Introduction

This Seminar was the second in line in a series of RACVIAC activities on the Transition of Military Education Systems in SEE which addressed the different aspects of the evolving process of military professionalization in SEE countries. This is a topical issue in the SEE region as a whole and will continue to be so for as long as the countries of the region will aspire to fulfil the requirements needed to become full members of the EU and/or NATO. The Seminar elaborated on such aspects of the ongoing process of military professionalization and its impact on civil-military relations in the past, present and future as are the changes in CMR in the last two decades, contemporary challenges in military education in the world and the ways to resolve them (with national examples in SEE), the Bologna Process (between theory and reality), integration of the military education systems in the public sphere, legal aspects of the status of the professional military and impacts on the educational system and the future perspectives for military education and challenges in the 21st century.

The Seminar lasted two working days and gathered 33 participants from 11 countries. Presentations and speeches were given by presenters from the Baltic Defence College, Theresan Military Academy, University of Liege, the University of Ljubljana, Military Academy "General Mihailo Apostolski"-Skopje,
Croatian Defence Academy, University of Zagreb and the University of Defence in Belgrade.

33 participants from 11 countries and participants attended the seminar.

The event proved to be of high importance for all countries and their representatives in the SEE region, providing an opportunity to exchange experiences and promote further actions in the field of defence systems and enhance mutual understanding and collaboration in the field of military education. The participants and lecturers were very proactive and willing to share experiences and discuss future challenges concerning this important area in view of the Euro-Atlantic integration processes and the current economic and financial context.

Participation

Among the participants were the representatives of the ministries of defence and foreign affairs, academics, parliamentarians, experts from military academies and the ministries of defence as well as universities / faculties for Electric Engineering and Computing and social studies. Represented were the Republic of Albania, Republic of Austria, Kingdom of Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Croatia, Estonia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹, Montenegro, Republic of Serbia, Republic of Slovenia and Kosovo*. 

Activity Background

RACVIAC and the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Slovenia have both recognized the importance of the regional approach and cooperation in this highly specific area, where the countries of South-Eastern Europe should together identify present-day and future challenges concerning this important area in view of the Euro-Atlantic integration processes as well as the ongoing economic and financial circumstances. Planned, organised and executed by RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation, the Seminar was a product of a joint effort between RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation and the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Slovenia and was conducted on the premises of the Slovenian Military Schools Centre in Maribor, Republic of Slovenia. It began on Tuesday, 10 March 2015 with a Welcome Dinner and spanned the next two working days (Wednesday and Thursday) until its official closure on Thursday afternoon, 12 March 2015.

Activity Overview

The main purpose of this second Seminar on the topic of Transition of Military Education Systems in SEE was to address different aspects of the evolving military

¹ Turkey recognizes the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.
* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence. (In accordance with Arrangements regarding regional representation and cooperation.)
professionalization process and its impact on civil-military relations in the past, present and future. On day two of the Seminar a very important topic, which is crucial for the success of the implementation process of the so-called Pooling & Sharing or Smart Defence policies, was tackled in depth. Such interaction and partnership and good cooperation between the representatives of the military education institutions in SEE at the executive level, that has the responsibility for the implementation processes, is of crucial importance for the success of this concept.

Following the participants’ arrival on the first day a Welcome gathering and Dinner took place, which were attended by H.E. Ambassador Branimir Mandić, Director of RACVIAC and activity participants.

The working part of the Seminar was launched in the Slovenian Military Schools Centre in Maribor, SI and was opened by Col Valter Vrečar, Commandant of the Slovenian Military Schools Centre, followed by remarks by H.E. Ambassador Branimir Mandić, Director of RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation. Among the guests of honor in the opening part of the Seminar was also Mr Boštjan Hodžič, the representative of the Office of the President of the Republic of Slovenia, who welcomed the participants, stressing the importance of the Seminar topic and wishing the participants a successful Seminar.

In the morning session of the first working day the participants discussed the subject of European military systems and their integration. Why to Europeanise our officers’ education already at a basic level, what are the instruments of this kind of Europeanisation, how effectively are these instruments being implemented in the military education and what are the remaining challenges were the principal topics of the first presentation delivered by Mr Sylvain Paile, Senior Researcher at the Department for Political Science at the University of Liege. Col Dr Harald Gell, Head of International Office and Senior Lecturer at Fachhochschule-Bachelor Programme at the Theresan Military Academy in Wiener Neustadt, on the other hand, outlined the Vision of the Operational Aspect of Europeanising the Initial Officers’ Curriculum. That there is no longer any dilemma about whether to have closed military education systems or to cooperate with civilian education programmes but to try and reach synergy and develop a joint theoretical background and joint scientific research, adopt the educational system for the generations Y & Z and have a joint degree, was the subject of the presentation delivered by Mr Uroš Svete, PhD, Head of Defence Studies at the Faculty of Social Studies at the University of Ljubljana. Mr Svete’s presentation also paved the way for Working Part I of this seminar.
Among the topics discussed in it was the new model of military university education in the Republic of Croatia, which has supplemented the former Cadet program and presents a milestone in the development of new Study programs for the Croatian Armed Forces, as stressed by Mr Davor Petrinović, PhD, in his presentation on the cooperation between the University of Zagreb and the CDA (the Government of the Republic of Croatia project). Two study programs have been established so far, Dr Petrinović underlined: the Military Engineering Programme (ME) and Military Leadership and Management Programme (MLM). Though much has been done, there is still a lot of work ahead, stressed the Professor at the Faculty of Engineering and Computing at the University of Zagreb, HR and Coordinator for the ME Study Program group, before giving the floor to LtCol Metodi Hadji-Janev, PhD, Associate University Professor and Vice-Dean of the Military Academy «General Mihailo Apostolski»-Skopje, who painted a complex picture of contemporary challenges in Military Education. This was followed by Mr Sylvain Paille’s expose on «Modelling the European Initial Officers’ Education and Training Systems» in which he discussed the proposed, existing models of classification of military education systems in the EU today. This was also the last presentation of the day, which ended with a sightseeing tour of the city of Maribor and a reception, hosted by Dr Andrej Fištravec, Mayor of the City of Maribor, at the «Old Vine House». At the end of day one, the participants also attended the Seminar Dinner, which was hosted by Mr Primož Šavic, Director General, Defence policy Directorate at the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Slovenia. On day two more concrete aspects of regional cooperation were explored, such as Euroatlantic integration and confidence and security building measures, starting with a veritable Success story, the case of the Baltic states. Mr Augustine Meaheer IV, PhD, Dean of the Baltic Defence College outlined the fundamentals of regional cooperation in professional military education through the example of the Baltic Defence College, which is equally owned and jointly managed by Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia, is a regional and multinational institution and combines military and civilian personnel. Modern and future-oriented the Baltic Defence College can be cited as an example of a higher education institution which is ideal for attaché education. Expanding on the forms of confidence and security building measures in the region through cooperation in the field of military education, Col Goran Dikić, Vice rector of the University of Defence in Belgrade, RS in his presentation underlined that these may encompass a wide array of measures: courses organized on a local level, courses organized through the support of the international organizations, joint exercises, exchanging personnel such as students and instructors at military academies, military schools and war colleges, joint projects and publishing of papers, participation in Europe Defence Projects and competition of military athletic teams.
The working part of day two also included national examples in SEE on the transition of the military education systems in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Croatia, Montenegro, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Republic of Serbia and Republic of Slovenia. The latter was given by Ms Mojca Grašič, Advisor for education and training to the Chief of Staff, SAF, stressing the importance of quality as a result of the transition of the military system in the Republic of Slovenia. This was followed by a presentation given by the Vice-Dean of the Macedonian Military Academy, LtCol Metodi Hadji-Janev, PhD, on the future perspectives of military education and their 21st century challenges in a globalized world. These include hybrid threats and modern understanding of security which, among other things, depends on the political system, economic development, cultural perspectives, scientific development and the environment, stated LtCol Hadji-Janev, PhD. Day two introduced the participants to an outstanding example of regional cooperation – the Baltic Defence College – and some ideas on how to reform our educational systems according to the needs of each specific country in these financially very problematic times. The main conclusion was that SEE countries must cooperate not only in the field of military education reforms but in the area of reform of the economic processes too.

Summary and Recommendations

While participants’ proposals related to academic issues included the suggestion to continually meet and share information on military training and education in order to make progress in this area, there were also proposals to make this activity an annual event. Some of the participants also pointed out that RACVIAC may consider sending members of its permanent staff to other events related to this topic in order to avoid possible duplications and having a panel on regional cooperation in regards to military education and the prospects of establishing a regionally-owned Defence College in a five-year perspective.

At the end of the Seminar BrigGen Zdravko Jakop, Deputy Director of RACVIAC also expressed his first impressions and proposals for future work on the substance and issues covered during the two-day Seminar on Transition of Military Educational Systems in SEE, held in the Military Schools Centre of the Slovenian Armed Forces in Maribor, in cooperation with the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Slovenia.

Closing remarks by BrigGen Zdravko Jakop, Deputy Director of RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation

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2 Turkey recognizes the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.
Brig Gen Jakop once again stressed that the main purpose of the second Seminar on Transition of Military Education Systems in SEE was to address aspects of the evolving military professionalization process and its impact on civil-military relations in the past, present and future, and it was fully achieved.

During the Seminar an important issue, crucial for the success of the implementation process of the so-called Pooling & Sharing or Smart Defence policies had been tackled, he added. Interaction and partnership, good cooperation between the representatives of the military educational institutions in SEE at the executive level, who are responsible for the implementation processes, is of crucial importance for the success of such efforts, BrigGen Jakop underlined.

Deputy Director of RACVIAC used the opportunity to thank especially RACVIAC partner institution and the representative of the Military Schools Centre of the Slovenian Armed Forces Col Valter Vrečar and his team for accepting the responsibility and obligation to support the preparatory part and also the executive part of this Seminar.

He said that he strongly believes that RACVIAC can serve as the best example platform for regional cooperation in the area of defence resources management with a focus on military educational systems in order to organize such high level events in the future as well. RACVIAC in the year 2016 has an ambition to continue with this project and support the implementation of the so-called EU Pooling & Sharing policy, recognized by NATO as “Smart Defence” Policy in South East Europe, he announced.

Finally, BrigGen Zdravko Jakop expressed his sincere gratitude to each and every one of the participants for taking part in the Seminar. This is recognized also as an unequivocal sign of appreciation for the activities organized by RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation.

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