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**FIFTY-SIXTH SESSION**

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Education and training for ESDP:  
the military Erasmus initiative

**REPORT**

submitted on behalf of the Committee for Public and Parliamentary Relations  
by Yves Pozzo di Borgo, Rapporteur (France, Federated Group)



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Report transmitted to: the President of the Council of WEU; the President of the Council of the European Union; the WEU Secretary-General/EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy; the President of the European Commission; the EU Commissioner for institutional relations and communication strategy; the Presidents/Speakers and the Chairmen of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and European Affairs Committees of the 39 national parliaments represented in the Assembly; the Presidents of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Baltic Assembly, the Nordic Council, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, the CIS Parliamentary Assembly; the President of the European Parliament; the Secretaries General of the Parliamentary Assemblies of the Council of Europe, NATO and the OSCE.

*Education and training for ESDP: the military Erasmus initiative*

**REPORT<sup>1</sup>**

*submitted on behalf of the Parliamentary and Public Relations Committee  
by Yves Pozzo di Borgo, Rapporteur (France, Federated Group)*

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MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

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<sup>1</sup> Adopted by the Committee on 7 May 2009.

**RESOLUTION 136<sup>2</sup>**  
*on education and training for ESDP:*  
*the military Erasmus initiative*

The Assembly,

- (i) Recalling Recommendation 724 on developing a security and defence culture in the ESDP, adopted on 3 June 2003;
- (ii) Aware of the need to base training for European states' military personnel on common values and convergent ideas as regards the means required for and the objectives of a shared security and defence culture;
- (iii) Welcoming the fact that in the second half of 2008 the French EU and WEU Presidency succeeded in getting off the ground an exchange scheme modelled on the European Erasmus programme for young officers in the early stages of their training;
- (iv) Aware that for the scheme, in which European states participate on a voluntary basis, to go ahead, it must have the political and economic support of all those who sign up for it;
- (v) Convinced that ESDP capabilities are dependent above all on the human element, which should logically take priority over investment in equipment;
- (vi) Concerned about the steadily reducing size of European defence budgets, increasingly hard hit by the economic crisis,

INVITES THE NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS REPRESENTED IN THE ASSEMBLY TO

1. Take a detailed interest in government action on training provision for young officers, making full use of the parliamentary process to keep the matter under review and ensure progress is made;
2. Draw attention, when examining the budget, to the importance of training provision at European level which is attuned to ESDP development and conducive to fostering an authentic shared culture, and to the need for funding for such training;
3. Ensure the electorate is properly informed about the training opportunities and openings in Europe that this exchange scheme will offer young people, highlighting the advantages of following a modern study programme leading to job qualifications in demand on the employment market;
4. Suggest to local authorities that they become involved in this investment in economic and human resources, emphasising the advantages they stand to gain from participation in a scheme which could well lead to the formation of regional centres of excellence.

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<sup>2</sup> Adopted by the Assembly on 3 June 2009 at the 3<sup>rd</sup> sitting.

## EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

*submitted by Yves Pozzo di Borgo, Rapporteur (France, Federated Group)*

### *I. Introduction*

1. The Committee for Parliamentary and Public Relations is taking forward its discussion on the development of a security and defence culture in the ESDP framework, as set out in Document 1816 and Recommendation 724, approved on 3 June 2003.<sup>3</sup> This is an area of abiding topicality, especially so at the present time. Our recommendation then, intended to encourage the formation of a European awareness founded on shared values and convergent ideas as to ways and means, has not been followed up in practice to the degree one might have wished. That aim was directed towards both the public at large and professional soldiers and specialists in the military field. While the ESDP has need of public support in order to make headway and gain in effectiveness, it must also repose on a “European” perception of security and a security culture common to the staff of Europe’s military services, whatever their country of origin.

2. Working together across national borders presupposes a number of shared convictions, an aptitude for cross-cultural exchange, a knowledge of foreign military structures and of developments in European defence, all things, in short, that are acquired during initial education and training and which must therefore be inculcated in the up-and-coming officer classes.

3. The French European Union Presidency put a good deal of effort into developing common action by Europeans in the field of crisis management and was the driving force behind many military and civil-military operations that were undertaken. The ESDP is thus beginning increasingly to flex its muscles and develop an organisation that is capable of responding practically to common security needs. Most prominent in this respect is the series of initiatives in regard to military investment and harmonisation of military systems, which have been the subject of several of our Assembly’s reports. It cannot be denied, however, that the aspect of professional training for those called upon to manage the process has tended to be somewhat neglected. The issue is now back on the agenda in the form of the European initiative for exchanges between young officers inspired by the Erasmus<sup>4</sup> programme, which was discussed by the European Union defence ministers in Deauville in October 2008 then adopted officially by the Council of the European Union in November 2008. It is hoped thereby to push back the frontiers of knowledge and, in the case in point, enable young European officer cadets in their first years of training to acquire a supranational understanding of security and defence matters and develop a common view of the same.

4. Clearly, all countries must set about reforming their defence structures; however, the present economic crisis and the national budget scrutiny process that takes place in the second half of the year may distract them from that shared goal. Faced with bids for additional resources for employment, health, infrastructure or other heads of public expenditure normally perceived by the electorate as priorities, we can expect once again in terms of government spending to see defence relegated to the role of Cinderella, receiving but a diminishing slice of the budget cake. Yet to cancel investment in armed forces training, which is in any case no more than a fraction of the overall national budget, is to totally disregard its significance. Developments in relation to human resources move forward with the ESDP, are vital to its implementation and are just as important as the infrastructure and equipment serving that policy: it would be pointless to give priority to the latter over the staff whose job it is to work together in making use of them. Bringing together national security and defence staff training at the European level should moreover make it possible to take account of the ESDP as a whole, including the numerous civilian or civil-military aspects of crisis management.

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<sup>3</sup> “Developing a security and defence culture in the ESDP”, report submitted on behalf of the Committee for Parliamentary and Public Relations by Mrs Katseli, Rapporteur, Document 1816, 3 June 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Erasmus (or European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) is the strand of the European Union’s Lifelong Learning Programme devoted to higher education.

5. Another purpose of this report is therefore to alert our parliamentary colleagues who will shortly be in the position of having to scrutinise defence budgets in their respective countries. This explanatory memorandum seeks to provide them with all the information they need to lend their support to the military Erasmus scheme. We urge them to think hard about its significance and to put over the following ideas to their constituents and more generally to seek to enlist the support of the wider public for ESDP development.

## *II. Background to the military Erasmus scheme*

6. The planned European scheme for exchanges of young officers modelled on Erasmus, otherwise known as military Erasmus, has its roots in the preparation of the French Presidency of the European Union. It was based in particular on the lessons learned from a prospective study submitted in 2008, compiled with financial support from the Belgian Government.<sup>5</sup> Already, back in 2003, in the report referred to above,<sup>6</sup> our Committee put forward the argument to many significant players involved with ESDP that it was necessary to establish a shared security culture through specific training. In that same report, the Committee also observed that all European countries had established contacts in regard to training and various bilateral exchange programmes. In this connection, reference was made to the salient example of French-German security and defence cooperation within the framework of the Élysée Treaty (also known as the Treaty of Friendship) signed 50 years earlier. This treaty made provision in particular for a greater number of exchanges between armed forces staff and an alignment of doctrines with a view to allowing common conceptions to emerge. It is also worth noting that a European Security and Defence College (ESDC) came into being in 2005 as the outcome of an EU Council Joint Action.<sup>7</sup> Difficult though these developments were to get off the ground, they were possible because they strengthened national armed forces' interoperability, a goal over which a consensus was steadily building in Europe. The idea of a military Erasmus is an original one however, in as much that it seeks to reinforce this broad ambition right from the initial stage of European officer training.

7. The initiative was first set out and discussed at the informal EU Defence Ministers summit held in Deauville, on 1-2 October 2008. The Ministers noted the inadequacy of exchanges and contacts between officers and decided to tackle the issue close to the source – in other words at the initial officer training stage. On this occasion, the EU member states were referring rather to reciprocal education and training arrangements. The Czech Republic for example announced that the country's military academy would subscribe to the Erasmus programme in 2010. The Portuguese intimated they would be interested in being involved in common language training; Hungary, Slovakia and Greece also stated their intentions of registering their military colleges or training for the exchange programme.<sup>8</sup> Gradually the idea took hold of using the Erasmus programme as a model, in view of the experience gained from it and the potential it offered.

### *1. A scheme modelled on the Erasmus programme*

8. The basic idea is iconic (especially for the media) in as much as it relates to one of the European Union's more visible achievements – although the European Commission is perhaps not wildly enthusiastic about the name of its civilian exchange programme being bandied about in this way. The Erasmus-Socrates Programme was supported by the Bologna Process set in motion in 1999, to organise higher education on the basis of a three-cycle system (bachelor/master/doctorate) and introduce a system of credits (the European Credit Transfer System – ECTS) to facilitate university exchanges and reciprocal recognition of study and qualifications. The Bologna Process and Erasmus are managed by the European Commission and are characterised by a general framework, the fact that participation by governments or universities is entirely voluntary and a centralised agency in Brussels

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<sup>5</sup> “Adaptation de la Politique de l’enseignement pour l’Ecole Royale Militaire de Belgique aux évolutions de la Politique Européenne de Sécurité Commune”, research undertaken by Sylvain PAILE under the supervision of Professor Quentin MICHEL (University of Liège), 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Document 1816.

<sup>7</sup> Council Joint Action 2005/575/CFSP.

<sup>8</sup> French Defence Ministry Statement, 10 November 2008. <http://www.defense.gouv.fr>

which has the task of monitoring and encouraging participation, supported in the case of Erasmus by national offices.

9. Most military colleges and academies are already part of the Bologna Process in order to facilitate recognition of their particular environment. They sometimes enlist Erasmus support in as much as they are able to promote student mobility. For example Belgium's Ecole Royal Militaire, on whose behalf a study has been conducted (referred to in paragraph 6 above) adopted an open, dynamic teaching policy. It joined the Bologna Process and was awarded the Erasmus University Charter in December 2005 and draws on the momentum being generated by the projected European Higher Education Area which is to come into being in 2010. The same study gives a run-down of the existing exchange programmes and insights into needs and opportunities connected with ESDP development based on a comparative analysis of the position as regards other national initial training bodies of repute (such as Saint-Cyr Coetquidan of France, the Hamburg University for the Federal Armed Forces in Germany, Portugal's Military Academy, the Military Academy of Lithuania and the National Defence Academy of Romania). The study notes however the difficulty of such an exercise on account of the fact that the implementation reports of the Bologna Process only take account of data provided by national ministries of education and that some forms of education and training which lie within the areas of responsibility of other ministries are barely included or not at all. Such is the case of initial training for military officers which by its very nature falls within the purview of defence ministries.

10. A survey in the form of a questionnaire has also been carried out recently by the Council Secretariat General at the behest of the European Union French Presidency. On 10 September 2008, the Council undertook a comprehensive stocktaking of current initial military training needs on the basis of responses received from 25 member states (the United Kingdom excepted) and covering 43 national initial officer training institutions.<sup>9</sup> The French Presidency of the European Union thus began promoting the military Erasmus scheme on grounds of there being specific needs in terms of initial military training.

## *2. Specific needs in terms of initial military training*

11. The Council Secretariat General study applies the following definition to initial training: "the officer's training/education starts after recruitment, includes vocational training and academic training up to and including Masters Degrees (if included in the initial training)".<sup>10</sup> Three sub-categories are identified: academic education and basic military training, both given within military academies, and vocational training given in other military training schools or institutes.

12. The study observes that a large number of these training establishments are already involved in some forms of multilateral exchange schemes. It would also appear that 60% of EU member states have implemented the Bologna Process within their military education and training arrangements prior to implementing military Erasmus. 70% of them also acknowledge that the experience gained from an exchange programme adds value in terms of an officer's career. However, only 60% of member states recognise the initial military training done in other member states. Less than half of the national institutions sampled had signed an Erasmus Charter that would allow them to organise academic exchanges. Hence the proportion of young officers or teaching staff involved at present in the various existing bilateral or multilateral exchange programmes, including the Erasmus scheme, remains limited.

13. A number of difficulties serve to explain this paucity in numbers. For example, the length of the curriculum, the way programmes are organised and the very nature of the initial training for officers (academic or physical training) may be quite different in the various member states, even if the Bologna Process helps overcome those differences to a degree. There is also the problem of the costs of certain forms of exchange and language difficulties, particularly for countries whose languages are

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<sup>9</sup> "Stocktaking of existing exchanges and exchange programmes of national military officers during their initial education and training", General Secretariat of the Council, Document 12843/08, COSDP 761. <http://register.consilium.europa.eu>

<sup>10</sup> Paragraph 3 of the above study.

not used to any great extent outside their own borders (Swedish, Estonian, Finnish and the like). In the absence of a structured exchange programme, training in another state must often be undertaken in addition to that in the home state instead of being integrated into it. Under such circumstances, international exchanges are seen as a waste of time and resources.

14. In relation to the existing exchange programmes, it is noted that these tend to be set up between neighbouring countries when it would no doubt be more useful to have more of them covering a wider geographic range.

15. There is also a need to develop teaching instruments and content that are of shared interest, for example a module on ESDP or an introductory internet-based distance-learning (IDL) programme. The survey notes that suggestions in this area are of real interest to the greater majority of member states.

16. The requirements for compatibility of staff training and for mobility are real, notwithstanding the insufficient numbers of officer exchanges during initial training. Military academies must constantly be adapting to changes in armed forces structures and higher education. A new political impetus seems necessary to move everything forward a piece. In this connection the steps taken by the French Presidency of the European Union should make it possible to take account of the particular characteristics of these initial military training establishments. Transposing the Erasmus arrangements into the military training frameworks of European countries will represent a further major leap forward for European integration. Thanks to the political support it can now command, the effort to produce a European security and defence culture right from the initial military training stage is likely to have a significant knock-on effect on the ESDP and be one of its main driving forces. As underlined by General Henri Bentégeat, Chairman of the EU Military Committee, at the seminar on the implementation of the military Erasmus project,<sup>11</sup> “Major rewards are expected in the fields of operations and capabilities”.

### *III. The scheme in broad outline*

17. The launch of a scheme modelled on Erasmus was unveiled by the Council of the European Union in a statement on 10 November 2008.<sup>12</sup>

“The Council has agreed to adopt the European young officers exchange scheme, modelled on Erasmus [Erasmus is the strand of the European Union’s Lifelong Learning Programme devoted to higher education].

The scheme is intended to strengthen the interoperability of the armed forces and promote a European security and defence culture.

The ability of the European armed forces to work together has become a determining factor in preparing and conducting increasingly complex multinational military operations. It entails increased cooperation between Member States in the field of officer training.

The scheme will provide European officers with an opportunity to undergo part of their training, from the initial training stage, in another Member State. It will thus promote the mobility of students and teaching staff of military training colleges and facilitate shared approaches to the training of young European officers, in particular in the field of the ESDP.

The Member States have therefore agreed on a number of practical measures, set out in the Annex hereto, for encouraging and facilitating exchanges between their national training colleges, with assistance from the European Security and Defence College. These measures will be implemented at both European and national level. They will be based on existing bilateral and multilateral exchanges.

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<sup>11</sup> “Military Erasmus on the move”, notes on a seminar held at the Ecole Militaire, Paris, on 13-14 November 2008. <http://www.ue.2008.fr>

<sup>12</sup> European Security and Defence Policy – Council conclusions: Annex II: Statement on the European Young Officers Exchange Scheme modelled on Erasmus – 2903rd External Relations Council meeting, Brussels, 10 and 11 November 2008. [www.consilium.europa.eu](http://www.consilium.europa.eu)

The European young officers exchange scheme, modelled on Erasmus, will be implemented on a national and voluntary basis, with due regard for each Member State's decision-making autonomy and specific characteristics in the field of training.

The Secretary-General/High Representative will draw up a report on the implementation of the scheme and will submit it to the Council as soon as possible in 2009”.

18. A raft of practical implementation measures were attached to the declaration:

#### “I. Measures at European level

##### *1. Measures common to the three components of initial officer training (academic education, ‘basic military training’ and professional training)<sup>13</sup>*

Compare the training offered by the various colleges on the basis of national indicative lists of skills.

Create an IT platform:

- containing national military colleges’ training curricula, for ease of identification and comparison of training;
- allowing national military training colleges to offer and request places on officer exchanges.

Identify ways of dealing with administrative, legal and other obstacles to exchanges.

##### *2. Academic component of initial officer training*

Develop training modules on international issues (academic component of officer training). A training module on the EDSP is now available. Training modules should be developed in other areas relating to international security. These training modules will be made available to national military colleges.

Make it easier for national military colleges to access and use the Internet-Based Advanced Distance Learning (IDL) system, which is being developed by the European Security and Defence College (ESDC), to enlarge the scope of available teaching material.

##### *3. ‘Basic military training’ and professional components of initial officer training*

Develop an equivalence system for the military components of initial officer training. The implementing working party will examine the possibility of using the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) which also covers the academic component of initial officer training.

Draw on the Erasmus programme to establish mechanisms to promote officer exchanges.

#### II. Measures at national level

Encourage Member States and their national military training colleges to make full use of the instruments and measures offered by the Bologna Process.

Encourage national military training colleges to increase the mobility of military students and teaching staff among the Member States.

Encourage Member States to recognise the training which their officers have received at establishments in other EU Member States.

Encourage the teaching of EU languages, in particular the teaching of a second foreign language, in order to extend the range of potential exchanges.

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<sup>13</sup> “The officer’s training/education starts after recruitment and includes vocational training and academic training up to and including Master's Degrees (if included in the initial training)”, taken from “Stocktaking of existing exchanges and exchange programmes of national military officers during their initial education and training”, 12843/08, 9 September 2008.

### III. Implementation of measures

A working party will be set up to implement the measures at European level and contribute to the implementation of measures at national level. That working party will also contribute, more generally, to promoting exchanges of officers during initial training within the European Union. It may supplement the measures set out in this document.

The working party will base its proceedings on the principles set out in the Ministerial Statement. This implementing working party will comprise representatives appointed by the Member States wishing to take part in it.

The implementing working party will meet within the framework of the Executive Academic Board of the ESDC in order to benefit from the network already established within that framework.

The database will be administered by the ESDC Secretariat and receive input from the Member States and their training colleges.

Implementation of the measures will begin after the adoption by the Council (Ministers for Defence), on 10 November 2008, of the Statement officially adopting the European young officers exchange scheme, modelled on Erasmus”.

19. The draft set out the initial practical outcomes expected in 2009:
  - publication of a shared training module on European defence;
  - creation of an IT platform containing national military colleges’ training curricula, for ease of identification and comparison of training and allowing national military training colleges to offer and request places on officer exchanges;
  - setting up of a working party to implement the decisions taken in the declaration.
20. The French Presidency was also minded to publicise the scheme modelled on Erasmus, devoting two seminars to the subject. On that held on 13-14 November at the Ecole Militaire in Paris the object was to identify the supply of and demand for initial officer training and exchanges and establish a standard rating for training modules on offer. On 16 December a discussion on the practical extent of the initiative was held at France’s military training school at Saint-Cyr Coetquidan (ESCC) attended by students from all the European military academies (Saint-Cyr is known for its highly reputed visiting scholar courses which it organises in all branches of study at all levels, as well as for its international semester making it compulsory for all students to undertake a period of training abroad as part of their work on their Master’s dissertation.
21. We should perhaps also dwell for a moment on the advantages it is hoped the scheme will bring, both for the military officers in receipt of their initial training and for the staff responsible for providing that training. These young officers will be called upon to undertake key responsibilities between the forces and the higher military and political echelons, at the very heart of the mutual understanding upon which our interoperability is founded. Protracted periods of exchange imply a certain cultural immersion which it is hoped will lead to open-mindedness and mutual understanding between military officers, while those teachers, researchers and administrative staff who take part in this type of vocational training abroad should find that it stands them in good stead in the course of their future careers.
22. In general terms, the political impetus given to the scheme should assist military academies adjust to the European Higher Education Area heralded by the Bologna Process and facilitate their application for the Erasmus Charter. It should act as a spur towards standardising initial training content, in particular by encouraging shared experience and best practice. It provides a unique opportunity for the formation of a cooperative network among the various initial officer training establishments.

#### ***IV. The contribution made by the European Security and Defence College to implementing the scheme***

23. A major part in implementing the scheme has fallen to the European Security and Defence College (ESDC). Our Committee feels therefore that the College's future is a factor to be taken into account.

##### ***1. General description of the College***

24. It is perhaps necessary first of all to recapitulate the reasons why the ESDC came into being. It had its origins in a proposal put by the then French President François Mitterrand and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl to the President of the European Council for the "development of the WEU Institute into a European Security and Defence Academy," a form of words that was incorporated in the 1992 Treaty on European Union (Maastricht Treaty).

25. However, it was not until 14 years had passed that a European Security and Defence College started to operate. Over that period the WEU Institute for Security Studies, set up in 1990, has in fact become the European Union Institute for Security Studies and is to be part of the network of institutes, colleges, academies and other establishments in EU member states managed by the ESDC.

26. The ESDC can be described as "virtual". Its mission is "to provide training in the field of the ESDP at the strategic level in order to develop and promote a common understanding of ESDP among civilian and military personnel [and] identify and disseminate, through its training activities, best practice in relation to various ESDP issues ...".<sup>14</sup> Its purpose is to further enhance the European security culture within ESDP and provide EU instances, Member States' administrations and staff with knowledgeable personnel familiar with ESDP developments.

27. The ESDC has an innovative format but one not securely established as yet. It is the result of a compromise which has left it without any permanent structures: in many ways it has no fixed abode and could best be described as intermittent (operating some 10 weeks in the year), itinerant (hosted by turns by different cities in Europe) and modular (organised as sessions on specific subjects). It has a secretariat in Brussels, originally comprising four staff and expanded to 11 to deal with the Erasmus side of things, whose task is to coordinate initiatives and feed them out to the periphery.

28. The training work of the ESDC includes two types of course: an advanced course on the ESDP (which runs once a year, offering five week-long modules across Europe) and a more general orientation course (which runs four or five times a year either in Brussels or in the capital of one or other member state). The 60 or so participants accepted on each of these courses hold posts of responsibility (senior officer level or its civilian equivalent for the orientation course, rank of colonel or its civilian equivalent – higher civil servant for the high level course).

29. Moreover the College has greatly widened its range of specific courses for specialist audiences: courses on Press and Public Information, a pilot course on Security Systems Reform, a course on the planning process for European Union military operations, etc. The College has also recently taken over responsibility for other training activities: a meeting of former course members (alumni) and a high-level seminar for participants holding top-level posts in the area of ESDP (rank of General or Ambassador).

30. It was thought to be essential that holders of senior posts within Europe should be aware of ESDP structures and be in discussion with one another as to how to improve the policy. The ESDC's training activities are also open to nationals from EU applicant states and third countries (including the United States and China) and also to certain representatives from other international organisations (ranging from NATO to the Arab League). These activities may also be attended by those in business and those working for non-governmental organisations, in the academic world or in journalism.

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<sup>14</sup> Council Joint Action 2008/550/CFSP of 23 June 2008 establishing a European Security and Defence College (ESDC) and repealing Joint Action 2005/575/CFSP.

31. In general terms the ESDC has helped bring national institutes closer to the institutions of the European Union and in doing so has encouraged a process of osmosis between them, especially in terms of an awareness of the complexity of the issues surrounding crises and crisis management in the ESDP framework. It is important to realise that a good deal of this training relates to the civilian aspects of ESDP and dovetailing them with military responsibilities. This is a part of the College's added value, contrary to the NATO Defence College (NDC), set up in 1951, which made such a contribution to forging a distinctive "NATO culture".

32. ESDC training can be supplemented as necessary by other institutions, member states or community institutes like the European Police College (CEPOL). The ESDC can furthermore act as a validating body for training provided by a single member state. The idea of ESDP teaching in schools offering initial training is, however, one that has long failed to receive the attention it deserves.

33. Until the start of the military exchange scheme modelled on Erasmus, the ESDC's remit did not include basic officer training. Officers do however have to undertake key responsibilities between the forces and the higher military and political echelons, at the very heart of the mutual understanding upon which our interoperability is founded. Europe must in future make sure that as many young officers as possible are able to benefit from ESDP training.<sup>15</sup>

## ***2. The role assigned to the ESDC in implementing the scheme modelled on Erasmus***

34. The new Joint Action establishing a European Security and Defence College (ESDC) states that the latter shall in particular "support exchange programmes in the field of ESDP between the Member States' training institutes ...".<sup>16</sup> Under the terms of the statement by the defence ministers on 10 November 2008, the ESDC is assigned the following tasks, inter alia with a view to implementing the scheme modelled on Erasmus:

- carrying out a review of existing exchanges between initial officer training schools (computerised database);
- developing the shared training module on the ESDP along with other modules on international issues and making them available to other national initial training establishments;
- also making available Internet-Based Advanced Distance Learning (IDL) and other relevant tools to enlarge the scope of available teaching material;
- setting up an Implementing Working Group (IWG) within the framework of the Executive Academic Board.

This was in fact set up on 5 February 2009. It is made up of representatives from interested member states and held its first meeting on 19 February.

35. The College is therefore to fulfil a number of functions. As well as developing and making available a range of training modules on international affairs (the module on the ESDP is already available), the College is also to manage an information technology platform. This database contains information on the various schemes on offer in initial training establishments under the military Erasmus umbrella: the training programmes developed by military schools providing initial training, and on the supply and demand for officer exchange places. Finally the Executive Academic Board of the College is to monitor the overall implementation of military Erasmus.

36. An important aspect of the IWG's work will be to develop an equivalence system for the military components of initial officer training. The IWG will examine the possibility of using the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) which also covers the academic component of initial officer training. The EU Secretary-General/CFSP High Representative will submit a report in 2009 based on the IWG's assessment and discussions. This report will set out proposals for the elimination of obstacles of an administrative, legal or other kind to exchanges and for incentive measures modelled

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<sup>15</sup> For background on the coming into being of the ESDC, see in particular "Le Collège européen de sécurité et de défense: success story?" Michel Monnier and Jean-Luc Cuny, February 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Council Joint Action 2008/550/CFSP of 23 June 2008, Article 4(3)(e).

on those of the Erasmus scheme proper. Following the meeting on 19 February 2009, “quick wins” or solutions that could be applied rapidly were identified. These were firstly, implementation of the study module on ESDP which already existed, with a “train the trainers” seminar, followed by a pooling of the results of questionnaires with protected access to the data obtained, setting up a “dedicated forum” allowing college students to swap experiences and lastly, drafting a model legal and administrative agreement for becoming a member of the Erasmus scheme.

### *3. The need for additional resources for the College*

37. Although delivering training via the network of national institutes works well, the ESDC has no structure worth speaking of. The legislation provides for the EU Council Secretariat, the member states and the institutes forming part of the network to provide secretariat services for the ESDC, but in practice the ESDC has insufficient administrative support. Several suggested courses of action were put forward to remedy this deficiency at a colloquy held by the l'Association des auditeurs européens de l'Institut des hautes études de la défense nationale (AAE IHEDN), in partnership with EuroDéfense-France, on 22 March 2007 at the Ecole Militaire, Paris.<sup>17</sup> Similar discussions were held in the Security and Defence Subcommittee of the European Parliament on 24 January 2008.<sup>18</sup>

38. On 23 June 2008, the Council, on the basis of the report submitted in December 2007 by the College's Steering Committee, revised the Joint Action setting up the ESDC (referred to above). This was essentially to give the College the necessary legal capacity to enter into contracts and make other administrative arrangements and to open a bank account.

39. However, these new provisions were not enough to deal with all aspects of the rise in demand from member states and the growing needs of ESDP missions and staff. A new Article 13 (“Review”) therefore provided:

“This Joint Action shall be reviewed and revised as appropriate in the light of a study on the future perspectives of the ESDC and their possible implications. The study shall also address aspects such as the Secretariat, staff capacities, running of the IDL system conference facilities, financial arrangements, management and coordination of ESDP training at EU level, and the civil-military balance within the ESDC network, to be prepared by the General Secretariat of the Council and presented by the Presidency to the Council ...”

The report in question was to have been prepared in November 2008. In point of fact it was drafted by the ESDC Secretariat and provided the basis for drawing up practical recommendations concerning the College. The final version of the report was published on 1 December 2008.<sup>19</sup> In terms of the scheme modelled on Erasmus the study accepted that: “... the administrative support of a project-oriented configuration of the Executive Academic Board and the administration of a database can be considered as regular Secretariat staff business to be dealt with within existing resources”.

40. More generally, the study noted: the “key role of the national institutes; the need for a balanced engagement of military and civilian institutes” and “access to conference facilities”; “insufficient staff resources to cope with current and future activities” and “the current location of the ESDC Secretariat” as factors in the growing discrepancy between the development of the College's activities and the current framework.

41. Recommendations for resolving the problem are put forward in the fifth section of the study. These were discussed at the various meetings of the ESCD Steering Committee (bringing together PSC Representatives of the various EU member states) during the second half of 2008 and then adopted by the GAERC on 8 December 2008.<sup>20</sup> The measures taken will establish the College on a firmer foundation and help improve the way it works. The ESCD will thus have:

<sup>17</sup> See the AAE IHEDN website: <http://www.ihedn.fr/associations/aae.php>

<sup>18</sup> Europe, Diplomatie, Défense, No. 96, 29 January 2008.

<sup>19</sup> Study on the Future Perspectives of the European Security and Defence College, 16631/08, 1 December 2008.

<sup>20</sup> “On the basis of the Study on the future perspectives of the European Security and Defence College (ESCD) which particularly stresses the growing demand for training in the ESDP field faced by the College, its Steering Committee recommended improving the functioning of the College by giving it a larger secretariat, a budget of

- A larger staff (eight people instead of the present four);
- Its own budget funded through the ESDP line of the community budget which will meet the College's estimated operating costs;
- Legal personality enabling it to recruit staff, enter into contracts, purchase equipment, especially teaching materials, and open a bank account.

42. It should be noted that the principle of voluntary contributions by member states remains, allowing for possible financial support for specific projects from sources other than the College budget.

#### *V. Future implementation of the scheme modelled on Erasmus*

43. The arrangements for implementing the Erasmus military project currently raise very many questions.

##### *1. Forthcoming developments*

44. There is the fear that member states' enthusiasm for some of the initiatives taken under the French Presidency, including that of boosting exchanges between young European officers, may wane. The Czech Presidency has made clear that in general terms it is not envisaging any major decision on European defence. The Czech Republic has, however, shown an interest in the scheme modelled on Erasmus and has proposed that the Defence Summer School run by Brno University should be part of it.

45. It is worth noting that the scheme and the role of the ESDC are expressly referred to, although somewhat vaguely, in the Secretary-General's Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy – Providing Security in a Changing World.

“Appropriate and effective command structures and headquarters capability are key. (...) There is also scope to improve training, building on the European Security and Defence College and the new European young officers exchange scheme, modelled on Erasmus”.<sup>21</sup>

46. Difficulties of a political or financial nature may arise following the submission of the Secretary-General/CFSP High Representative's Report (in May-June 2009). This report must identify solutions to deal with administrative, legal or other types of problems in relation to exchanges and put forward incentive measures. It will draw on contributions submitted by the member states by 31 March in reply to a new questionnaire designed to obtain a closer comparison of training methods and programmes. Similar reports will continue to be made, probably on a six-monthly basis. The success of the Secretary-General's report will depend in large part on the level of participation by member states in both the membership and the work of the Implementation Working Group. This should help make member states aware of the opportunities offered by and difficulties encountered in setting up exchanges or exchange programmes. But it is common knowledge that the United Kingdom showed no interest in the scheme at the time it was put forward.

47. Experience has shown that military Erasmus needs to be implemented progressively on a voluntary, national basis that takes account of the independent decision-making powers of individual states and their specific education and training systems. It remains to be seen what that means in practice. A number of national or bilateral initiatives in military training are already afoot and will very likely have their mention in the forthcoming report by the Secretary-General/CFSP High Representative. For example, in January 2009 a declaration of intent was signed by the Spanish and Portuguese Defence Ministers to set the university exchange process in motion (setting up of a study committee).<sup>22</sup>

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its own and legal personality. The Council has approved these recommendations”. Presidency Report on ESDP, as approved by the Council on 8 December 2008.

<sup>21</sup> Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy – Providing Security in a Changing World, Document S407/08, 11 December 2008.

<sup>22</sup> Article by Nicolas Gros-Verheyde, published on 29 January 2009. [www.bruxelles2.over-blog.com](http://www.bruxelles2.over-blog.com)

48. A further development strand of initial military training, not directly linked to the scheme modelled on Erasmus, concerns what might be termed “civil-military combinations”. For example conventions were signed in mid-January of this year by the Polish Defence Minister to give more autonomy to and bring three national military defence schools: the Wroclaw Land Forces Military Academy, the Deblin Air Force Officer’s College and the Gdynia Maritime Academy, closer to the university environment.<sup>23</sup> On that occasion the Polish Minister explained that the military school of the future would take in a growing number of civilian students. One of the objectives was to convert Deblin College into an Air Academy open to Polish and foreign students. One should not get too carried away when assessing such measures, as it is not known yet how they are likely to be incorporated into any European arrangement.

49. Setting a general trend in motion is likely to depend largely on how effective the pivotal role played by the European Security and Defence College, and in particular the Implementation Working Group of the Executive Academic Board, proves to be. In the first instance this will be functional (as a clearing house) and conceptual (identifying areas of convergence between institutions offering initial military training in terms of needs and responsibilities, drafting an Erasmus-style charter). A gradual approach is the one to adopt, given the complexity of the environment in which initial military training institutions operate and the limited resources of the College.

## *2. Areas of uncertainty*

50. It cannot be denied that the outlines of the planned military Erasmus scheme are still fairly “fuzzy”. The Council of the European Union has doubtless found it difficult to build a consensus based on a very detailed implementation programme.

51. There are however two possible strands that can be used as a basis for assessment: the whole area of forces interoperability (the professional dimension) and the question of shared values and a European security and defence culture (ethical dimension).

52. Besides, the project combines the rationales of coordination (bilateral and multilateral cooperation though exchanges between member states) and integration (standardisation of ESDP education and training).

### *(a) The role of the member states*

53. The member states and their national initial officer training institutions are set very broad, undemanding goals: use of the Bologna Process as far as possible; military student and teacher mobility; recognition by one member state of training in another; language teaching, particularly in a second foreign language.

54. It is not clear as yet which measures member states will favour. Does the national and voluntary basis recommended by the Defence Ministers in fact permit the implementation of military Erasmus in a sufficiently coordinated and visible manner? Without prejudging the answer to that question, it should be remembered that this was the approach adopted for the Erasmus process proper. The primary characteristic of the latter is that it fulfils the subsidiarity principle: the understanding has always been that the member states stay fully in charge of management and organisation of their educational system and hence of their initial military training arrangements. All the same, by agreeing to harmonise education and training, the 46 signatory states have made a non-binding commitment under the Bologna Process, for the aim of the latter was not uniformity but to achieve voluntary convergence of educational systems.

55. Cooperation between member states does no more than supplement their action by the contribution it makes to developing quality education with a European dimension. Consequently a degree of decentralisation is to be expected in the management of programmes to encourage mobility among officers in receipt of initial training and of the teaching staff who dispense that training. Setting up national agencies following the Erasmus model could well be part of such a decentralised

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<sup>23</sup> Article by Nicolas Gros-Verheyde published on 17 January 2009. [www.bruxelles2.over-blog.com](http://www.bruxelles2.over-blog.com)

framework. It might be envisaged that territorial entities (such as regional or local authorities) could become involved with the process and possibly provide funding to assist travel in various ways.

*(b) Funding*

56. The humanist Desiderius Erasmus is known to posterity at least in part on account of the fact he left his fortune to the University of Basel and travel grants are a major factor in Erasmus arrangements. But it is not clear when it comes to military Erasmus what contribution from European Union funds might be available. The question of funding incentive measures, including travel bursaries will no doubt be a sensitive one but one to which an answer must be found if the scheme is to be implemented effectively.

57. In principle, the resources tied in with the Erasmus programme can benefit the academic side of national initial officer training institutions. When it comes to the military training aspect the ESDC Implementation Working Group is to take as its model a specific system of equivalences based on the present European Credit Transfer System. The major unknown factor, both politically and financially, concerns the various incentive arrangements, including travel bursaries, likely to be offered at the European level. In order to benefit from these, institutions are likely to have to enter into an agreement along the lines of the Erasmus Charter.

58. The European authorities did not immediately make clear the financial aspects of the scheme for fear that it might never get off the ground. Moreover, in the early stages, there were still too many unknowns and costs were something to think about once a more down-to-earth picture of who was likely to take part and what they were able to offer had emerged. A fact that should not be overlooked is that the scheme is non-compulsory. Countries and teaching institutions are entirely free to decide how far to become involved and put forward proposals supported by financial backing. What does not seem to be on the cards for the time being is funding from the ESDP common budget, at least if the reply given by Claude-France Arnould, Director for Defence Issues, Council of the European Union, to parliamentarians from the Assembly at their meeting in Brussels on 24 March is to be believed. She returned the ball back into the national parliaments' court by acknowledging the role that parliamentarians must play in this area.

*(c) The language issue*

59. Another basic question revolves round the problems of language. Will training given on military exchanges be in the most widely spoken language in Europe, namely English? This is obviously a sensitive matter and opinions vary in this regard.

60. It should be recalled that ESDC modules are offered in English and French, although in practice the take-up is greater in the former. The study undertaken for Belgium's Ecole Royal Militaire moreover argues that taking the lead in disseminating a European security and defence culture necessarily requires the use of English, currently the most commonly used medium for both European affairs and student mobility.

61. However, the consensus in Europe is in favour of a second foreign language. However, this approach will not constitute an obstacle to the development of English-language exchanges to the extent that this is felt to be appropriate by the various national initial officer training establishments.

*(d) The civil-military combination*

62. This issue concerns ties between national initial training establishments and universities. To what extent can strengthening those ties, encouraged by the process of "professionalising" the armed forces in which most European Union countries are currently engaged, be taken account of so as to enrich the military Erasmus network of exchange programmes?

63. One area of particular interest concerning students following the civilian training is for them to follow armed forces reserve officer training in a European member state other than their own. The fact that the Council of the European Union Declaration does not specifically mention reserve officers should not be interpreted as ruling them out of the military Erasmus scheme. Indeed, reserve officers could have exactly the same opportunities for participating in it as their comrades on active service. For example, France has opened up its "headquarters" training programmes to young European

(Austrian, Belgian, British and German) and North American (Canadian and US) reserve officers. Extending the number of exchange programmes open to young reserve officers would have the additional benefit of sensitising a wider public to the challenges of European defence and the specific instruments available to it, in particular the ESDP.

*(e) Other aspects*

64. Further issues may surface in the more distant future. Will the resources allocated to the ESDC allow it to take on board all its new missions effectively? In particular is there not a risk that its tasks of compiling data on and coordinating exchange schemes may reduce the likelihood of the college one day having proper structures and its own teaching establishment?

- It is possible that exchange networks may ultimately be set up in a permanent structured cooperation framework between member states as provided for by the Treaty amending the Treaty on European Union (Lisbon Treaty) which would make it possible to develop very large-scale programmes?
- Could the exchange scheme for officers eventually be extended beyond initial training (which is only to Master's level)? Could exchange programmes at the level of military doctoral research be developed at some point?
- Once military Erasmus has proved itself to be relevant and effective might it be extended beyond the European Union region? Mention has already been made of the fact that College of Europe ESDP training is already open to nationals of some third countries and international organisation staff. There would also appear to be a possibility of extending such instruments further along the lines of the Erasmus Mundus programme, which since 2005 has allowed students from around the world to follow a part of their curriculum in Europe and nationals of European Union countries to travel to study in third countries.

**3. Obstacles that might arise: the lessons learned from Erasmus**

65. Before concluding our report, there is a need to discuss some of the criticisms levelled against the "civilian" Erasmus programme and consider whether or not they are fair comment with a view to the military Erasmus scheme.

66. A number of commentators have called the effectiveness of Erasmus into question: some have accused it of being "played out". It is true that the scope of the programme remains limited as student (4% in Europe) and EU participant university (679 out of 3 500) numbers are fairly small. But although young people from "old Europe" countries (Germany, Spain, Denmark, Finland, Greece and France) have become somewhat disaffected, the programme continues to expand in the central and eastern European countries. A number of reasons holding back development have been cited: the inadequacy of Erasmus bursaries, challenges to the quality of the assessment for the university exchange period or the worrying persistence of language barriers.<sup>24</sup>

67. It is necessary to take such criticisms on board, although discussion of them in terms of military Erasmus is no doubt premature. The fact that the exchange scheme for young officers is modelled on Erasmus proper does not mean that the former will be transferred lock, stock and barrel into military training establishments. In any event the broad character of the two arrangements and the way they operate, and hence the way they are funded, will be far from comparable. Moreover, the Erasmus programme is definitely a success, even if it has not achieved quite everything that was hoped for.

**VI. Conclusions**

68. In less than 10 years the European Union has become a major force in stabilising the international environment and resolving conflict. New, ambitious goals are being contemplated or have already been agreed: consolidation of Europe's strategic vision (review of the implementation of the European Security Strategy), adaptation of EU strategic planning capabilities and increasing

<sup>24</sup> See in particular the analysis by B. Perruca, *Le Monde*, 10 December 2008.

numbers of different-sized civilian and military operations in the Balkans, Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

69. In addition to these developments Europeans must surmount the challenge of enhancing their military capability at a time when, throughout Europe, defence budgets are being squeezed and needs are growing. It is becoming urgent for Europeans to pool resources in so far as possible. As a result of an officer exchange programme between Europe's military schools, modelled on Erasmus, our soldiers will be better equipped to work together. The scheme meets the need for a single military culture and operational language, at HQs as in the field.

70. However, this scheme is far more than a plan for military training. The convergence in European education systems that is needed and which Erasmus encourages, coupled with the Bologna Process, has helped bring out a feeling of European identity. Military Erasmus must similarly contribute to a stronger bond of European citizenship, for the decision to live together also implies being willing collectively to defend one another.

71. As Jean-Marie Bockel, Secretary of State for Defence representing both the EU and WEU French Presidencies so aptly remarked before the WEU/ESDA Assembly on 2 December 2008:

“Through this programme, which offers far more opportunities than are available today, young European officers will be able to carry out part of their academic and operational training in another member state. The current situation in our different countries demonstrates the relevance of this initiative. Through these exchanges, the men and women taking part will develop a real awareness of common European defence – I might even say a genuine ‘common defence culture’ that they will carry with them throughout their careers ...”<sup>25</sup>

In that sense, the achievement of a military Erasmus scheme is likely to advance significantly the progress of ESDP, which lies at the heart of the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy. Military Erasmus will therefore be a crucial instrument for building the dynamic, coherent, effective and credible policy of which Europe is in such need.

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<sup>25</sup> Official report of the 55<sup>th</sup> plenary session, first sitting, Tuesday 2 December 2008. <http://www.assembly-weu.int>.

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