Proposal for the creation of SQF-MILOF peer-assessment mechanism (SQF-PAM)

This proposal develops the idea discussed in 2ⁿᵈ-5ᵗʰ Sectoral Qualifications Framework for the Military Officer Profession Executive Group (SQF-MILEG) meetings of 2022 and 2023.

SQF-MILEG works to encourage the process of leveling of curricula against SQF-MILOF by European military education institutions. However, for the moment this process requires the leveling procedure to be undertaken by the institution in question with on its own accord and resources without any expert support. This proposal envisages a mechanism which would support institutions in the process of leveling their curricula against SQF-MILOF and elaborate opportunities for future curriculum development in concordance with SQF-MILOF. The benefits of a support mechanism would serve to:

i)   Contribute to the harmonization of learning outcomes across EU MS military training and education programs/ systems;

ii)   accumulate data about the best practices among education institutions that implement SQF-MILOF;

iii) develop curricula based on knowledge of that best practice;

iv)   contribute to building trust among institutions for future international cooperation initiatives.

The peer-assessment procedure can be specifying by drawing on existing assessment frameworks with a strict focus on concordance to SQF-MILOF and a focus on avoiding administrative burden on either institutions or experts, or duplication of formal evaluation that institutions may already undergo. Nonetheless some administrative support and work for the peer-assessment work would be required this include:

i)   mission statement, values, and visual identity of the network;

ii)   information sharing environment;

iii) maintenance of the expert network;

iv)   scheduling of peer-assessment events;

v)   assessment delivery forms and guidelines;

vi)   analysis and structuring of accumulated knowledge.

(i) An important element of any successful and sustainable certification is its brand value. The SQF-MILOF peer assessment network would need a logo, a visual identity, the network would need to have a values and mission statements. All these would serve to explain, popularize and motivate participation in the process. A focus on mutual learning and discovery of opportunities should be the main aim of all assessments. A formal recognition at the EU level of the network and its efforts would also serve to sustain it, and to encourage engagement of military education institutions with it. It is also important that PAM is based on a policy of expert representation from across the EU, so as to avoid the "regionalization" or marginalization of the initiative. PAM network should have the ambition of involving experts from all member states.

(ii) Peer assessment documents (and data) need to be structured, archived and made available electronically. This can possibly be further developed on ESDC website

(iii) A survey of EU military education institutions, and other expert bodies is needed to establish the initial database of experts who are interested and able to contribute to peer-assessments. Later, this database would need to be updated, and expanded. This requires some active administrative support.

(iv) Scheduling for peer-assessment could coincide with SQF-MILEG meetings. SQF-MILEG meetings could be conducted at institutions that express interest in peer-assessment. Experts could be expected to conduct assessment on voluntary basis, and mobility could be assured through various funding instruments: i) Erasmus program; ii) experts' own institution, if it's supportive of SQF-MILOF, and benefits of peer-assessment itself, or iii) a separate mechanism for mobility could be established. Scheduling and promoting the tool would be the most labor intensive effort of all of the elements of administrative support. It is also worthwhile considering coinciding SQF-MILEG meetings with assessment visits.

(v) With the goal of being careful not to introduce administrative burden, a measure of flexibility on how the assessment is conducted needs to be possible. Assessment relies on two elements: analysis of documentation, and meetings/site-visits of the institution assessed. As it is important not to burden the host institution with document translation, or data analysis other, then what is readily available, any guidelines for experts with regard to document analysis need to be minimal, perhaps based on the host institution decision on what to provide. This means that this peer-assessment model would be largely based on knowledge gained from meetings/site-visits. Nonetheless, the experts would require a certain structure for their visit and assessment delivery. This would require the development of an assessment form(s), and a guideline for the delivery of assessment. The forms could include elements such as: i) an overall expert opinion, answering a set of questions, e.g. description of the level of institutionalization of SQF-MILOF, existing training and education program overview and their structure vis-à-vis SQF-MILOF, best practices, and future opportunities; ii) a dataset (or datasheet) annex would be a valuable resource for future comparative analyses, and possible follow up actions.

(vi) This process would over time accumulate data, which could be analyzed to understand the state of play of SQF-MILOF, and summarize best practices, common challenges, etc. A commissioning of periodic studies (reports) would also be beneficial for the development of peer-assessment process, and provide an important dissemination and communication opportunities for SQF-MILOF.

In conclusion for the implementation of the SQF-MILEG requires an expansion of its mandate to request the ESDC the necessary resources and administrative support to follow through with the implementation of the proposal.