which was provided by a researcher of the European Studies Unit of the University of Liège, in close collaboration with the ESDC.

2.1 *The goals of the Seminar*

The Seminar clearly assigned three goals: enhancing the knowledge of ESDP, creating networking capabilities, and providing a glance into the Portuguese culture and history.

2 The ENLIST system is used by the ESDC, with national PoC, allowing MS to inscribe students in ESDC Courses.

2.1.1 Enhancing the knowledge of ESDP

As for the first objective, the outline of the residential part was drawn, according to a clear logical sequence. The seminar was organized on the basis of 90 minutes panels, inviting lecturers from EU MS, both academic and military. These panels were organized in two parts: a communication from the lecturers, followed by a question and answer (Q&A) session, allowing the interaction with the students.

In the first panel on ESDP History and Institution the students could understand the development of the EU, and current organization, with a special focus on ESDP. In order to understand better this “blob” that is the EU the second panel addressed its geopolitical characterization. This would help to explain the EU foreign policy. In the third panel the students were introduced to the European Security Strategy (ESS), analysing the 2003 and the 2008 document. The following panel addressed the ESDP institutional framework and the decision making process. On the second day, the panels addressed the ESDP civil and military capabilities. Still, because we know that those capabilities are not enough, was also addressed the capabilities development process. The following panel focused on EU neighbourhood policy, with the aim of understanding EU interests in its near borders.

Knowing the goals, the decision making process and the capabilities, the seminar addressed real life operations, analysing ESDP missions and operations. In this panel was addressed a military operation (RD Congo), a civilian mission (EULEX Kosovo) and a naval military operation (EU NAVFOR ATALANTA), so and accordingly, in these missions and operations the EU interacts with global partners. In the following panel were analysed EU relations with the United Nations, NATO and the African Union.

In the last day the students addressed the future of ESDP. In the first panel we detailed the changes introduced by the Lisbon Treaty, and in the following panel we discussed future developments of ESDP, with a speaker from the Council, addressing the Council vision; a speaker from the Commission, addressing how the Commission can contribute to this future vision; and a representative from the Spanish future EU presidency addressing what are the priorities of Spain’s presidency on ESDP. The final panel addressed the relationship between the host nation and ESDP, focusing on the contribution of Portugal to the development of ESDP.

Regarding the lecturers, the organizing Academies invited Portuguese and EU speakers, both academic and military, with the purpose of giving the students a wide perspective ranging from real life issues to the academic ones.

2.1.2 *Creating networking capabilities*

A second goal of the seminar was intended to create and stimulate networking capabilities among the students both at the real and at the virtual level. One virtual, but relevant tool, was the creation of the EMILYO webpage (<http://www.emilyo.eu/>) and a discussion forum, which were presented to the students. A list with the contacts of all participants was distributed and a Facebook group was created. This group has been very active, and students are starting to interact at a European level.

2.2 *Impact on the Media*

This initiative had the full support of the Portuguese MoD. Naturally, the support called the attention of the national media. A media package was created, and made available to the press, with a press release, information on the seminar and organizing institutions. The impact was such, that several dozen news were posted in national newspapers and radios, as well as web-based contents were made available.

3. **The outcomes of the integrated education of future ESDP actors**

The evaluation was based and conducted on the Kirkpatrick’s model of evaluation training programmes at professional levels (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 1998), which is also used by the ESDC in its activities, aiming at analysing the completion of the objective set for this pilot project (*i.e.* training cadets to the European Security and Defence Policy). It consists in the collection of information provided by the participants themselves, but possibly also by on-site interviews and observation, as was done for this pilot project. However, contrary to professionals – who are normally the target audience of the trainees to which Kirkpatrick’s model is applied – military cadets are not yet posted and do not have experience of the on-site job, professionally speaking. Therefore, adaptations of the model had to be made in order to create the instruments of the evaluation for the Seminar. The four levels of the model were nevertheless preserved: reaction, learning, behaviour and results.

The first level of the Kirkpatrick’s evaluation model consists in assessing the level of satisfaction of the participants with regard to the training taken as a whole: relevance, organisation, arrangements, etc.

Regarding the satisfaction with the IDL module, the participants stated that they were, for a majority of them, experiencing this learning instrument for the first time in their education. This first contact was much appreciated and 82% of the learners said they were “very” or “generally” satisfied with the module. It seems, indeed, that it was considered as an excellent tool for introducing topics and realities that were generally unknown to the cadets, while the two themes retained for the IDL part were the history of the ESDP and the European Security Strategy, and the documentation provided through this learning path was considered as relevant and very helpful.

The flexibility of this learning path, the ESDP vocabulary, the amount of resources made available, the English language tool and the level of details were particularly stressed by the students as an advantage. On the other hand, they suggested the implementation of a summary of the main information contained in the AKUs using graphs or, especially for the AKU1 on the construction process of the ESDP, through chronological illustrations. The technical vocabulary and the English language were, on the contrary, also stressed as difficulties for the cadets.

Regarding the Seminar in general, probably more focused on the residential module, the participants expressed their high level of satisfaction with the conduct of this pilot project and notably with the organisation: material (such as the educational package), logistical support, etc. To this regard, the social dimension the organisers intended to give to this learning process was considered to be highly effective and supportive to the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences, and it somehow became a victim of its success, because the residential module was considered too short.

Concerning the method used for transmitting ESDP knowledge, however, more comments were made. The topics retained, and also the lectures themselves, were considered as too complex by a significant number of participants, or too theoretical, notably with regard to themes like institutions, ESDP decision-making process, or capabilities development. It shall be said, at this stage, that the participants came from different study-cycles and had thus different interests and knowledge concerning the mechanisms and realities of the ESDP.

In the Kirkpatrick’s model of evaluation, the third level of investigation concerns the application of the learning and the change of behaviour of the participants “on the job”. While the Seminar was training for cadets in the broader context of an educational process, it is not adequate to focus on the “on-site” application of the learning. Then, it was decided to investigate the individual perception of the gains by the participants, which is normally supportive but not the main object of a Kirkpatrick’s based evaluation. In order to do so, the evaluator and the organising

team tried to assess the qualifications that may be required from future actors of the ESDP. In a questionnaire inspired from the Kirkpatrick’s level 3 the following skills and competences, inspired by the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)³, were thus evaluated by the participants with a grade (out of 6), according to their perception of gains:

- Abilities to report about ESDP issues (4,4 out of 6);
- Abilities to manage ESDP notions (4,8 out of 6);
- Abilities to identify national visions on ESDP (5,3 out of 6);
- Abilities to communicate in a foreign language (5,3 out of 6);
- Networking abilities (5,7 out of 6);
- Abilities to share information on national educational system (networking applied to “professional” fields of the participants) (5,0 out of 6);
- Capacities to undertake further researches on ESDP (4,8 out of 6);
- Capacities to undertake further researches on European policies in general (4,6 out of 6);
- Capacities for finding the adequate research resources (4,7 out of 6).

It was decided – although the organisation of the Seminar intended to stress the social aspect of the learning – to include also social abilities in the list of skills which were investigated. Eventually, it seems that the participants perceived their gains in term of qualifications more important if they are connected to social interaction in general: sharing about national experiences, sharing about personal experiences, communicating, creating networks. The overall and important observation is that the participants felt that their gains in terms of skills and competences were relevant, which sustain and reinforce the current ESDP learning process.

The fourth level of the Kirkpatrick’s model is related to the evaluation of results from the sending organisation perspective. It is was thus envisaged to ask these institutions to answer also a questionnaire, a few months after the seminar took place, as to allow measuring impacts, investigating their satisfaction and the possible results of their participation in the education they provide internally. Mainly, this questionnaire was intended to assess the satisfaction and perception of the gains

³ Skills are understood in the EQF as cognitive (involving use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and use of methods, materials, tools and instruments); competences are described in terms of responsibility and autonomy.

to the students in terms of skills and competences, but it was also an approach to collect statistical results in terms of its interests for ESDP issues. It shall be said that the observation of such possible impacts will be limited by the little number of participants from each participating institution.

Finally, it was expected to obtain relevant information regarding the recognition of the seminar outcomes by the accreditation of the ESDP modules provided internationally. Questions were asked regarding the internal processes of accreditation or the recognition through a mention in the diploma supplement at the end of the cadet's curriculum. The desirable Europeanization of military higher education would make, indeed, a great step forward if the international trainees will have the possibility of seeing this type of education universally recognised. Lessons drawn from this pilot project had thus a considerable importance concerning future integrative initiatives.

The first one revolves around the broader question of the profile of the selected and target audience. Because different institutions took part in this Seminar, it can also be asked, taking into account that officers' education is different from one member state to another and some military educational systems are focused on the first cycle, some on the second, and others on both, what should be the specific target audience.

The second point – as a suggestion to future organizers – is the need to maximize the interaction between the participants, as they suggested it, by allowing them to participate in discussion groups during the residential module or, due to the fact that all the themes proposed are essential to the understanding of ESDP and that time is limited, to propose a third stage after the residential module. After the IDL and the residential module, indeed, it could be proposed to the participants to work in small groups, possibly on a practical exercise such as the planning of a military mission, and to integrate this part also in the seminar by asking them, for example, to provide a paper a few months after their participation on the residential module. If putted in place, it would not only allow them to remain in contact with each other, but it would also foster their interests in ESDP issues and make them use the skills and competences they acquired.

Finally, it shall be emphasized that similar events shall be organised regularly in the future, as to enlarge the impact on the European cadets⁴. The 39 participants of the Lisbon Seminar also confirmed this need of sharing knowledge on ESDP at a larger scale. Organising such seminars on a regular basis would contribute to

4 In March 2010 Spain organized the second seminar.

solve the issue of recognition. If it does not remain a “one or two shots” experience, the recognition through accreditation or mention on the diploma supplement as encouraged by the Bologna Process, will undoubtedly have to be addressed by the participating institutions. But providing education on a European topic in a European environment can become a cornerstone of the integration that is looked forward today not only by the European higher education system but also by the ESDP itself.

Conclusions

This Initiative can make a significant contribution to the creation of a European Identity among EU MS Officers and is crucial to be deepened by all Member States. Regarding the students, we conclude that they have had an excellent result, fostering the ties between EU MS Officers, and therefore, creating new types of synergies among MS Armed Forces.

The structure of the course tried to balance the conceptual knowledge of ESDP with case studies. It was recommended that in future courses there should be a time for reserved discussion groups, allowing the students to analyse and discuss cases by themselves. If possible, the seminar should have two weeks, instead of one, allowing both conceptual part and a more extensive debate between students. The external evaluation is something to maintain, providing the necessary independence.

Subjected to further discussion and development, we propose that every six months four to five MS Academies should organize this type of Seminar, allowing MS to send more students abroad, and receiving more students in their academies. At the end of the day, every MS and their Armed Forces will win in a way that not only small steps for capabilities will be taken, but also significant leaps to implement a comprehensive “Military Erasmus” will be given.

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