



5 years of the
European initiative for the exchange of young officers inspired by Erasmus



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Sylvain Paile, Harald Gell (Eds.)

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Editors: Silvain Paile, MS, LL.M.
Col Dr. Harald Gell, MSc, MSD, MBA

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4.9 Contribution from the Polish Military Academy of Land Forces



COL SMOLAREK Mirosław PhD

Head of Reconnaissance and Command Department/Assistant Professor

General Tadeusz Kosciuszko Military Academy of Land Forces

MAJ BIELEWICZ Marcin, MA

International relations coordinator/Lecturer

General Tadeusz Kosciuszko Military Academy of Land Forces

Internationalisation

The Military Academy of Land Forces in Wrocław, Poland (MALF) has a long tradition in military cooperation with military institutions other European countries. In the time of the Warsaw Pact cooperation however, was limited to exchanges of delegations between military academies of the Eastern Bloc, organization of common sports or cultural events and in fact it was not a real cooperation which effects would be joint both military and scientific – research projects. The breakthrough came in the 90's of the twentieth century, when, after the fall of communism in Europe, there have been significant changes in the Polish armed forces and our country trying establishing closer cooperation with NATO countries began looking for partners for military cooperation also in areas of military education. At the beginning there were visits by MALF decision-making bodies, which then descended to a lower level of command. Due to the geo-strategic position of the first “natural” partners were German Bundeswehr with Offizierschule des Heeres in Hannover, which MALF still sustains close relations that have increased after moving OSH to Dresden. Other partners were the military academies and universities from the Czech Republic in Vyskov and Brno, from Slovakia in Zilina and Liptovsky Mikulas, especially that the part of MALF staff were graduates of these universities and academies. However, these initiatives had bilateral characters and many ideas remained in the design phase. MALF cadets also participated in the “traditional” military international projects such as military exercises beginning with the German- Polish exercise “Spessart 95” and then cyclically in PfP (Partnership for Peace) and NATO exercises.

Wider international cooperation took place in 1998 when the Baltic Sea Military Academies Conference (BSMAC) has been established. The meeting organized by military institutions from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway Poland and Sweden was for our Academy the first participation in such large international military project. That is why the Conference was for MALF one of the milestones for wider future international cooperation. Later on the idea of the Conference was extended on Germany. The Conference is still a forum for exchanging ideas between military academies. During the annual meetings MALF had the opportunity to share its own experiences, observe higher education reforms in other countries, to familiarize itself with new ideas in the field of military higher education. Some of these solutions has been adapted and implemented in MALF. In addition, the conference was very helpful in the implementation of the

Bologna process and allowed to derive from the experiences of other countries. Conclusions regarding the potential directions of the reform of the Polish military educational system were presented to decision-making bodies in the MOD and, once accepted, implemented at our Academy. BSMAC was also the first attempt between the academies to find a common platform for military education and training of their officer-cadets in order to initiate the exchange of military students. However, the differences between education systems proved to be too large, or the academies were too low in the military hierarchy and did not have to force through joint projects. Strict syllabuses, stringent requirements for assigning military subjects meant that one could achieve only limited short-term joint initiatives on the exchange of military students (e.g. a joint shooting or sport competitions, skiing, mountaineering or airborne training etc.). Results of such projects were not related to the recognition in other armies; however, they contribute for building the foundations for a future larger cooperation. One should mention also very intensive efforts done in the early 2000s by the then Rector of University of Brno General Urban, and commanders of Academy in Dresden and MALF in developing joint initiatives to enhance cooperation and finding common platforms in national educational systems, which could enable large-scale exchange of cadets and long-term educational initiatives.

In terms of MALF internationalization radical changes took place in 2008, as a result of the reform of military higher education institutions. In this time all Polish Military Academies and Universities were obliged by the MOD to open their doors for civilian students. This order allowed MALF to implement the program Erasmus, which was also accessible for its military students. The Academy prepared also a semester program for foreign students including military, which was initiated in 2012. Until now the beneficiaries of the program were students from Lithuania, Romania, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, and Austria. For MALF military partner institutions which cannot use Erasmus funds or their national system of education prevents from delegating students abroad for a whole semester MALF offers cooperation on a bilateral basis such as with the French Military Academy Saint-Cyr, which students in the winter participate in monthly training organized by MALF including ski, winter climbing and airborne training together with Polish officer-cadets, whereas MALF military students participate at the entire semester in France.

Furthermore the Erasmus program has enabled the exchange of teachers between universities who conduct classes in frame of „teaching mobility“ MALF prepares and leads also international projects based on funds obtained from the European Union. An example would be the training regarding preparation NATO peace support operations held in July this year. In the project participated 48 cadets from the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia, and lessons and exercises were conducted by the teaching staff of the participating academies.

Another example of international approach to training of military students could be the on-going joint educational project organized together by the universities and academies from Brno, Budapest, Liptovsky Mikulas and Wroclaw, funded by the International Vise-grad Fund. This is the first time that military cooperation initiative “Better cooperation

for better operation of the future Visegrad EU Battlegroup” was recognized and received financial support from this institution. Therefore, this three-part-project focused on mutual cooperation, aims on finding best way to educate its cadets – future officers – to be able to operate within international military structures during EU Battlegroup operation.

Outside of the European initiatives, MALF is reaching training partners beyond this region. Since December 2012, it has been part of the U.S.-Poland exchange programs such as Military-to-Military, State Partnership Program, Culture Understanding and Language Proficiency. These programs are not that broad like well-known International Military Education and Training (IMET) and Foreign Military Students (FMS), but they suit academy’s purpose better. Last summer, two of MALF’s cadets took part in the leadership training at Fort Benning, next year the academy will host the U.S. cadets that will train with Polish colleagues for an entire month. That would create more opportunities to interact with international training partners.



*The Polish delegation from the General Tadeusz Kosciuszko Military Academy of Land Forces handing over a present to TMA’s Commandant, MajGen Mag. SINN during the iMAF 2013.
(Source: Theresan Military Academy)*

The overall conclusion is that the internationalization of MALF activities is not very fast, but effective and multifaceted. The next step in this regard should be initiatives, which could increase the exchange of students within the Erasmus and EMILYO programs.

Five years of „EMILYO“ – benefits so far and desires

Permanent reform of the Polish military education system caused that MALF joined society EMILYO quite late, in fact it was only in 2012, because previously MOD authorities responsible for this program did not see probably the Wrocław's Academy in this group, and did not inform MALF sufficiently about the development of the Initiative focusing rather on other Polish military academies, mainly from the capital city. A breakthrough was made during the Polish presidency in 2012, when for the first time a representative of MALF was invited to the conference focused on military education cooperation, organized in Warsaw.

Moreover, a large contribution to joining MALF to the EMILYO Initiative brought our friends from Austrian Theresan Military Academy and Czech Defence University in Brno. Therefore, MALF experience is quite limited. However, after only the year MALF can see profits from participation in the EMILYO. The Initiative allows us to expand contacts with other international military institutions. The co-operation with Theresan Military Academy very quickly resulted in the exchange of students and teaching staff. Furthermore the Initiative allows strengthening contacts with Hungarian NUPS (Hungarian National University of Public Service) established by the Erasmus program, which also resulted in the exchanging of military students and preparing common educational project in framework of Visegrad Group. MALF hopes for further development much closer cooperation within EMILYO framework based on either a bilateral basis or broader initiatives like above mentioned „Peace Support Operations Training“ or V4.

Certainly, it would also be desirable to find a permanent international funding for joint projects, as country's MOD budgets not always can support this Initiative in sufficient way. A permanent source of founding would allow the development and implementation of much ambitious joint projects, long-term and cyclic, which may then become the basis for a common and integrated education and training of future officers of the European Union.

Approaches to „EMILYO“

The academy in Wrocław has organized and participated in the meetings of European officers. They were mostly mid-level meetings, however, the academy hosted an EMILYO commandants gathering – European Military Academies Commandants Seminar (EMACS). Its officers have participated in the meetings organized by other military education institutions focused on broader exchange programs. Such initiatives were not only focused on bilateral partnerships, which limit the outcomes, but beyond that to create multilateral training opportunities.

Moreover, each international training event, conference or a customary visit was the great opportunity to discuss and coordinate mutual projects. They also create great opportunity for building network of people at each involved institution. Personal acquaintan-

ces made the exchanges of cadets and junior officers easier. Due to the unavailability and the loads of work of rectors and commandants, it is difficult to gather them in one place too frequently. Therefore, people concerned with the need of and recognizing benefits from exchanges, using their personal contacts, make the procedures clear and lower obstacles, so cadets might enjoy the value of training in the international environment.

The meetings of officers, both official and informal, must be sustained on all levels due to maintaining the tempo of the Initiative. It needs, however, people that believe in the idea and benefits of the exchanges, to push the arising problems aside and overcome the challenges created by the existing national legal and education systems.

How to facilitate exchanges from the administrative point of view

The experience with the limited military officer training exchange between European Union countries showed a number of issues that hamper the flawlessness of the initiative. We are looking for similarities between Erasmus and EMILYO, and trying to emulate some of the settlements. Although some might be feasible for military education, the bigger part of it would not.

Due to the specific nature of basic officer education, in most cases a mixture of academic and military topics, it is incomparable. Any attempt to standardize it, so far, was in vein. Each of the nations keeps its military education system under its control, as one of national identity pillars. It is hard to blame them for such approach. The idea of consolidated European army, controlled by EU parliament, was long ago given up. And there is lack of political support for further consolidation and integration of EU. In fact military integration is the easiest among the other areas. Armies of the European Union countries have experience in operating jointly within humanitarian, peace, or stability operations. They know each other. Know their equipment. And they train together. Therefore, all important obstacles were removed long ago.

Challenge there is not operational, but political. Since, there is no will to adjust all military education systems among EU nations, the recognition of the results of training abroad is necessary. Here, we should consider the idea of not making officer preparation identical. What is the benefit from learning same skills, but in different language? The benefit for the young person is to learn different approaches to the same issues and problems. It would enable person to solve more complex situations and think “out of the box”, than its peers that did not participate in the exchange programs. Therefore, it should be considered that recognition should be made a default.

Another issue that creates obstacles is the financing these programs. Military training is expensive, depending on what is the content of it. Additionally, there is accommodation and board, travel and per diem expenses. It requires detailed planning and coordination, as well as separate budget devoted to this goal. The Erasmus program has its own budget, but it does not cover education costs. Here, with military training, it is not only cost

of chalk, electricity and lecturer time. However, the settlements of Erasmus program providing money for participants to cover most of travel and accommodation expenses should be copied and applied to EMILYO, to ease the national burdens and boost military education exchanges.

Lessons learnt

Entire semester exchanges of officer candidates are not easy, but very important. Not only from the education point of view, but mainly from social one. Participants that spend more time in the foreign country might learn culture better, which will help to spread tolerance and remove stereotypes that on many occasions affect proper cooperation during military international deployments.

Shorter trainings and courses can provide intensive instructions that supplement the existing education systems, and are less expensive. They must be very focused on single education topic. One of the examples is “CSDP Module J” organized by the Theresan Military Academy. Its content is oriented on the assumed end-state of familiarization of future officers with basic knowledge regarding CSDP, and allows for international cooperation between its participants.

Nowadays, such exchange programs are the must. It is important for the young leaders to know how to operate with their counterparts from other nations. It would prepare military education systems for full consolidation when final political decision in this regard is made.