

Erasmus Policy Statement

For the Estonian National Defence College (ENDC) international cooperation is essential to improve the quality of both research and study activities. The development plan of the ENDC for 2011-2015 places greater emphasis on international cooperation with the aim to enhance the flexibility and quality of studies through raising international competitiveness. By the year 2015, the ENDC has set the aim to pursue the mobility rate of 4-5% among all students and academic personnel. Therefore, one of the priorities of the College is to participate in different international programmes, the Erasmus programme being one of them. Firstly, such programmes serve as a motivation tool to strengthen international cooperation (including budgetary funds). Secondly, being part of the European network(s) of higher education institutions can be considered as a value-adding aspect for the ENDC. And thirdly, previous experience shows that participation in European Union cooperation programmes facilitates the establishment of future cooperation contacts. For example, a number of military academies in Europe are ready to establish cooperation contacts, however, Erasmus programme partners have simplified procedures to do so.

When selecting partners, the ENDC places particular emphasis on the institution profile of potential partners, in order to meet the needs of students, staff and related interest groups. With regard to students, in addition to cultural awareness and language learning aspects, the profile and content of curricula are examined, so that exchange students could transfer as many credits earned outside their home institution as possible. When selecting partner institutions of higher education, the ENDC considers the specialties and specific nature of the curricula, e.g. branches and services of armed forces, their armament and equipment. For exchange students from partner institutions, equal opportunities are provided as with the regular students of the ENDC.

For selecting partner institutions, the ENDC analysed potential bilateral cooperation possibilities with such institutions, i.e. mutual interest in sharing expertise and knowledge. The ENDC has identified its priority areas as the improvement of the quality of studies and fields of research to make higher education more attractive. Due to the specific profile and nature of the ENDC, one of the priorities when selecting cooperation partners is also the graduates' possible participation in future international military operations.

Geographically, the ENDC prefers cooperation partners as higher education institutions from East-European countries (e.g. Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic). Currently, the cooperation contract signing is underway with the Polish Air Force Academy (agreements have been made, the contract is being drafted, signing of the contract is scheduled for spring-summer 2013). These are our immediate neighbours or potential allies and therefore these universities can offer most to the ENDC. Another important group of countries are the Scandinavian countries (e.g. Denmark, Sweden, Finland). Although that the above countries are all the Baltic Sea Region states, the ENDC has also considered future cooperation with the countries such as Germany, France, Italy or Austria. In November 2012, the ENDC signed a cooperation agreement with the Theresan Military Academy of the Austrian Republic. The contract identifies the mobility rates of students and university teachers for the academic years 2012/2013 and 2013/2014.

By the year 2020 the ENDC foresees to develop the mobility principles and find partner universities for teachers and students of professional higher education of all three services (e.g. land force, navy, and air force). This will be accompanied by the establishment of teaching subjects in English and increase in the number of foreign university teachers teaching at the ENDC. The above two aspects – i.e. teaching subjects in English and involving university teachers from abroad already works at master's level studies, yet more attention should be paid to them at professional higher education level studies. Therefore, the aim of the Erasmus mobility programme is to involve the students of both professional higher education and master's education, and the same applies to the partner universities of the ENDC. In addition to the specifics of the field of education, the main priorities for the ENDC will be organising practical placements and mobility opportunities for university teachers. More specifically, the ENDC is currently compiling a plan to offer 3-6-month studies to university students from abroad. The first priority is to offer practical placements to foreign students and send one's students to practical placements abroad. With regard to university teacher mobility, the aim is to address teacher mobility placements starting from 3-month stays. Most probably mobility programme will be used mostly by master's level teaching staff. I

The aim of the ENDC:

- Improving the quality and relevance of higher education, so curricula meet the needs of individuals, the labour market and future careers, as well as stimulating and rewarding excellence in teaching and research.
- Providing more opportunities for students to gain additional skills through study or training abroad, and to encourage cross-border cooperation to boost higher education performance.
- Training more researchers to prepare the ground for the industries of tomorrow.
- Strengthening the links between education, research and business to promote excellence and innovation.
- Ensuring that funding is efficient - freeing up higher education governance and investing in quality education to match labour market needs.

The ENDC values officers and non-commissioned officers with initiative who perform their duties with creativity and efficiency. Therefore, the aim of modernization in the ENDC is to offer studies with the best quality possible to ensure the preparation of professionally competent officers who can cope with challenging and tough situations. Modern warfare is based on multinational cooperation, and therefore one of the ENDC's priorities is to enhance interoperability capabilities of its graduates. The focus of the ENDC studies is on the ability to cope with culturally different circumstances (ethnic origin, religion, etc.) to avoid potential conflicts caused by cultural diversity at personal level. An important issue here is the knowledge of foreign languages. Lifelong learning supported by international cooperation forms the foundation of a military profession. The aim of the ENDC is also to ensure that graduates are better prepared for their future careers, and international cooperation is an important element for the achievement of this aim. An important quality of the ENDC teaching staff is their international experience – teaching experience obtained in another country in front of the students with different background. Such international experiences and contacts can be particularly useful for both teaching process and for the enhancement of both ongoing and future research cooperation.

At administration level, the ENDC has actively participated in diverse NATO and EU workgroups and participated in international missions. One of the aims of participating in such research workgroups is to transfer that knowledge and outcomes to study process at teacher level.

The ENDC belongs to the cooperation network of the Baltic Sea military academies (students). Such study groups aim at promoting cooperation in the field of defence cooperation.

The ENDC has joined the initiative promoting cooperation between European military academies called "European Initiative for the Exchange of Young Officers Inspired by Erasmus". Within this programme, the ENDC students have participated in joint subjects on European security policy and defence strategy in Austria, Cyprus, Portugal and Greece. In addition, the ENDC participates in the work of the implementation workgroup which involves an active cooperation with the representatives of countries joined with the initiative.

ENDC joined the European Union mobility programme for university students and teachers called DoRa. Within this programme, teachers and student can apply the knowledge obtained in conferences and seminars to their study process, or they use the knowledge obtained in specialised libraries in research work at both teacher and student levels.

Participation in international projects helps to raise the quality of studies at the ENDC – be it through master students, young university teachers or junior research fellows. An additional value obtained through participation in such programmes is the acquisition of foreign languages and cultures: all the above programmes (e.g. NATO, DoRa and the above initiatives) require working in different work environments. No doubt that participation in international military operations and exercises give invaluable experiences.