



**CENTRE FOR SECURITY COOPERATION**  
**Defense Conversion Cell**  
**Rakitje, Stari hrast 53, 10437 Bestovje**  
**Croatia**



**REPUBLIC OF CROATIA**  
**MINISTRY OF DEFENCE**

**The 8<sup>th</sup> WG2 Workshop on Military Base  
 Conversion MBC  
 Zagreb, 11<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> June 2008**

*In cooperation with the Ministry of Defence  
 of the Republic of Croatia*

RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation, in cooperation with Croatian Ministry of Defence (MoD) organized the 8<sup>th</sup> workshop on Military Base Conversion from the 11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> June 2008, in RACVIAC (Rakitje) that included a field study trip to the former military base TRSAT in Rijeka region. The workshop mainly focused on the “Croatian experience - transition of military bases from the military to civilian”. A sincere gratitude goes to the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Croatia for the active cooperation and regional ownership support, provided to RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation.



*Workshop Participants*

The purpose of the 8<sup>th</sup> Workshop on Military Base Conversion was to provide the participants with the opportunity to share Croatian life examples, the trends, experience and lessons learned in the field of military base conversion.

Another main objective of the WG2 workshop was to bring together representatives from different ministries, regional and local authorities, international organizations, NGOs, financial institutions and businesses to examine and discuss all the aspects of military base conversion (MBC).



*Regional co-operation*

The workshop gathered twenty-six participants, from the Southeast European countries, namely: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Former Yugoslav

***Networking,  
 Establishing and  
 Maintaining Contacts***

Republic of Macedonia\*,  
 Moldova,  
 Montenegro,  
 Serbia and

the United Kingdom, with knowledge and experience in military base conversion, representing relevant ministries, agencies and institutions, which are directly involved in the MBC process.

\* Turkey recognizes the Republic of Macedonia by its constitutional name

## Seminar Opening



The representatives of the Croatian MoD hosted a Welcome Dinner on Monday, the 11th of June and Ambassador Nedžad Hadžimusić, RACVIAC Director, opened the workshop early next morning extending his warm welcome to all the MBC participants. He stressed the importance of the activity comparing it to the locomotive hurtling towards the future, the future that would bring the completion of RACVIAC transformation process. Ambassador expressed his deep appreciation to the valuable partner - the Croatian Ministry of Defence for the support provided in organizing this workshop.

## Plenary session



*Forum in the City of Rijeka*

During the two workshop days a multinational team of subject matter experts shared their experience in MBC projects and provided a deeper insight into national and international donors and financial organizations involvement in the MBC projects funding. The participants were provided with the opportunity to gain better understanding of

different legal aspects of the military base conversion process.



*Field Trip Study – Academy of Fine Arts*

On the first day of the workshop participants went on a study trip and visited the former military base TRSAT, which was converted from an old army base into a modern, high-tech campus building of the University of Rijeka. The study trip was followed by a presentation outlining the Croatian approach at the Hotel Excelsior in Lovran on the following day.

During the study trip to the University Campus and the Academy of Fine Arts the participants gained a detailed insight into step-by-step approach to the practice regarding the conversion of the former military base TRSAT, which is to be completed by 2013.



*The future Pedagogical Faculty Building*

Pursuant to the Croatian Government's decision the ownership of the military base TRSAT was conveyed to the University of Rijeka with no compensation, but under condition to modernize and reconstruct the facilities into University Campus and Hospital.

## Subject matter experts

All the participants particularly appreciated the presentation on the Croatian practice delivered by Ms Iva Tijan, professor from the University of Rijeka.



*Ms Iva Tijan, prof., University of Rijeka*

The presentation provided the participants with a clear picture of the resources involved and influence of different factors, such as: political decisions and guidelines, legal framework, ways of conversion, role of different actors, development and implementation of projects, transfer of ownership, financial issues, protection of environment, procedures, problems encountered and lessons learned as well as the outcome of a MBC project.

Ms Tijan outlined the chronology of the conversion process from army barracks towards the completion of the 1<sup>st</sup> phase of building the campus. She reiterated the importance of this undertaking as a valuable example of a good practice. The transformation adventure finally ended by the formal opening of the first University affiliation - the Academy of Fine Arts (November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2006) with the participation of the Prime Minister Ivo Sanader, PhD and other highest national officials as well as the highest officials of the local community.

The experts and participants subsequently discussed the pros and cons of the existing systems in each country, stressing the importance of strong local contribution and control as the key to the success, since the local community is the main body to determine its future. All agreed this 1<sup>st</sup> project

phase was a big success, but there was still a long way to go to achieve the final goal.



The participants had a special opportunity to enjoy in the exhibition of students` works illustrating the idea of the transition from military into civilian – arms to arts.



*(What could the old chairs be used for? At the end, the timber would return to the place from whence it originated – to the nature.)*

The other interesting event during the field study trip was the visit and lunch in the students` canteen. The participants were satisfied with the conditions the students were provided.



*Social communication*

Mr. Andrew GIBBONS, the Economic Adviser of the Royal Ministry of Defence, concluded the workshop by his presentation on the UK experience in the field of MBC, the pros and cons of the military base conversion process, the practical approach, challenges faced, the legal aspects and the role of the stakeholders in the military base conversion process in the United Kingdom.



He concluded his presentation by stressing that deliberately supported projects would not address a long-term success, but rather a successful project would very much depend on the importance of how, where and when it was fitted into the economic environment.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Once again, the 8th WG2 workshop confirmed that the partnership approach, the exchange of experience, lessons learned and common supports are most valuable assets, the ones to defeat the cons and to address the pros. The participants mentioned that such cooperation should continue not only at the actual level, but

move even further, to a cooperation that would access the bilateral or regional projects' accomplishment.



The workshop gathered together participants of different background and different field of expertise, but all sharing one unique goal "to solve the trouble at core"; no matter how long it would take.

All the participants realized the complexity of a military base conversion process, which would require a step-by-step approach and involvement of all the existing resources, capabilities and capacities as well as all the aspects of the society. In order to enhance the process and minimise the costs, countries should put additional efforts in strengthening cooperation and adopting a common approach.

Compiled by: LTC Grigore CHIRICA, 8<sup>th</sup> WG2 Workshop Director, RACVIAC - CENTRE FOR SECURITY COOPERATION and Major Zvonko POPOVIC, WG2 Chairman.

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