

The 4th CSDP Olympiad in Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria

(Report by Cadet Kacper Kasprzak)

It is a great honour for me to tell you about my 4th CSDP Olympiad experience on behalf of all my colleagues who participated in this event. The Olympiad was a wonderful experience which I am privileged to share.

When in March 2017 I heard about the CSDP Olympiad, I have already known that I was going to apply to participate in the event. Although I barely knew what Common Security and Defence Policy is, I have perceived the participation in the Olympiad as a unique opportunity to increase my understanding of European military cooperation.

And I was not mistaken. The Olympiad indeed proved to be a truly enriching experience. Firstly, the e-learning units introduced the history and key objectives of Common Foreign and Security Policy. Those were firm basics, but even with them, our individual task proved to be challenging. 3,500 word essay written in line with specific and strict rules was not an “easy cake”. Research, writing, and translating took me a lot of time but, by any means, it was not the wasted time.

For me, the most important part of the Olympiad was meeting fellow cadets from all over Europe. Such a multinational and multicultural spirit of the Olympiad's residential phase was the characteristic which truly distinguished this competition. Friendly discussions during the ice-breaker and later throughout the week truly showed me the European military cooperation in action. I think that because of talking to all those cadets, who had so different backgrounds, it was the first time that I fully realized what the European Security and Defence Culture is about.

The competition itself, however, was not as pleasurable as hanging out with other cadets. Essay presentations held in English, within a limited time frame, proved not to be easy. As for me, it was my first public appearance in front of such a wide audience and I have to admit that the appearance was almost overwhelming. I must notice though that all the presentations of my colleagues were remarkable and in a truly interesting way showed me how cadets from different countries feel about biggest challenges for European security.

The part of the Olympiad's competition I liked most was the knowledge competition. In particular, it is a team competition. The discussions which my team held over each tricky question showed me that no one was here by a mistake. All of my colleagues



had excellent knowledge, and I truly enjoyed cooperating in a team of such competent participants. In fact, the thing which I will remember from the knowledge test was not the competition but the cooperation. And being the best of all those amazing people, as it later occurred, made me extremely proud.

But, as mentioned earlier, the Olympiad was not only about competition. After all those demanding days of making use of our knowledge, there was a time to feel the spirit of the beautiful Bulgarian city of Veliko Tarnovo. Stunning architecture and landmarks were almost as good advertisement of Bulgaria as our Bulgarian colleagues who served as guides during our sightseeing.

From the 4th CSDP Olympiad, I brought home something more valuable than a winner trophy. Those are the memories of the Olympiad, people who I met there and things which I saw there. And of course, a thick phonebook filled with phone numbers of my new friends.

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