



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
ARMAMENTS DIVISION
NÁMĚSTÍ SVOBODY 471
160 01 PRAHA 6
CZECH REPUBLIC
TEL.: +420 973 211 500
FAX: +420 973 211 013
E-MAIL: jiri.stanek@army.cz

EU2009.CZ

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Why Convene a “European Education and Training in Armaments Co-operation – The Way Ahead” Conference in Prague?

In general, the conference is organized to increase support for European Defence Agency's (EDA) work on education and training in armaments co-operation. More specifically, it will assist in the development of a set of recommendations to be presented at the EDA Steering Boards this autumn on how to make European education and training in armaments co-operation a working reality.

The subject of education and training in armaments co-operation enjoys widespread support from the EDA and its participating Member States. This support stems from the realization, based on empirical evidence provided by the EDA Co-operative Lessons Learned and Best Practice exercise, that most European co-operative armament programmes are hampered by a lack of mutual understanding among different stakeholders. This is mainly due to EU defence resources as a whole remaining heterogeneous and capability, armaments, R&T/D and subsequent procurement process, along with defence industrial policy, still predominantly confined to national borders. But it is also because the EU does not provide the stakeholders engaged in co-operative programmes with a co-ordinated EU-wide education or training platform where a common understanding of a European approach to armaments co-operation can be promoted and nurtured.

In the last year, the EDA presented the results of a study conducted by the EU Institute for Security Studies (EU ISS) on “Enhancing the mutual understanding of stakeholders engaged in co-operative programmes,” which identified options for training and education of stakeholders in co-operative programmes. The EU ISS study made a number of recommendations in this regard, ranging from the development of a virtual learning centre to a specific armaments co-operation education network of national defence institutes, colleges and universities. However, these recommendations are yet to be transformed in concrete proposals and, later on, materialized into an open, effective and coherent European system of armaments co-operation education and training.

It is with these types of challenges in mind that the Czech Republic has included “European Education and Training in Armaments Co-operation” in its EU Presidency Agenda and have invited distinguished representatives from MoDs, academia, and industry from Europe and the United States to share their findings and recommendations with other conference participants, thereby serving as a catalyst for change of the European attitude towards armaments co-operation. The conference will address:

- How to increase the efficiency of co-operative armaments programmes through the establishment of a common European education and training platform in armaments for different levels of stakeholders: awareness, expert and decision?
- What constitutes the fundamental elements of armaments co-operation education at the European level?

- What kind of armaments co-operation education providers are available and what role can they play?
- How to supervise and coordinate armaments co-operation education at the European level?
- How to integrate and join-up the existing education providers, EU institutions and industry into a European armaments co-operation education project?

I sincerely hope that the conference will help illuminate and enrich the debate over these issues and ultimately produce concrete, creative policy options for consideration by the EDA Steering Boards this autumn on how to make European education and training in armaments co-operation a working reality.



Jiří Staněk
Director