

CEPOL - European Police College

EVALUATION REPORT 2007

CEPOL Courses, Seminars and Conferences



Evaluation Report 2007

1. Introduction

The Evaluation Report aims to provide *updated statistics* on CEPOL courses, seminars and conferences for 2007, followed by a presentation of the outcomes of activities held during the year, analyses, conclusions and recommendations.

The main aims of the evaluation of CEPOL activities are, primarily, to improve the quality of training:

- Future organisers need to know the lessons learnt from past activities and what improvements can be made;
- ACTA Working Group, the Annual Programme Committee and the Governing Board need comprehensive information in order to improve the quality of CEPOL activities, increase attendance and reach the right target group;
- The European Parliament, the Council, the Commission and different stakeholders, such as Europol and the Chiefs of Police Task Force, need information regarding the results and outcomes of CEPOL activities.

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2. Statistics

Activities

85 activities were organised, out of 99 scheduled, an increase of 25 courses (42%) compared to 2006. Three activities were cancelled and 11 activities were postponed until 2008.

Participants

The actual number of participants was 1,922 out of an anticipated number of approx. 2,700. The number of participants increased with 45% compared with 2006.

The percentage of actual attendance compared with the estimated was 72%.

The average attendance was 23 participants per activity. In 36 activities the number of participants was less than two-thirds of the estimated number. In a majority of these activities (21 out of 36) the invitation letters were sent out late.

Participating Member States

Fifteen member states attended on average a CEPOL activity. In 57 out of 83 activities less than two-thirds of the Member states were represented.

In 20% of the activities (17 out of 85) more than 3 participants came from the same Member State, most of them coming from the hosting country.

A number of courses/seminars are repeated over the year (Information Seminars, Q13, Admin Course etc). These activities have a lower estimated number of participants (15-20) and therefore not all Member states can attend each activity. This is reflected in the Report, i.e. in the figures regarding average attendance.

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Experts and Trainers

A total of 762 experts and trainers contributed to CEPOL activities in 2007 with an average of 9 experts/trainers on each activity.

628 experts/trainers were from the Member states, 17 experts/trainers were from non-EU countries and 117 were from EU bodies/agencies and other organisations.

425 experts/trainers (68%) came from the host countries, with an average of 5 experts per activity from the host country. One third of the experts/trainers attended activities outside their home country.

Eight countries contributed by more than 25 experts/trainers (either abroad or in their home country); Portugal (73), France (61), Germany (60), Italy (53), UK (40), Spain (39), Netherlands (34) and Austria (31). Six countries sent less than 10 experts/trainers.

EU organs and international organisations also sent experts to CEPOL activities. Europol contributed most with 39 experts. Experts from Eurojust, OLAF, Chiefs of Police Task Force, Interpol, the Commission and the Council were also invited.

The statistics show that there is room for more experts/trainers from different countries in order to better facilitate a European approach. An important task for the preparatory work is to discuss how to invite experts/trainers from other countries than the organising and supporting countries.

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3. Evaluation Reports

All *evaluation reports* for the 85 activities organized were received by CEPOL Secretariat. These have been studied and analysed as detailed and discussed below.

Post-course evaluation was not carried out during 2007.

Consequently, information on whether *knowledge* gained during the CEPOL courses and seminars is being applied and shared, and whether the *networks* established during the activities are being maintained, is not available and not included in the report.

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4. Methodology

All evaluation forms completed by participants are summarized and reported by the Course Organisers to CEPOL Secretariat. This Report is based on this information.

In all activities, the participants were asked to evaluate the course/seminar on the following aspects:

1. To what extent have you in *general been satisfied* with the course?
2. What were your *expectations* before the course?
3. To what extent have you been satisfied with the *technical level* of the course?
4. To what extent have you been satisfied with the *training methods* used?
5. To what extent have you been satisfied with the *course materials*?
6. To what extent have you been satisfied with the *trainers*?
7. How do you find the *relevance* of the course?
8. To what extent has the activity provided you with satisfactory *new knowledge*?
9. Did you *miss any topics* or would you have liked the topics *prioritized* differently?
10. Is there anything you would suggest *changed on future* courses?
11. Do you think that *distance learning* could form part of the course as pre-study?

Note:

In Questions 1 to 8, participants can rate their satisfaction on a "Likert Scale" of 1-5 where 5 is the highest. The questions are generally supplemented with participant's own comments.

Questions 9 to 11 are "open" questions where participants are asked to provide their comments.

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5. Presentation of Findings

From the ratings on the eight questions in the Course Evaluation Questionnaire six can be considered as valid ratings, as shown below:

- *Trainers* with the highest rating of 4.38;
- *Course relevance* rated second highest with an average of 4.35;
- *General satisfaction* rated at 4.26;
- *Course material* rated at 4.25;
- *Training methods* rated at 4.20;
- *New knowledge* with the lowest rating of 4.10.

The ratings on Technical Level and Expectations are not included, due to different interpretations of the questions, and are taken into account only for comments that participants wrote.

5.1 General Satisfaction

Global Average: 4.26 (Lowest 3.1/Highest 5.0)

The level of satisfaction expressed by the participants was generally high.

Mostly noted and appreciated was the high level of *organisation*, the *good atmosphere* created that facilitated *interaction* between participants and how this enhanced the learning process, and the sharing of *experiences* that provided *insight and knowledge* of the different police systems and good practice.

Overall, the activities were assessed as *informative*, providing *new perspectives* and challenging old ways of thinking on topics dealt with.

Participants generally found the *knowledge* gained useful and applicable to their *daily work*.

Group work and *group process* was also an element that was positively commented on activities when this took place.

Also notable are repeated comments that participants came to realise the importance of CEPOL in the field of police cooperation.

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On the other hand, repeated comments show that some topics were not in line with the objectives of the activity.

Comments were also made that the presentations should be shorter and there should be more workshops and group work to make the participation more active.

Rather concerning were comments of dissatisfaction with the level of some presentations and quality of trainers.

5.2 Expectations

Comments show that participants understood this question in three different ways:

- a) What they expected to *learn/achieve* from the course
- b) How high their expectations of the course were *before* they attended
- c) Whether their expectations had been *met*

The different interpretation of this question invalidates the rating in this area and therefore cannot be included in the above graph depicting global averages.

On grouping the written comments one can get an indication on the three different interpretations regarding participants' expectations as highlighted above.

Although it is stated that participants did not know what to expect because they had never attended a CEPOL course, generally the participants claim to have had high expectations, which indicates that CEPOL's training has gained a positive reputation.

In addition, the numbers of positive comments outweigh the negative ones when participants commented on whether their expectations of the course/seminar have been met.

5.3 Technical Level

The question on the "Technical Level" also proves to be ambiguous as comments from participants show that it is understood in two ways: a) the

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technical level in the *content* delivered and b) in terms of technical *facilities* and *equipment* used.

According to comments by the participants, the technical facilities and equipment used in CEPOL activities is generally satisfactory.

With regards to the technical level in the content delivered, comments provided by participants attending the same activity are that they either found it *too basic* or *too technical*. Such varied comments on the same activity indicate that the knowledge base of participants attending the activities differs, possibly meaning that the right target group is not always being ensured.

5.4 Training Methods

Global Average: 4.20 (Lowest 3.3/Highest 4.9)

Generally participants were satisfied with the training methods used in CEPOL activities.

Some activities are rated higher than others on this aspect and comments by participants reveal the methods preferred. Where these methods (see below) were not used, participants expressed their dissatisfaction and this is reflected in the rating for the activity concerned.

The training methods preferred, almost without exception, are a mix of lecturing and interactive approaches, including the following:

Presentations:

These are still appreciated and found effective for learning when they are presented skillfully, kept short, include visual aids, and followed by discussion.

Participants showed their dissatisfaction when presentations are too many and too long, beyond 45 minutes, and not based on practical issues. Some comments were also made on the preference to have slides in English and not in the mother tongue of the experts.

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Workshops:

When adequate time for discussion is allowed, participants find workshops to be very effective to create a mood for discussion and thus facilitate active participation by all.

Workshops also give space for participants to share their knowledge and experience within the smaller group and to establish a network. Participants commented that they learned more where the opportunity for interaction was created.

Practical exercises, case studies and field visits:

Practical exercises and solving problems on practical issues through case studies are found useful.

It must be stated that participants do want input from the trainers/experts through short presentations and lectures, but comments clearly show that when these are followed by an opportunity to assimilate the theory to practical issues, including field visits, learning becomes much more effective.

Sharing of experiences and good practice:

This appears to be the most beneficial to participants of CEPOL activities, as it is repeatedly mentioned.

Suggestions to let each participant present the situation in their country were also made in order to share experience and good practice in different European countries.

Comments are very clear that participants do not find it effective when an activity is packed with too many presentations and not allowing enough time for discussion and input from the participants.

5.5 Course Materials

Global Average: 4.25 (Lowest 3.63/Highest 4.80)

Overall participants were satisfied with the materials provided in the activities. The participants found the material informative and useful for future reference. Comments from participants however do indicate that materials are not always adequate, lacking in *content* and *quantity*.

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Moreover, material is not always provided beforehand, that is, before the presentations; it was repeatedly stated that the participants prefer this as it makes sessions easier to follow, allows them to prepare questions and also add their notes.

Most of the activities with a high average rate above 4.45 in this criteria included comments of appreciation on materials being provided *beforehand*, clear and explained prior to the sessions concerned.

Requests for *pre-study material* were also noted.

Participants also expect the course material in digital format at the end of the activity on a CD Rom and expressed their dissatisfaction when this was not provided.

5.6 Trainers

Global Average: 4.38 (Lowest 3.69/Highest 5.0)

Participants' satisfaction with CEPOL trainers appears to be high. Most comments on trainers are positive, described as being highly professional, competent and knowledgeable, helpful and open to questions, clear in their delivery, motivated and adapted to participants' needs.

Four activities have an average rating below 4.0 in the scale of 1 to 5.

On the other hand, repeated comments on different activities were noted with regards to trainers'/experts' lack of language skills or, conversely, on expert's/trainer's fast speed during their presentations when being native English speakers.

This language barrier hindered understanding with some participants.

Other repeated comments referred to the different levels of trainers' and lecturers' expertise and the poor delivery skills in certain cases.

It must be mentioned that participants also appreciated, for instance in the English Language Courses, when the groups were divided according to their level of English, as it facilitated learning, and gave remarks when this was not done.

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5.7 Course Relevance and New Knowledge

*Global Average: Relevance 4.35 (Lowest 3.65/Highest 4.85)
Knowledge 4.10 (Lowest 3.35/Highest 4.80)*

Although CEPOL activities are proving to be highly relevant, they do not seem to be as challenging. The *new knowledge* provided scored the lowest of the evaluated criteria, with a global average score of 4.1.

Even if activities were scored relatively high in "relevance", it appears, however, that the topics delivered and discussed were not challenging enough as the "new knowledge" gained was rated rather low.

Also concerning is the fact that, even if limited in numbers, some activities had an average score of 3.9 and below on both relevance and new knowledge.

5.8 Missed Topics

Participants had the opportunity to state what topics they missed in the activity and also to give their feedback on whether topics were presented in the right order.

Participants provided numerous comments and suggestions related to the topic on every activity. This is valuable information for the course Organiser of the next activity on the topic.

Some general and repeated comments were a wish for:

- more in-depth discussions on topics related to the activity
- structured input from colleagues on the situation in their country
- discussions on practical solutions on problems related to the subject,
- additional contribution/presence from relevant EU institutions

5.9 Suggestions for Future Activities

Valuable information and proposals were provided for future courses and seminars;

- Provide a *booklet* about CEPOL
- Provide with a *short presentation* on CEPOL
- Provide *internet* facilities in the training rooms
- More *interactivity* between lecturers and participants
- Shorter presentations with more *frequent breaks* to keep the mind sharper.
- Respect *timeframes* of presentations
- Course managers should *check presentations in advance* to ensure that material presented meets the goal
- More time for *networking*
- More *case studies*

5.10 Distance Learning as a Pre-Study

As resulted in previous evaluation reports, *distance learning as a pre-study* to the activity attended is generally considered positive and desirable.

Comments were made that this should not be voluminous considering the work schedule for many senior police officers.

Reasons provided as to why participants were in favour included:

- it will give participants the opportunity to be more active and ask more questions to the experts/lecturers and allowing the lecturers time to prepare for such requests;
- participants can prepare themselves in a better way;
- certain theoretical issues and research findings could be studied/ examined in advance, allowing more fruitful time for discussing;
- it would ensure the same entry level to the activity.

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6. Analyses of CEPOL Evaluation Tools and Processes

As stated in the introduction of this Report, the main aims of the evaluation of CEPOL activities are, primarily, to improve the quality of training:

- Future organisers need to know the lessons learnt from past activities and what improvements can be made.
- ACTA Working Group, the Annual Programme Committee and the Governing Board need comprehensive information in order to improve the quality of CEPOL activities; how to increase attendance and how to reach the right target group.
- The European Parliament, the Council, the Commission and different stakeholders, such as Europol and the Chiefs of Police Task Force, need information regarding the results and outcomes of CEPOL activities.

The recommendations stated in the Commission Opinion for a more systematic evaluation system require attention, and steps need to be taken in this direction.

Indicators for measuring the objectives as well as the outcomes of CEPOL activities are needed.

As with other organisations, CEPOL necessitates an evaluation process on two levels; *macro* and *micro* levels:

- On a *macro* level, CEPOL has to ensure that its prescribed objectives are met.
- On a *micro* level CEPOL evaluates the quality and processes by which these objectives are met. This latter level has both direct and indirect impact on the achievement of CEPOL's prescribed objectives.

A comprehensive evaluation system can be guided by the following 13 questions stated in CEPOL Q13 document, providing indicators for quality standards in CEPOL training activities:

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Initiative:	1. What is the Problem? 2. Is education and/or training the proper solution?
Design:	3. Is the overall design of the course balanced, effective and CEPOL specific? 4. Are teachers and trainers competent? 5. Are appropriate methods and materials selected? 6. Is the content up-to-date and appropriate in this context? 7. Has the attendance of the right target group been ensured?
Implementation:	8. Is the learning environment properly organised? 9. Is the implementation appropriate to the design?
Evaluation:	10. What are the results of the efforts? 11. Are these results intended? 12. Are problems solved adequately? 13. What can be learned and what can be improved?

In order to arrive at and understand answers to the last four questions the evaluation tools necessarily need to incorporate a measure on all the other criteria.

The above is also reflected in the proposals and recommendations presented by the Working Group of Learning in their document on the Evaluation of CEPOL Activities

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6.1 Evaluation Questionnaire

The findings presented in this report provide information on a micro level, on how participants attending CEPOL courses/seminars in 2007 experienced the activity.

The Course Evaluation Questionnaire completed by participants at the end of the activity was the *only tool* used to gather information. Despite the relevance of the findings, the picture gathered is limited. Many questions still remain unanswered.

The following are some observations on the effectiveness of the evaluation tool used for participants' feedback.

6.1.1 Expectations

The question '*What were your expectations before the course?*' does *not* provided the desired information as it is too late to ask about expectations when the activity is over.

It is important to ask participants to state their expectations on registering for the activity in order that the organiser can match these with the course objectives to ensure the right target group for the activity and the right content.

The trainers should also be informed about participants' expectations and trainers should be flexible and address these expectations, as long as these remain in line with the objectives as this approach focuses on participants' learning.

A more direct question in the evaluation questionnaire, "*Were your expectations of the course/seminar met?*" would therefore be more useful.

6.1.2 Technical level

As highlighted earlier in the results for this item, the question on technical level is being misinterpreted by many of the participants and therefore needs to be reformulated. A direct question on the technical facilities provided can be included under a more structured section measuring the *logistics*.

The technical level of the activity in terms of *content* should also be

measured in a more structured section on course content, which could include other specific questions to measure course relevance to participants' function, the materials and handouts supporting this content, and how all these contributed to the participants' learning.

6.1.3 Experts and Trainers

Comments on experts/trainers are normally *generic* and do not help to understand if there were single experts/trainers who did not deliver up to date information or used inadequate training methods.

For example, in some instances, participants stated that they gave a high rating in general regarding the experts/trainers but added unsatisfactory remarks on a particular expert/trainer. Rating trainers/experts separately, would avoid this ambiguity and unclear information and would make the rating more reliable.

Unless this feedback from participants is collected, CEPOL will not be able to ensure that the right trainers are being selected. Question 4 in the Q13 '*Are trainers competent?*' specifically stresses that this is a crucial element in safeguarding the quality standards in CEPOL activities.

6.1.4 Training Methods

The information provided by the participants on the training methods used are in answer to a *global* question; '*To what extent have you been satisfied with the training methods used?*'

Having a blanket rating on the training methods is not indicative as to which methods were found most beneficial. Different topics require the use of different training methods. It would therefore be more helpful to get participants' feedback on how the training methods helped in the learning process. Such information is important for the organisers and for the experts/trainers to enhance the learning outcome in future activities.

In light of the above it is important that **each topic** is evaluated individually for *content relevance, trainer's style and clarity, and training methods* used.

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6.1.5 Transfer of Knowledge

The evaluation questionnaire does not measure the *transfer* and *sharing* of learning which is important for the success of CEPOL training activities.

Normally one or two person(s) attend a CEPOL activity from each Member State. Therefore, it is important that knowledge and information gained during a CEPOL activity is cascaded to colleagues, staff and line managers when they return to the work.

Asking participants whether they think the outcome of training can be applied in their workplace and whether they think it can be beneficial to their organisation would be an indication of the relevance and applicability of CEPOL training. This can later be confirmed or otherwise in the post-course evaluation.

6.2 Post-course Evaluation

Post-course evaluation is imperative to gauge the *long-term effectiveness* of the training activity; an initiative which enables CEPOL to report on its main remit.

A major shortcoming in the current evaluation process is the lack of information on *how* participants are making use of what they learned. The importance of this is emphasized in questions 10-11 in the Q13 guidelines.

CEPOL is expected to report on the impact and result of its training programmes. With the information provided in 2007, CEPOL is not in a position to report on this aspect.

CEPOL needs to know whether participants found the training useful and whether they are applying the knowledge gained on their job. Information on how they are maintaining and utilizing the *network* established during the activity they attended is also important.

6.3 Target Groups

Question 7 in the Q13 Guidelines highlights the importance of having the right target group attending an activity: *'Has the attendance of the right target group been ensured?'*

There are many indicators showing that participants attending CEPOL

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activities often are not the right target group. Organisers' observations may be the most obvious source for information. Naturally the organisers are dissatisfied when the participants are not the right target group as this has a direct bearing on the success of the activity.

The wrong target group can also be detected in comments from the participants. In the same activity, some participants find the level *too* basic, while others find the topics *too* technical, indicating that there is an imbalance in the entry level.

Another indication may be when participants express their wish for very basic information on the topic in advance. While this need not necessarily always mean that participants are not knowledgeable enough on the subject, it does leave one to question whether these participants have enough expertise on the topic, which is one of the requirements for participation in CEPOL courses as this is also the basic for building up networks among the participants.

Almost without exception, on every activity there are a number of participants who comment that their expectations from the course have *not* been met. This seems to reveal a mismatch in what these participants expected and the objectives of the course. As mentioned above, receiving participants' expectations together with their registration will enable organisers to match these with the course objectives.

Many times the description of the target group is generic and not specifically defined. The criteria of being a 'senior police officer' is in reality ambiguous due to different ranking systems in European countries; this can attract a wide range of applicants who may consequently not be the right target group.

To counteract this problem, besides stating their expectations of the course on sending in the registration/application for a CEPOL activity, participants should also be asked to provide details on their professional background, what their job function is and how they see the course topic relating to their post.

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This will enable the organiser to match these with the course objectives, and will help the experts and trainers in their preparation and delivery. The organisers are in a better position to diminish the risk of having the wrong target group while trainers will be better informed on the level and background of the participants.

6.4 Objectives

The objectives of a training activity should serve as performance indicators if they are to be a useful tool both in attracting and selecting the right target group, as discussed above, as well as in evaluating the results of the activity.

Objectives must be *specific, measurable, achievable, result-oriented* and *time-bound* where applicable.

In the course evaluation questionnaire used in 2007, the objectives were not measured and therefore there is no information available to be evaluated on this important aspect.

At the end of the training activity, participants should provide information on whether they feel the objectives of the course have been met as this is a major aspect for CEPOL in reporting the results of the activities to its stakeholders.

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7. Evaluation Templates

The CEPOL Rules, Commitments and Guidelines state that the Secretariat should provide templates for the evaluation of CEPOL activities, including post-course evaluation, which is to be distributed by the Secretariat.

A standard evaluation form with 11 questions was developed by the Secretariat and has been in use since 2006. The form was used to evaluate the activities held in 2007.

The current evaluation form does not provide sufficient information for the improvement of future courses/seminars, and it does not enable CEPOL to report beyond the satisfaction level on its training activities to its stakeholders.

A strong recommendation for a more comprehensive evaluation system were put forward by the WGL in their document on CEPOL evaluation system in 2006 as well as by the Commission in its comments to the 2007 Annual Programme.

In this respect, CEPOL Secretariat drafted new evaluation templates in 2007, in line with Kirkpatrick's model of evaluation and in line with the Q13 guidelines for quality standards in CEPOL training activities.

Following consultation with WGL regarding the scale to be used, and as instructed by the GB in February 2008, the templates were distributed to Member states for feedback.

Based on the feedback received from Member states and extensive comments by individual members of the WGL on consulting the group in April 2008, the templates were revised and presented at the Training and Research Committee on 21-22 April 2008.

The Templates were also presented to the Annual Programme Committee on 6-7 May. The revised templates are now being tested during May and June 2008.

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The templates are as follows:

- *Template 15a: Course Evaluation* (completed by participants at the end of the activity)
- *Template 15b: Feedback from Trainers* (completed by trainers at the end of the activity)

Following the two-month trial period, covering 25 activities, the use of these new templates, both in terms of effectiveness of information provided and time involved for reporting and analyses, will be studied and assessed.

7.1 Dissemination of Evaluation Results

Presently CEPOL presents the evaluation findings in its Annual Report and the Annual Activity Report.

The findings and any observations made by the organiser on an activity is included in the final analyses of the CEPOL activities for the year, to be presented to the Governing Board.

Course organisers sometimes ask for the evaluation report for an activity held in the past on the same topic. Unfortunately, this practice is not carried out by all organisers, meaning that the findings and observations made on an activity are not always utilised by the next organiser.

It is therefore the intention of the Secretariat to provide the next organiser with this information and at the same time give access to evaluation reports and other relevant material of previously organised activities.

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8. Future Evaluation Processes

It is important for CEPOL to have an evaluation system where information gathered is standardised.

If CEPOL aims to have reliable evaluation results, standardised system of reporting has to be adopted where organisers collect and provide the same information.

Course objectives and target group are two major areas requiring attention. The objectives need to be elaborated in a way that they are well defined, specific, and prepared in time, to attract the right target group. In addition, more information is needed from officers applying for a CEPOL activity to ensure that the applicants fit into the decided target group.

The lack of assessment on the long-term effect of CEPOL activities, and how the training is being cascaded, is a major shortcoming in the current evaluation system.

Besides improving the current tool used for evaluation, CEPOL therefore goes a level further by implementing a process of post-course evaluation in 2008.