

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. Currently the new Working Group has been established under J1 management. New policy is worked out and is waiting for approval.

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.

The language training is also provided for lower levels in training centres.

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	7	70	180		
2.	Intensive courses L1	4	48	1361		
3.	Intensive courses L2	5	60	2197		
4.	Intensive courses L3	1	12	601		
5.	Other courses (incl pre-mission training)	14	212	900		
6.	German	1			8	900
7.	French	4			35	250
8.	Italian (pre-mission training)	1			26	120

SPECIALIST DEVELOPMENT

Professional development has been one of priorities amongst the small community of ELT personnel. During the period of the progress report, 6 language specialists - 3 members of the testing team and 3 teachers from ENDC and POC 3 have attended Observer Professional Course at DLI concentrating on OPI issues. 3 specialists continue their MA studies. Peacekeeping English Project has terminated but in-country specialist training continues. There have been 3 residential seminars for language professionals. Several teachers have attended courses abroad not only as trainees but as teacher trainers also.

At the moment there is MTT from DLI in Estonia. They assist our personnel in level 3 teaching, testing and teacher training.

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	117
2	61
3	55

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.

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. Pan-Baltic co-operation has expanded. Denmark and SHAPE have participated in our co-operation events.

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. Some SAC's have been established into the training centres as well. 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

In spite of some 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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