

ESTONIAN DEFENCE FORCES LANGUAGE TRAINING

INTRODUCTION

Language programs within the Estonian Defence Forces are designed for several needs which will all be discussed in this report: intensive courses, courses for cadets which are integrated in their curricula and pre-mission language training. Additionally, other languages have been taught on irregular bases in accordance with the necessity.

DEFENCE LANGUAGE POLICY

The MoD Language Issues Working Group has directed defence language policy since 2001 but accomplishing these tasks has been the responsibility of Personnel Department of the General Staff. In order to narrow the gap between decision-making and completing objectives, MoD has taken action to transfer the decision-making under the responsibility of J1 as well. Therefore, documents concerning shifting the Language Issues Working Group from the MoD under the General Staff are in process at the moment.

LANGUAGE TRAINING STANDARDS

Language training is separated from testing according to the principle of duality. International standards to be followed in syllabus design are set in STANAG 6001 descriptors and Common European Framework (CEF). Following these standards enables to build common understanding.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING

The Estonian National Defence College (ENDC) provides foreign language courses through its Language Centre. The objective of the ENDC is to provide language teaching for cadets, officer-cadets through their curricula and offer intensive courses for Defence Forces personnel according to the request of the Defence Forces development plan. As an integral part of curriculum development activities, achievement tests have been constructed.

The aim of language training within the Estonian Peace Operations Centre (EPOC) is to enable personnel to perform NATO defence-related tasks in international missions.

Table 1. Language courses conducted in Estonia

No	Type of course	Groups	English		Other languages	
			Students	Hours	Students	Hours
1.	Cadets according to ENDC curriculum	8	77	188		
2.	Intensive courses L1	4	50	1361		
3.	Intensive courses L2	5	58	2197		
4.	Intensive courses L3	1	8	601		
5.	Other courses (incl pre-mission training)	14	186	970		
6.	German	1			8	900
7.	French	4			39	260
8.	Italian (pre-mission training)	1			28	120

SPECIALIST DEVELOPMENT

Professional development has been one of priorities amongst the small community of ELT personnel. During the period of the progress report, 3 specialists have been awarded MA degree, 3 continue their MA studies. In co-operation with British Council there have been 3 teacher training residential seminars and 2 one-day seminars. Several professionals have attended several courses abroad not only as trainees but as teacher trainers also.

2 members of the testing team have been accepted as members of the European Association for Language Testing and Assessment.

TESTING

Annual testing plans for STANAG 6001 are fixed in the Directive of Chief of Defence. Test takers receive a linguistic profile in the general proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing skill. For different purposes (i.e. needs analysis) ALCPTs have been administrated throughout the reporting period.

Table 2. STANAG 6001 testing results (June 2004 – June 2005)

Level	Certificates issued
1	62
2	129
3	51

New general proficiency test batteries are provided twice a year for reading and listening skills. Moreover, in order to minimize test compromise, new tasks for the writing test are developed for every testing session.

The most significant change that was made with regard to testing was eliminating level 1 testing battery, in accordance with the suggestion made by BILC Team, and concentrating on levels 2 and 3.

PAN-BALTIC CO-OPERATION

Pan-Baltic co-operation in testing is an ongoing process, which has led to common understanding of levels and requirements, and adds to standardisation. First steps in the field of teacher training in co-operation with Latvia have been taken in the initiative of EPOC and ENDC.

SELF-ACCESS CENTRE

The time, effort and funds invested over the last few years in the self-access centre (SAC) have finally brought added value to ENDC French and English language training activities. That project had been in the developmental stage for some years. It has given students the opportunity to work independently on their foreign language skills, to improve their profiles at their own pace, and to perform supplemental learning activities.

CONCLUSION

The Estonian Defence Forces are currently in a new phase of restructuring. In spite of the restructuring, the aim is to promote active participation in security efforts and to be able to fulfil international commitments. This implies efforts in the field of foreign language training.

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