

Working Paper

Research Unit EU Integration
Stiftung Wissenschaft und
Politik
German Institute for
International
and Security Affairs



Julia Lieb / Nicolai von Ondarza

Good practice despite formal opposition

Future Perspectives for the European
Security and Defence College

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Ludwigkirchplatz 3-4
10719 Berlin
Phone +49 30 880 07-0
Fax +49 30 880 07-100
www.swp-berlin.org
swp@swp-berlin.org

**Working Paper FG 1, 2007/ 18, August 2007
SWP Berlin**

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Summary

Despite initial disagreements, EU member states created the European Security and Defence College (ESDC) in 2005. Its small awareness level in public today is mainly due to the limits set as regards its institutional and financial capacities. However, its participants are showing a growing interest in a further extension of training structures in the area of European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) and recognise the relevant potential of the College. The negotiations shortly commencing under the Portuguese Council Presidency on a revision of the Joint Action establishing the ESDC offer an opportunity for reform. The positive further development of the College could become a model for the whole area of EU foreign and security policy, spelling out how concrete cooperation in a field still marked by serious reservations can lead to results that will strengthen the coherence of European foreign policy both to the in- and outside.

High expectations – few resources

The idea of a European Security and Defence College goes back to the European Council of Cologne in 1999 and has since then been pursued particularly by France and Germany.¹ The crucial impulse for the realisation of the College was given by the so-called »chocolate summit« in April 2003 in Tervuren, Belgium, where Belgium, France, Germany and Luxembourg called for a strengthening of the security and defence dimension within the EU. However, the summit of the four declared opponents of the Iraq War, taking place in the context of the US-led invasion and inner-European division, was partially perceived as an 'anti-American' initiative set on competing with the transatlantic structures of NATO.² Assurances on the part of the initiators that their propositions were intended solely as supporting measures in accordance with the principles and functioning of NATO could only calm inner-European critics such as the UK to some extent. From the start, the project was, as a result, confronted with several severe limitations. Thus, the Council of Ministers agreed to create a purely 'virtual' College with weak institutional structures and without a budget of its own.

The Council approved the key aspects of an EU training policy for ESDP initially in November 2003 and then in September 2004 an EU training concept.³ The first ESDP pilot course took place in 2004 even before the final transfer of responsibility to the European level.⁴

Building upon the work of various national and European working

¹ See Monnier, Michel/Cuny, Jean-Luc, Le Collège européen de sécurité et de défense: 'success story?', in: *Défense nationale et de sécurité collective*, February 2007, pp. 21-30:22ff.

² See »European leaders form pact to boost defense cooperation – foes of Iraq war seek to Operate independently of U.S.«, *Washington Post*, 30 April 2003.

³ Draft EU Training Policy in ESDP, Council of the EU, 14520/03, 7 November 2003; Draft EU Training Concept, Council of the European Union, 12035/04, 1 September 2004.

⁴ Monnier/Cuny, *Le Collège européen de sécurité et de défense*, p. 26.

groups, the ESDC started working in July 2005 by means of a Joint Action of the Council.⁵ The declared, ambitious objective of the college is therefore to »further enhance the European security culture«⁶. The ESDC shall communicate to the training participants an understanding for the diverse aspects of ESDP as well as its place in the overall context of CFSP, thus generally increasing the expertise on ESDP on the various levels of European and national institutions. In addition it shall promote the networking and exchange between relevant actors and institutions in this field.

Structures

The ESDC is organised as a network of »national institutes, colleges, academies and institutions within the EU dealing with security and defence policy issues«⁷. On the part of the EU, it is supported by the EU Institute for Security Studies (EU ISS) in Paris, while various institutions take part from a multitude of member states (see Annex I). This way, the ESDC is sure to include an approximate concordance with the various security cultures within the EU as well as a certain broadness in regards to content.

Within the ESDC, a Steering Committee and an Academic Executive Board are responsible for the coordination and direction of training measures. A permanent ESDC Secretariat is located within the General Secretariat of the Council. There, however, the responsibility for the ESDC lies primarily with a single official, who can only partially draw upon the support of the Policy Unit and General Directorate E for External Economic Relations and Politico-Military Affairs. The demand for a stronger institutionalisation of the secretariat and an increase in personal, advocated especially from within the College, has not been possible to realise in a first round of recruitment in 2005. The latter in particular should have been provided for at an early stage, as the Joint Action foresaw the deployment of two national delegates to the ESDC-Secretariat. However, at first the member states proved to be reluctant to provide for and finance suitable national experts. Only recently in August 2007 a new, promising recruitment procedure with highly qualified candidates has been initiated.⁸

The planning and conduct of training measures is supported by the Council Secretariat, the European Commission as well as the European Parliament. Their lecturers and facilities contribute to the successful implementation of the training programme especially in Brussels. Those involved describe the cooperation between the permanent ESDC Secre-

⁵ Council Joint Action 2005/575/CFSP of 18 July 2005 establishing a European Security and Defence College (ESDC), Official Journal of the EU 2005 L 194.

⁶ Joint Action, Article 3(a).

⁷ Joint Action, Article 1(2).

⁸ Information from the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU. See also General Annual Report on ESDC Activities 2006, SC/2006/07 REV 1, 12 March 2006, p. 3 and General Annual Report on ESDC Activities 2007, SC/2007/010 REV 1, 28 March 2007, p. 6.

tariat and the Commission as both regular and constructive.⁹ Commission Representatives from DG RELEX (foreign relations) are integrated in a small, informal ‘ESDP training team’ in the Council Secretariat. The ESDC can therefore build upon working, though poorly institutionalized structures.¹⁰

The ESDC’s financing is provided by the member states, as well as by the participating institutions on the national and European levels and the attendees of the training programme. The member states’ willingness to support individual training measures with sufficient funds differs significantly. Financing the College from the EU budget is so far not in consideration. The ESDC options therefore remain severely limited.¹¹

Training

The main task of the ESDC is to organise and conduct EU training measures in the strategic area of ESDP.¹² To this end, it basically offers two different training activities: ESDP High Level Courses (HLC) and ESDP Orientation Courses.¹³

The Orientation Courses aim to provide general training on ESDP issues. Annually, four to five weekly seminars for approx. 60 attendees are conducted preferably in Brussels, as this helps to keep costs low and the proximity of relevant actors can be put into use for the training measures. The seminars are aimed at a broad spectrum of attendees ranging from national officials from EU member states and candidate countries (in Germany officials from the A13/14 level), but has recently been expanded to include representatives from third states and international organisations. This extension of the reach of the programme has been put into effect by the Austrian EU Presidency and has generally been welcomed.¹⁴

The group of participants for the High Level Courses (HLC), which constitute the core task of the ESDC, is considerably smaller. The HLC are aimed at civilian and military senior officials from Member States and EU institutions, who come into contact with the strategic aspects of ESDP or pursue a career in this area. The classes are structured in five modules for one week each, offered over a period of seven months for approx. 60 attendees. The participating institutions usually hold the classes at their respective location as well as in Brussels and in co-operation with the other institutes in the ESDC’s network. The five modules of the HLC build on each other and are structured into the topics: fundamentals of ESDP; crisis

⁹ See Annual Report 2006, p. 4; Annual Report 2007, p. 2.

¹⁰ Information from the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU.

¹¹ Joint Action, Article 11. See also Monnier/Cuny, *Le Collège européen de sécurité et de défense*, p. 26.

¹² See Weisserth, Hans-Bernhard, *Das Europäische Sicherheits- und Verteidigungskolleg: wesentliches Instrument zur Weiterentwicklung der europäischen Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitik*, in: *Sicherheit und Frieden*, 25:1, 2007, pp. 11-14: 12.

¹³ On the following explanations see in particular Weisserth, *Das Europäische Sicherheits- und Verteidigungskolleg*, pp. 13f as well as Draft Modalities for the ESDC, Council of the EU, 9184/2/05 REV 2, pp. 7ff.

¹⁴ See Annual Report 2006, p. 5.

management capabilities; crisis management missions; ESDP in a regional context and future perspectives of the ESDP (for an overview on the HLC between 2006-2008, see Annex II).

Attendees have generally evaluated the content and progression of both training measures positively. Yet the regular evaluation of the programme also reveals that the standard curricula of the seminars and modules have to be refined further and adapted to the needs of the various attendees. An additional challenge is to achieve a balanced combination of civil and military aspects as well as the proper relation between participants coming from different fields within the College. In the ranks of the ESDC itself the preponderance of military elements in the training is readily admitted.¹⁵

The limited scope of the ESDC with its small number of participants is evidently due to its lack of resources.¹⁶ Within the College, therefore, new training objectives and concepts are now under discussion and being implemented. After a pilot course for key personnel from national Press and Public Information Staff in November 2006, this new form of training was adopted for the coming annual programme of the ESDC.¹⁷ Furthermore, crash courses for senior personnel and decision-makers as well as Special Representatives of the EU, Heads of Missions and Operation and Force Commanders are in consideration. An extension of training measures for legal or political advisors in the field of ESDP is also under discussion as alongside a shift of focus onto specific regional or horizontal aspects.

The Will and Way - the revision of the Joint Action

The weak institutionalization and limited resources of the ESDC stand in stark contrast to the demand for its training measures. Overall, the applications for participation – which are increasingly coming from the UK as well – regularly surmount the available capacities. The training measures described as »good to excellent« by attendees and the scope of the ESDC therefore seem to have eliminated some of the initial reservations.¹⁸

At present, a report on the “activities and perspectives”, as foreseen in Art. 13 of the Joint Action, is drawn up under the Portuguese Council Presidency and will later be transmitted to the Council. This report will lay the foundation for a revision of the Joint Action, which is supposed to be agreed under the Slovenian Presidency by the time the current Joint Action expires in July 2008. Policy-makers currently plan to implement the revised Joint Action in the second part of 2008 during the French Presi-

¹⁵ See Annual Report 2006, pp. 4f; Annual Report 2007, pp. 1ff.

¹⁶ See, Weisserth, Das Europäische Sicherheits- und Verteidigungskolleg, p. 14.

¹⁷ Information from the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU. See also Annual Report 2007, p. 3.

¹⁸ See Annual Report 2006, p. 5; Annual Report 2007, pp. 1f, 4 and 11ff.

dency.¹⁹

This revision could be used for the establishment of stronger, permanent structures for the College, thereby solving the problems amounting due to its lack of staff and budget. It could further be used to clarify questions surrounding its legal personality and reduce other minor deficits of the ESDC. On the other hand, there remains the possibility of merely carrying on with the current status quo or even reducing the activities of the ESDC. Due to its evident success, a reduction or complete abolition of the College is currently not in consideration. However, the United Kingdom and the Czech Republic in particular resist an upgrade of its permanent structures.²⁰

The key question in the negotiations on the revision will therefore be the stance of the UK. In this context the British side should be reminded that it is one of the most active users of the ESDC.²¹ A further interesting option for the enlargement-friendly British would be the possible inclusion of personnel from candidate and third countries in the training measures to introduce them to the ESDP procedures. Likewise, an increased cooperation of the ESDC with other institutes active in the area of security and defence policy such as the NATO Defence College could help to soothe British reservations.

A turn-around in London's policy is only possible, though, if its partners manage convincingly to justify a stronger structure for the ESDC with concrete added-value. Moreover, the impression that an institutionalization of the College questions the autonomy of the UK in its education and training policy in the area of security and defence policy has to be dispelled. The negotiations on the ESDC will be carried out in parallel to the intergovernmental conference (IGC) on the planned Reform Treaty. For these negotiations, the United Kingdom has enforced two legally non-binding declarations in the IGC mandate that emphasize national autonomy in the area of foreign and security policy.²² In view of the ratification of the Reform Treaty the British concerns should therefore also be respected during the deliberation of the ESDC.

If, as a result of the talks on the ESDC, insurmountable differences between the negotiating partners have to be acknowledged, a continuation of the current status quo would seem to be the only viable option. In this case – under the condition that the changes envisioned for CFSP and ESDP in the Reform Treaty will be enforced – a fundamental restart of the College should be considered in the long run. Still, even in this case it would be desirable at least to agree upon basic institutional improvements that find general consensus for the ongoing work of the College (e.g. the increase of staff in the secretariat).

¹⁹ See Monnier/Cuny, *Le Collège européen de sécurité et de défense*, pp. 28ff. (The author's timetable has been updated for the purpose of this paper.)

²⁰ Information of parties involved in the ESDC.

²¹ See Annual Report 2007, pp. 11ff.

²² See IGC 2007 Mandate, Council of the EU, 11218/07, 26 June 2007.

Perspectives

In order to speed up this process, several steps should be taken by those advocating the ESDC.

Promoting institutionalization

The establishment of a sufficiently staffed and institutionally adequate permanent secretariat is the *sine qua non* condition for further progress and the development of an identity for the ESDC.²³ Only the central coordination of its activities can guarantee a coherent orientation of the College and a visible position for it in the EU structures. Central administrative structures and the operational network between national institutes can work hand in hand together. With this autonomy-preserving reform, the participating institutes would maintain the principal responsibility for the training measures and thus relieve the central coordination-, planning- and evaluation-station. The national training centres could expect to gain from this design both in expertise as well as through their greater integration into current ESDP developments.

In order to promote the functioning and aims of the ESDC, a higher priority should be given to its staffing policy as well as the question of its institutional place in the EU framework and a possible legal personality. In this context, the external representation of the College through a single spokesperson should also be considered. Further room for improvement lies in the decision-making procedures of the Steering Committee and the Academic Executive Board, which are perceived as both ineffective and time-consuming by participants.²⁴

Material and political support

An extension of training measures and other activities of the College can only be realised by an increase of its financial and staff resources. The member states as main financial backers of the College have proven to be reluctant in this respect in the past. If the financing of the ESDC can not be shifted towards the EU budget in the future, the reference to its previous achievements should generate the necessary political will to acquire appropriate funds from the member states.

Political symbols should not be underestimated for the further success of the ESDC. In the past, a part of the publicity enjoyed by the College was due to support from the highest level. For example, High Representative and General Secretary of the Council, Javier Solana, issued the invitations for the high-level courses and, when possible, ceremonially presented participants with their degrees.²⁵

²³ See Annual Report 2006, p. 6; Annual Report 2007, pp. 6f.

²⁴ See Annual Report 2006, p. 6; Annual Report 2007, pp. 5ff.

²⁵ »Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the CFSP, congratulates the European Security and Defence College on its first anniversary«, Press Release, S213/06.

Retaining the training balance

The modular training described above has proven effective. For the senior officials in the High Level Courses, the time intervals between the respective modules favour the tight time schedule of the participants, and their scope covers sufficient matters of substance.²⁶ Besides the abovementioned discussion within the College on an extension of its training programme, recent recommendations from inside the ESDC aim for improvements in the form and content of the curriculum. These include a long-term planning process for the training measures, the formulation of comparable training standards in the curricula as well as their publication, the setting-up of a pool of persistent and experienced lecturers and a balance between civil and military aspects both in terms of the content of the training measures as well as the selection of participants for the courses.²⁷

The efforts coming from within the College to discuss such propositions constitute a positive impulse for the objective of formulating an overall concept for the ESDC in a revised joint action.²⁸ In order to achieve a real boost and consolidation of training measures in the area of security and defence policy, however, it is up to the member states to provide for adequate funding and political support.

Exploiting the potential of the internet

Contrary to the initial prescriptions set out in the Joint Action, the internet has so far played only a marginal role as platform in the training activities due to the ESDC's lack of funds.²⁹ The internet could indeed be used in a twofold manner to bring about improvements to the training: On the one hand, web-based training constitutes an affordable alternative for the extension of the training programme. On the other hand, the internet allows for an external representation of the College and at the same time enhances the permanent network between participating actors and institutions. The existing enhanced co-operation with partners which are experienced in this respect (such as Belgium's Royal Higher Defence Institute) can be regarded as a first important step towards an expansion of the College's capabilities.³⁰

Strengthening the network character of the ESDC

The institutions participating in the ESDC are in constant contact due to their close co-operation in the framework of the Academic Executive

²⁶ See Annual Report 2006, p. 3; Annual Report 2007, p. 2.

²⁷ See Annual Report 2006, p. 4f; Annual Report 2007, p. 1f.

²⁸ Information from the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU.

²⁹ So far, only the broad EU training programme in the field of ESDP can be accessed through the homepage of the Council of the EU. The ESDC does not provide – as it is the case for the European Diplomatic Programme (EDP) – of an intranet for the procurement of subject matters or the maintenance of contacts. (The EDP is a common project of member states and EU institutions in the area of CFSP.)

³⁰ See Annual Report 2007, p. 3.

Board, the co-ordination of the training programme and the occasional joint conduct of training modules in the High Level Courses. Nevertheless, the insufficient continuity in the orientation of training measures should be remedied by eliciting binding commitments from national institutes as well as through a stable budget based on long-term national funding. A further avenue for development lies in the intensification of established contacts as well as an extension and diversification of the ESDC network beyond the boundaries of the EU. In this context, co-operation with other training measures in ESDP should be considered, such as the frequent military, civil-military or police exercises. The existing regular meetings of participating institutes in the various training measures are leading the way.³¹ Last but not least, the benefit of the establishment of an alumni-network should not be underestimated, as it could promote contacts between various officials working on security and defence policy across Europe.

Conclusions and perspectives

The ESDC has become an important player for training in the field of European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP).³² It contributes to a European security culture »based on common values, interests, and experiences, which will surpass, at least partially, the national security cultures of the member-states«³³. If the College were developed in an ambitious way, it could become a showcase for joint EU training in the area of foreign and security policy, while demonstrating the added-value of practical co-operation. Notwithstanding, EU members should come to an agreement with each other over the long-term objectives that are to be pursued with a European Security and Defence College. This would also raise fundamental questions on the relationship between the College and national training institutes, as well as more generally on the necessary and desirable content and priorities for European training in the future.

During the negotiations under the Portuguese and Slovenian EU-Presidencies (mid-2007 until 2008), it will be imperative to realise the aforementioned potential for institutional and structural progress as much as possible and reduce the evident deficits. The implementation of individual provisions – such as a secured and sufficient financing via the EU budget – could reduce tensions within the College as well as national reservations. However, the formulation of a conclusive and sustainable overall concept should not be lost sight of.

The advocates of a strengthening of the ESDC should meet British caveats collectively. The Franco-German Duo is but one option in this respect – Germany could additionally build upon the Trio Presidency with Portugal

³¹ See Annual Report 2006, p. 7.

³² Weisserth, *Europäisches Sicherheits- und Verteidigungskolleg*, p. 12. See also Annual Report 2007, p. 7.

³³ See Erhard, Hans-Georg, *The EU as a civil-military crisis manager: coping with internal security governance*, *International Journal*, 61:2, 2006.

and Slovenia, thereby also integrating the interests of the smaller member states in a consolidation of the ESDP structures. The European Parliament should also be afforded early input into the reform considerations, not least given its position as an actor in the budgeting procedure and its positive attitude towards the ESDC. Finally, the pressure for reform could be stepped up by an increase of the awareness level of the College. This could be realised by means of public support from the senior political level, which is at present widely lacking – at least from national actors.

Annex I: National institutes participating in the ESDC

Member State	Institution	Homepage	Location
Austria	Landesverteidigungsakademie / National Defence Academy	http://www.bundesheer.at/organisation/beitraege/ivak	Vienna
Baltic States	Baltic Defence College	http://www.bdcol.ee	Tartu
Belgium	Institut Royal Supérieur de Défense (IRSD/KHO) / Royal Higher Institute for Defence	http://www.mil.be/rdc	Brussels
Czech Republic	Vítejte na Univerzitě obrany / Czech Republic Defence University	http://www.unob.cz	Brno
France	Institut des Hautes Études de Défense Nationale (IHEDN) / Institute of National Higher Defence Studies	http://www.ihedn.fr	Paris
Finland	Tervetuloa Maanpuolustuskorkeakouluun / National Defence University	http://www.mpkk.fi	Helsinki
Germany	Bundesakademie für Sicherheitspolitik (BAKS) / Federal College for Security Studies	http://www.baks.bundeswehr.de	Berlin
Greece	Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Hellenic Defence College	www.mfa.gr / www.setha.mil.gr	Athens
Hungary	Zrínyi Miklós Nemzetvédelmi Egyetem / National Defence Academy	http://www.zmne.hu	Budapest
Italy	Istituto Superiore di Stato Maggiore Interforze (ISSMI) / Higher Institute for National Defence	http://www.difesa.it/SMD/CASD/Istituto+ilitari/ISSMI	Rome
Netherlands	Instituut Defensie Leergangen (IDL) / Netherlands Defence Academy	http://www.nederlandsedefensie-academie.nl	The Hague
Poland	Akademia Obrony Narodowej / National Defence Academy	www.aon.edu.pl	Warsaw
Portugal	Instituto da Defesa Nacional / National Defence Institute	http://www.idn.gov.pt	Lisbon
Romania	Colegiul National de Aparare / National Defence College	http://www.unap.ro/unitati/cnap/cnap.html	Bucharest
Slovenia	Ministrstvo za obrambo / National Ministry of Defence (Institute)	http://www.mors.si	Ljubljana
Spain	Centro Superior de Estudios de la Defensa Nacional (CESEDEN) / Higher Centre for National Defence Studies	http://www.ceseden.es	Madrid
Sweden	Försvarshögskolan / Swedish National Defence College	http://www.fhs.se/sv	Stockholm
United Kingdom	Defence Academy of the United Kingdom	http://www.defac.ac.uk	Shrivenham

Source: General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union

Annex II: ESDP High-Level courses in 2006-2008

High Level Courses 2006-2007

Module	Location	Organiser	Supporter (financial/logistic)
1. <i>Foundation Module</i>	Brussels	IRSD/KHID Council Secretariat Commission	Netherlands Luxembourg
2. <i>Crisis Management Capabilities</i>	Paris	IHEDN	
3. <i>Crisis Management Missions</i>	Athens	Greek Diplomatic Academy with support of the Hellenic Defence College	Italy Austria
4. <i>ESDP in regional context</i>	Madrid	CESEDEN	Polish National Defence Academy
5. <i>Future Perspectives of the ESDP</i>	Berlin	BAKS	

High Level Courses 2007-2008

Module	Location	Organiser	Supporter (financial/logistic)
1. <i>Foundation Module</i>	Brussels	IRSD/KHID Council Secretariat Commission	Netherlands Luxembourg
2. <i>Crisis Management Capabilities</i>	Lisbon	Portuguese National Defence Academy	BAKS
3. <i>Crisis Management Missions</i>	Prague	Czech Republic Defence University	UK
4. <i>ESDP in regional context</i>	Tartu	Baltic Defence College	Austrian National Defence Academy
5. <i>Future Perspectives of the ESDP</i>	Ljubljana	Slovenian National Defence Institute	

Source: General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union