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Capacity-Building through Training - A Strategy for the OSCE

Background: The Challenges for the OSCE

All international organizations face new challenges because of a rapidly changing international environment. Most of them use training and capacity-building to adapt to new situations. The OSCE faces the same challenges. In addition, the OSCE is a very young organization which wishes to be flexible so as to adapt quickly to new tasks. It operates a number of field missions that are staffed with short-term secondment. Its structures are decentralized. The Secretariat in Vienna was established in its present form only in 1993. Its personnel resources are limited. Because the OSCE is a non-career organization, staff working in the Secretariat have limits on the duration of their employment. As regards flexibility, it may be sufficient to mention the adaptation that the OSCE underwent to meet the challenges presented by the establishment of the Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) at the end of 1998, a mission which was four times bigger than the largest mission that the OSCE had ever had before that.

The field missions are - with a few exceptions² - staffed by personnel seconded by the participating States. The term of duty is six months with an option of prolongation. Often mission members serve two tours of duty which means that they stay in the mission some twelve months. The system of staffing the mission through short-term secondment means that the missions can draw on the experience of mission members with different professional and national background. However, the system also brings with it specific problems, e.g., with regard to continuity.

In 1995, the OSCE had about 70 international staff members in different field missions. In the middle of October 1998, the number of international mission members had increased to about 600 and there were more than 1,000 local staff members in 17 field missions. This was the situation before the establishment of the KVM. Just before the Mission was evacuated from Kosovo in March 1999, the number of international members in the KVM was close to

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2 The exceptions generally refer to staff dealing with administrative and financial matters in the missions. These mission members have fixed-term contracts meaning that they are employed by the OSCE.

1,400 and there were almost 1,700 local staff members.³ Although the number of personnel was reduced after the Mission was evacuated, the figures referred to serve as an illustration of the almost dramatic development in OSCE field activities in only a few years.

The Initial Stages of the Work

Even before the developments of 1998, there was an increasing awareness among participating States of the need to prepare the growing numbers of mission members for their tasks in the field. In response to the demands of participating States, the Secretary General, Ambassador Giancarlo Aragona, initiated the development of training activities in a systematic way to meet the challenges facing the Organization. The author of this article was seconded to the Secretariat by the government of Sweden in March 1998 in order to build up a comprehensive training programme for the OSCE.

This effort was initiated parallel to the discussion in the Permanent Council on how to strengthen the operational capabilities of the OSCE which eventually led to a restructuring of the Secretariat. The work on building up a system of training in the OSCE had the same purpose, namely to strengthen the capacity of the Organization to carry out a growing number of tasks in an efficient and cost-effective way.

The work started with an extensive process of consultation. Inside the Secretariat an internal working group was set up to get the staff involved in the process. A number of consultations were held with Delegations to the OSCE to get input from them. Discussions were held at the ODIHR and the HCNM and they appointed members to the internal working group. Last, but certainly not least, the field missions were invited to submit their comments and suggestions and follow-up visits were made to the Mission to Croatia and the Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina to discuss the training needs in more detail.

As part of the process in developing a comprehensive approach to training, a review was made of existing training efforts. At the end of May 1998, the situation was summarized as follows:

"In some cases new mission members get a briefing before taking up their duties but in many cases they receive only little, or no introduction at all before leaving their home countries.

All mission members go through Vienna on their way to their respective missions. In Vienna, the Secretariat gives them a one day adminis-

3 As of 15 March 1999, the number of KVM international staff was 1,378 and local staff was 1,680 bringing the total number of staff to 3,058.

trative orientation. During this orientation they get an introduction to what the OSCE is and how it works. They are informed about mission support, the conditions of secondment and given an overview of the mandate for the mission and related matters.

On arrival in the mission area they normally receive a briefing at local headquarters. However, in most missions there is no systematic training after this time. An exception is the Mission to Croatia where steps have been taken to initiate a training programme both for senior staff and for other members of the Mission. The Mission has recently appointed a training officer in consultation with the Secretariat. In the Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina training is used in a number of specific fields but the pressure of this task has made it difficult for the Mission to implement a comprehensive training programme. The Chief of Staff has just been given the task of co-ordinating training in the Mission. Otherwise, on-the-job training and 'overlap' between outgoing and incoming mission members is the most usual method of training in the missions.

In 1996 and 1997 some new mission members were invited to a Mission Member Training Seminar in Vienna. About 25 persons attended each seminar and most of them had not yet taken up their duties. The purpose of these seminars has been to enhance the knowledge and know-how of designated or potential members of long-term missions and to enable them to better fulfil their tasks as well as to prepare them so that they can adapt rapidly to new working conditions. Budget allocations were made in 1997 for a second seminar. This second seminar was, however, not held because of the lack of nominations for participation from participating States. The seminar planned for June 1998 was postponed for the same reason.

Training seminars are organized for local field mission staff involved in finance and administration.

Some mission members have been sent to the ODIHR for training. However, this has not been done in a systematic manner, except with regard to Tajikistan.

In a few cases the Head of Mission received a special briefing by the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the ODIHR.

When a member of a smaller mission concludes his/her tour of duty, in most cases he/she passes through Vienna for a short debriefing in the Secretariat. However, there is no systematic use of the feed-back from departing mission members to improve the work of the mission through 'lessons learned' and to build up the institutional memory of the Organization. For members of the larger missions there is no organized debriefing in Vienna upon completion of a tour of duty.

The ODIHR conducts election observation missions for ten to twelve elections each year. Each mission arranges brief training sessions for the 50 to 200 election observers. The purpose of the training programme is to give the election observers instruction in the OSCE methodology for election observation - e.g. what to pay close attention to while monitoring the election - and to give information on OSCE commitments on free elections and about local conditions and legislation. The ODIHR is also preparing projects for training domestic election observers, i.e. local officials, representatives of political parties and NGOs."⁴

An inventory was also made of international and national institutions that offered courses which might be of relevance to the OSCE. This inventory was made in May 1998 on the basis of information available at the time in the Secretariat.⁵ Available courses which could be of relevance for the OSCE were identified in the following institutions: CASIN (Centre for Applied Studies in International Negotiations) in Geneva, the Lester B. Pearson Canadian International Peacekeeping Training Centre in Clements Port, Nova Scotia, the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, Peace Centre Burg Schlaining in Austria, Scuola Superiore S. Anna in Pisa, Italy, United Nations Staff College in Turin, Italy, UNITAR (United Nations Institute for Training and Research), the United States Institute of Peace in Washington. The results of the initial findings of the work were presented in a working paper on training in the OSCE of 22 May 1998. The working paper also contained a plan of action consisting of the following points:

- continued consultations in the Secretariat, with OSCE institutions and field missions as well as interested participating States on fine-tuning the identification of needs/objectives and, in particular, the priorities;
- finalizing the development of OSCE training strategy before the end of the year;
- inviting field missions which have not already done so to start creating a systematic training programme based on mission task priorities in consultation with the Secretariat, and to initiate those training activities which are most urgently needed;
- appointing a training co-ordinator in the Secretariat, bearing in mind that the greatest amount of manpower is needed at the beginning of the process;
- starting development of guidelines and systems to construct an institutional memory in the Organization,

4 Quotation from a Working Paper on Training in the OSCE of 22 May 1998, pp. 4-5.

5 Cf. *ibid.*, Annex.

- starting development of training material such as handbooks, guidelines and training modules;
- engaging staff in the Secretariat, through the internal working group in the training process by involving them as designers, deliverers and beneficiaries;
- initiating the instruction of trainers;
- pursuing contacts with international organizations and others to explore concrete possibilities of co-operation in the training process.

Comments by Participating States

The working paper was circulated to the OSCE Delegations in Vienna inviting them to give their comments as input to further work. When the initial findings presented in the working paper were discussed at an informal meeting of the Permanent Council on 9 June 1998 comments from participating States were generally positive and the proposal to develop a training strategy was given broad support.

The Co-ordination Unit

In anticipation of completing the work on strategy, the Secretary General decided to set up a unit in the Secretariat for the co-ordination of capacity-building and training. The decision reflected the approach adopted in the work on strategy, namely avoiding a new unwieldy structure in the Secretariat. Instead, the philosophy behind it was to create a unit with the primary task of co-ordinating training activities in the Organization. This means that the training efforts in the OSCE have to be carried out through a mobilization of all parts of the Organization but in co-ordination with the Secretariat. This would not only keep costs down but also bring the training process as close as possible to the actual activities of the Organization and make sure that training activities are relevant for the tasks of field missions and institutions of the Organization. At the same time, unity of approach, consistency and quality would be ensured through co-ordination.

The unit consists, at present, of the Co-ordinator for Capacity-Building and Training and a Training Assistant. The Secretary General appointed the author of this article as Co-ordinator when he decided to set up the unit.

Finalizing Strategy

On the basis of the positive comments from participating States the work to develop an OSCE training strategy continued. Inputs were given by various parts of the Secretariat through the informal working group set up for the purpose. A number of suggestions were also provided by OSCE Institutions and field missions, in particular the Missions to Bosnia and Herzegovina and to Croatia.

A proposal for a strategy was finalized but the consideration of it by participating States was delayed because of the priority that had to be given to the preparation of the KVM. The proposed strategy was discussed at an informal meeting of the Permanent Council on 25 November 1998.

In spite of the close consultations held with interested delegations before the circulation of a paper on the proposed strategy, a few felt that the proposal was too ambitious. This position was not so much related to training issues as such but was rather a reflection of the general position of some delegations regarding the OSCE as an organization. In summary, they feel that the OSCE must not be permitted to develop into an organization like the UN. Against this argument, it was explained that this was not the intention of the proposed training strategy. On the contrary, the proposed strategy was aimed at making the OSCE as cost-effective as possible within the existing organizational framework. Although the overwhelming majority of delegations were in favour of the proposal, the concerns expressed had to be taken into account to achieve consensus. Negotiations were therefore initiated among the most interested delegations in order to find an acceptable solution. These negotiations were successfully concluded with a general agreement on the content of the strategy. The final version of the strategy document entitled "Capacity-Building through Training: A Strategy for the OSCE"⁶ was approved by the Permanent Council on 18 March 1999.⁷

In its decision, the Permanent Council noted that the considerable increase in OSCE activities, particularly in the field, required a determined effort to improve capacity-building and training in the Organization. After welcoming the document containing the strategy, the Council approved it and invited the Secretary General to begin implementation and write a yearly report starting with a first report to the Permanent Council in early December 1999. The Council also invited participating States to provide the Secretary General with information regularly on national training activities geared to the strategy.

6 SEC.GAL/25/99/Rev.1 of 12 March 1999.

7 Cf. OSCE, Permanent Council, PC Journal No. 215, Agenda item 5, Decision No. 291, PC.DEC/291, 18 March 1999.

Strategy Content

First, perhaps, a word should be said about the terminology used in the strategy document. The term "capacity-building through training" reflects the comprehensive approach of the strategy. Training is a means of empowering the Organization to carry out its tasks in an efficient manner. The strategy takes into account the general feeling among the participating States, the staff of the Organization and its partners in the field that it is important to find ways to make overall OSCE performance more professional. It also reflects the fact that a responsible and cost-effective training programme requires method, thought and care. Quick and occasional workshops can be provided relatively easily. However, a sustainable system which ensures the building of an institutional memory, the distillation and learning from operational successes/mistakes, making sound management principles part of the OSCE culture, that up-to-date information technology becomes second nature to OSCE staff etc. requires a thorough and strategic approach to training.

The terms "training" and "capacity-building" mean that both formal activities, such as workshops, and informal ones, like mentoring, coaching and self-learning, are included. They also cover materials development and relate to both pre-mission preparation, training in the field and debriefing at the end of a tour of duty. In addition, training should be seen as a means of management, as a means for co-operation with other international organizations and as an opportunity to improve personnel management.

The OSCE Strategy for Capacity-Building through Training as approved by the Permanent Council is a "blueprint" for actions during the period 1999 to the end of 2001.

The paramount goals of the strategy are: to enhance the ability of the institutions and the missions to carry out their mandate as decided by participating States, to strengthen the internal performance of the OSCE and in this way to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of mission activities in the field. A number of more detailed objectives - such as the development of an institutional memory, the identification of best practices, team building, improved communication skills, unity of approach - have also been identified.

Underpinning the strategy is an analytical process which first identifies a number of OSCE capacity-building and training needs, which are either weaknesses to be corrected, strengths to be built on, opportunities to be seized or new knowledge and skills to be assimilated from outside. According to the analysis, all OSCE staff at all levels are addressed - with a strong emphasis placed on mission members in their various areas of specialization. The staff of the Secretariat and the institutions must not be overlooked, given their key role in providing effective support to field activities.

In the face of multiple training demands, priorities have been set. The field missions of the OSCE have up to now concentrated on efforts to prevent conflicts or post-conflict situations, in short: making civil society function. Bearing this in mind, an obvious priority for the OSCE will be human rights training for mission members and training in related areas such as conflict prevention. In order to strengthen the performance of the OSCE, other priorities will be specific preparation required for practical tasks in OSCE missions, general knowledge about the OSCE, standards of behaviour and ethics, gender issues as well as institutional communications. In keeping with the way the OSCE operates, flexibility should highlight this approach. Beyond the priorities *per se*, the strategy also draws on principles of sound and well-proven training management practice which can make a strong contribution towards helping a "training culture" to take root quickly and effectively. It is, for example, foreseen that all staff must be made aware of their own responsibility to learn, for their own good and that of the OSCE, but in this they have to be assisted by the Organization. Another principle is that the training activities will be a means to achieve the objectives of the OSCE. Yet another principle is that activities that are likely to have a strong multiplier effect and/or be sustainable over time should be favoured over isolated events.

Based on the preceding analysis and considerations, the key features of the strategy have been defined as including the following: a three-year strategic planning horizon; a highly participative and "joint management- and staff-owned" approach in combination with a central co-ordination capability; development and updating of a body of knowledge and best practice; a training impact assessment and evaluation system; sufficient programme scope to ensure a critical mass of OSCE-wide impact in a short time span.

The implementation of this capacity-building and training strategy, including both its management and the actual performance of its activities, will call for the co-operative functioning of a series of interconnected mechanisms. While decentralization, based on performance in the field by missions in accordance with agreed yearly training plans, will ensure commitment and energy where it counts most, a support structure consisting of focal points in all parts of the Organization and a Co-ordinator in the Secretariat will provide overall quality control and the all-important development of an OSCE-wide materials and skills base. The Co-ordinator will also be the locus for institutional accountability and reporting on the overall training effort, as well as troubleshooting and evaluation in this context. Actual performance of activities will be assured through many different means, including workshops and the impressive array of possibilities now afforded by modern technology. The capacity building and training unit in the Secretariat will provide as much training as possible, including in the field missions. The Co-ordinator will

also seek to make best use of training provided by other sources, such as the participating States, other international organizations or NGOs.

The strategy is intended to cater to the needs of the Organization. It will be implemented through a controlled and decentralized system based on participative management. This is the reason why the network of focal points in field missions and institutions will play an important role in fulfilling the priority objectives defined in the strategy. Contact persons at the focal points will work closely with the Co-ordinator. They will define training needs in their respective work places and establish plans for training activities which will be reviewed by the Co-ordinator. These plans will then serve as the basis for the training budgets of the institutions and the missions. They also serve as the basis for defining which activities can be carried out more cost effectively at the core to the benefit of several or all missions. The role of the Co-ordinator will be to ensure consistency, quality control and unity of approach and content as well as to manage central budget allocations. He will also encourage and assist missions and work units to implement training activities which are relevant for their tasks. Finally, training material is needed for a sustainable result. At the start of the implementation the Co-ordinator will put the emphasis on the development of a summary module which will be the basis for the induction of new staff members in the field and the Secretariat. Training material and manuals are also needed on administrative issues and a general mission handbook should be produced covering the professional performance and behaviour of members of field missions.

The Initiation of Training Activities

Parallel to the work on the strategy, a number of activities were initiated even before the strategy was approved. Since most mission members stay in their missions only a limited time, the initial emphasis has been put on training in the early stages of assignment as part of the induction of new staff in the field and in the Secretariat.

Two day *induction courses* are held in Vienna for new mission members and new Secretariat staff. The purpose of these courses is to give a general introduction to the OSCE and how it is working. This course became mandatory through the approval of the strategy.⁸ It provides an overview of the OSCE and its activities as well as initial administrative and practical information.⁹ Up to now, the course has been held every two weeks. By the end of June 1999, 22 courses had been held with a total number of 262 participants.

8 See Section 8.3 page 10 of document SEC.GAL/25/99/Rev.1.

9 An exception was the KVM that organized induction of new members in the mission area.

The plan is to develop this course into a training package that can be implemented not only in Vienna but also in the large field missions. This package will also be of importance as a basis for training that may be offered in and by participating States in preparing their nationals for work as members of the OSCE field missions. Hopefully, such training activities will be assumed by at least some participating States and also be open for nationals from other participating States.

Among the specific topics included in the induction course are basic information on human rights and gender issues.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mrs. Mary Robinson, proposed in a statement to the Permanent Council in June 1998 that her Office and the OSCE should co-operate in the field of *human rights training*. Following this initiative, the Co-ordinator and the Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR) developed a co-operative approach on human rights training for field missions. This has resulted in an effort including the OSCE/ODIHR, the OHCHR, the Council of Europe and the European Commission, in the form of a pilot project for human rights training for field missions. Through this project it is hoped that greater awareness of existing standards can be created so that they can be applied more effectively in field activities. This will contribute to avoiding "forum shopping" in the field. The training will also include practical skills needed in field missions. Last but not least, through this joint effort common standards for human rights training will be developed which will be an important reflection of the universality of human rights. The pilot project was implemented through a workshop on human rights training in field missions which was held in July 1999 in the facilities of the European Masters in Venice-Lido on the invitation of the European Commission. Out of 25 participants up to 18 came from the OSCE. It is hoped that the workshop laid the basis for continued joint training efforts on human rights work in field missions.

An effort is also under way to provide support through training to field missions for their work relating to *gender issues*. Many of the field missions work in post-conflict situations where women victims of conflict present a particularly sensitive problem. This is only one example of gender issues which field missions have to work on. A training manual which is now under preparation will provide guidance to the missions in dealing with these issues. Training will also be part of the policy awareness campaign to follow up the organizational directive on the professional working environment in the OSCE.¹⁰

Preliminary plans have been made to provide *training on mediation techniques* in the form of a workshop organized in co-operation with UNITAR.

10 Organizational Directive No. 11 on Professional Working Environment in the OSCE dated 9 June 1999 circulated with document SEC.GAL/62/99 of 10 June 1999.

Any field activity requires an efficiently working administrative base. For this purpose an *administrative training* workshop was held in 1998 and a second workshop was held in June 1999. Training is used as an integral part of the introduction of new *information technology* (IT) systems. All new staff members receive training in IT tailored to their needs when they arrive at the organization.

Apart from the activities under way or planned at the headquarters level, a number of training activities have also been initiated in some of the *field missions*. The Mission to Croatia has a well developed training programme which comprises, *inter alia*, induction training and specific training for police monitors which have been part of the Mission since October 1998. The Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina has a training programme which includes a welcome programme, IT training and management training for some of the members of the Mission.

These are some examples of training activities which are now emerging as an integrated part of the activities of the OSCE.

Concluding Remarks

Based on developments during the last year it can be concluded that the increased attention to training has in itself had an effect. The awareness of the need for training has increased. There is also an ever-increasing understanding of how training can be used as a means of management and as a means of supporting the substantive activities of the organization.

The OSCE Strategy for Capacity-Building through Training has indicated the direction in which the Organization should proceed. The strategy will, however, not succeed by itself. In order to be successful certain conditions need to be fulfilled, among them:

- the political support of the participating States;
- strong and visible management support;
- sufficient funding;
- integration of capacity-building and training with OSCE activities, and a place in the Organization which highlights this approach;
- the development of a "culture of training", i.e., an atmosphere in which the use of training is widely understood and accepted.

The approval of the strategy is only the beginning of a process and it is important that it be continued over time to achieve the desired results. Capacity-building and training means change. If it is not generally accepted that some

practices might have to be reconsidered it will be difficult to achieve the desired results.

When the implementation of the strategy has picked up speed the time will come to think about further steps. One obvious way to improve the performance of the Organization is to complement the training activities of the OSCE with pre-mission preparation in the participating States of future mission members. Hopefully some participating States will organize such training and invite participants from other participating States. It is essential, however, that the message given to future mission members be consistent, regardless of where training is organized. The training material developed by the OSCE will be an important means of achieving unity of approach. But other measures to ensure an even quality in national training efforts are probably needed. This is a matter that should be studied further.

Finally, to be able to meet its challenges and carry out increasingly demanding tasks, the OSCE must become a "learning organization". That means that the Organization should not only learn from its successes but also from its failures. By distilling best practices and creating an institutional memory, the effectiveness of the Organization can be increased. This can, however, not be done in isolation but should be integrated into a lesson-learning system. Such a system should be based on the experiences from systems which have been developed and are in use in private industry, in the armed forces of some countries and in some international organizations. Training is an essential part of such a system both as a way of disseminating best practices and getting feed-back which - after appropriate analysis - can serve as the basis for recommendations for action to be taken. Another important input in such a system would be systematic debriefing of departing mission members.

These are some suggestions for further steps to improve the functioning of the OSCE and to ensure that it can remain a flexible and cost-effective organization, also when new demands create new challenges.