

DECISION 14/2008/GB
OF THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE EUROPEAN POLICE COLLEGE
ADOPTING THE E-LEARNING STRATEGY

Adopted by the Governing Board
on 21 May 2008

THE GOVERNING BOARD,

Having regard to Council Decision 2005/681/JHA of 20 September 2005 establishing the European Police College (CEPOL) ⁽¹⁾, and in particular Article 7(9)(a) thereof;

Whereas:

It is for the Governing Board on the basis of Council Decision 2005/681/JHA to adopt common curricula, training modules, learning methods, and any other learning and teaching tools.

HAS ADOPTED the e-Learning Strategy as detailed in the Annex to this Decision.

Done at Bled, 21 May 2008

*For the Governing Board
Nevenka Tomovič
Chair of the Governing Board*

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 256, 1.10.2005, p. 63.

E-learning-Strategy in the context of CEPOL's Vision and Mission

Introduction

CEPOL's Mission: Contribute to European Police Cooperation through Learning.

CEPOL's Vision: CEPOL is acknowledged by allied agencies and authorities in the policing and educational areas as the primary source of learning and development in the field of education and training for better cooperation and policing in Europe.

Mission and Vision statements both contain 'learning'. This document describes the way how we can reach the vision and fulfill CEPOL's mission through e-learning.

Strategic aims regarding CEPOL's e-learning environment:

- a. build up an e-learning-culture in combination with a learning culture and encourage life long learning;
- b. create a common understanding of e-learning as a comprehensive system in it's own but also as a part of CEPOL's learning activities as a whole;
- c. offer an opportunity to increase the options for police officers to acquire knowledge and to develop competence and to support individual and various learning styles;
- d. distribute content to large and differentiated target groups spread over Europe in a very short time and offer an option to learn anywhere and anytime (learning on demand);
- e. contributes to harmonise the pre-entry level of participants (including language) and to harmonise content;
- f. mainly focused on blended learning (pre-course, course, post-course) but also on self paced e-learning;
- g. allowing more time/space for effective classroom learning;
- h. production and management of new knowledge and content;
- i. coordination of CEPOL-activities in the framework of e-learning;
- j. support Communities of Practice to gain sustainability and networking and support multipliers to share knowledge and raise awareness of CEPOL's benefits.

In the CEPOL learning environment, e-learning offers an opportunity to increase the options for police officers to acquire knowledge in different ways. One major benefit of e-learning, for example, is that it can reach participants that are spread over a wide geographic area (such as the European Union member states).

Another advantage of e-learning is the possibility to distribute content to a large target group in a very short space of time. E-learning can support and enrich learning *and* teaching processes within CEPOL.

E-learning helps to improve learning as well as helps to consolidate the knowledge of participants to CEPOL's activities. E-learning should be regarded as a comprehensive system, not only focusing on learning, but also on knowledge management and the distribution of content. A long-term perspective of e-learning could also help reduce the work of CEPOL's trainers as pre and post course preparation could potentially be done using an e-learning-environment.

It must be borne in mind, however, that e-learning offers an opportunity to broaden learning methodology. Participants and trainers should use an e-learning-system to discover that e-learning benefits their learning and teaching efforts. It should also be considered that an e-learning-system, like the one described in this paper, can only be realised step-by-step and not in a few months. It is estimated that it will take between 3-5 years until an entire e-learning system is running.

Learning in General

A view on e-learning cannot take place in isolation from a view on learning methodologies as a whole. E-learning is one way of delivering information and just one other method in the blend of modalities. So, educational principles constitute one important part of the approach to e-learning. This paper is written in the following sequence: *learning in general, e-learning and e-learning architecture*.

Learning can be defined as the process of acquiring information which leads to a change or increase of knowledge. The way the processing takes place develops over the course of people's lives. In the same way in which personalities evolve, people also develop their preferred style(s) of learning. As learning styles differ from one individual to another, all learners cannot be treated the same

Offering *blended learning* increases the chances that all learning styles will be served. Blended learning is organised by selecting and applying the best combination of modalities that will have the highest impact.

As CEPOL's potential target group exists of adults and, to be more precise, experienced practitioners in the field of safety and security, CEPOL needs to look at the characteristics of adult learning in general and experienced practitioners in specific.

Adults learn best if they can relate the learning to their daily lives. Senior police officers – CEPOL's main target group - are confronted daily with challenges and (complicated) problems in a complex environment. As democratic policing requires, they often have to take into consideration decisions, guidelines or opinions from others. They are also accountable for their decisions and for the performance of the police. If this is the context, CEPOL should at least try to apply or create learning strategies that are based on this and include problems connected to their daily work (through case studies, for example), build on their experiences and collaborate in the way they usually do: exchanging of ideas, discussion and reflection (working groups).

Learning Environments

CEPOL's core business is learning - creating and maintaining effective learning environments. There are many perceptions of a learning environment. Very often people think of the physical environment, missing other elements as stated in the definition below.

A learning environment is the result of the interaction between:

- Participants;
- Trainers & teachers;
- Learning methods;
- Content;
- Material conditions;
- Organisational conditions.

All are derived from the aim and objectives of the learning activity.

As participants are part of the interacting parameters in the learning environment, they should be approached as learners, not as students. A student is often involved in passive learning, reacting to the stimulus of the teacher and confined to the road map of the syllabus. By contrast, a learner is an active participant in individual education. The learner interacts more assertively with the materials, other learners, and teachers.

Key characteristics of learner-centred education are:

- Setting high developmental expectations and standards for all participants;
- Understanding that participants may learn in different ways and at different rates; maintaining a constant search for alternative ways to enhance learning not only

during the formal learning process, but also after during the so called post course learning phase;

- Preferably providing a primary emphasis on active learning. This may require the use of a wide range of techniques, materials and experiences to engage learner interests;
- Using participants as a recourse of knowledge;
- Creating space for participants to express individual learning needs and expectations not covered by the programme and ensuring – within reasonable limits – enough flexibility to fulfil these needs.

E-learning

E-learning can be defined as a computer-based comprehensive system to impart or acquire knowledge, consisting of various components which are connected in a way that enables users to create information and communication.

E-learning can be used in two different ways:

Self-Paced Learning

Self-Paced Learning allows a learner to complete learning individually - at their own speed and in their own time, such as interactive, web-based or CD-ROM training.

Self paced e-learning modules have following advantages:

- A very vast group of learners can be reached (potentially the whole of CEPOL's target group).
- There is no travel involved (travel costs, loss of travelling time, environmental issues, etc.)
- 'Just-in-time learning': a priority topic can be dealt with within a short period of time.

Blended Learning

Blended Learning is the combination of multiple approaches to learning and can be used:

- Specifically in case of the combination of personal instruction (like a course or training) and electronic delivery of learning materials (e-learning can be one way of delivery);
- As a mix of ways to deliver a course of training, only using an e-campus, without the physical presence of a trainer/teacher.

E-learning, be it self-paced or a mode of blended learning, has the following advantages:

- The offered content is for everyone and everywhere the same (harmonised quality);
- Unlike in auditory learning: learners can read and re-read – even using a dictionary – which for non-native English participants could be an advantage if the official CEPOL language of English is used;
- Learners can learn at any time, any place and at any pace;
- It offers conditions and facilities for post course learning reinforcement;
- It is contextual to the younger generation that is used to process information through the Internet.

E-Learning Supporting CEPOL’s Policy

The table below gives an overview of the potential suitability of self-paced e-learning and e-learning as part of blended learning to support CEPOL’s policy on learning.

	Self-Paced	Blended Modality
Pre-course learning (harmonising pre-entry level and creating time for higher levels of learning during the course/seminar)	n/a If a self paced e-learning module is used as a pre-course assignment it becomes blended learning	+
Facilitating English as a second language (re-reading)	+	+
Collaboration, exchanges of good practice	-	+
Creating opportunities for creating sustainable professional networks	-	+
Harmonising content	+	+ / - Part of the content will still be delivered by experts, teachers and trainers
Encouraging post-course learning re-inforcement (including implementation and becoming a lifetime learner)	-	+ / -
Involvement of CEPOL’s network of colleges in the delivery	+ / -	+
Space for individual learning goals	-	+ / -
Encouraging knowledge productivity	-	+
Encouraging cascading learning experiences	+ / - Encouraging others to use the medium	+
Using participants as a source of knowledge	-	+

E-learning Architecture

A general pre-condition is that e-learning is not only an added value to CEPOL's Instructor-led Training or so-called face-to-face training (f2f). E-learning also has to be considered as an integral part of a learning architecture. With this approach e-learning becomes part of a comprehensive system of education as displayed in figure 1.

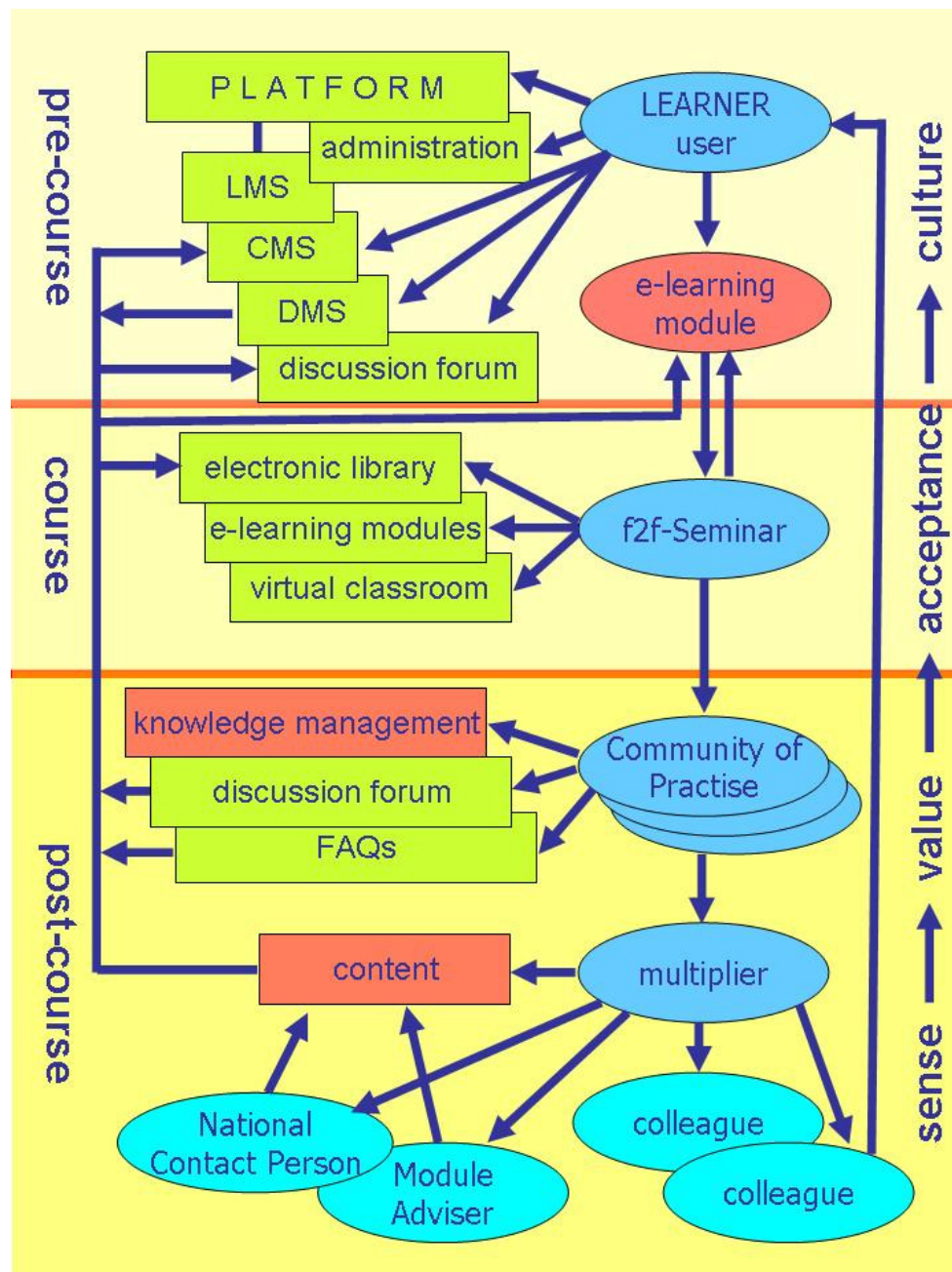


Fig. 1 (E-learning Architecture)

The entire learning system (including Instructor-led Training and e-learning-modules) is based on a so-called blended learning concept and is divided in three parts:

- Pre-course phase
- Course phase
- Post-course phase

Figure 1 gives a short overview of the main components of that system and its basic relations. One part describes the situation of the learner and their various roles within the different phases. A second part tries to visualise how an electronic network can support and complete the whole learning process.

In the centre of this system the participant is placed as part of a CEPOL training-measure. This can be a single seminar, as well as a course containing several modules. For those activities, participants become learners and users (as far as they use CEPOL's e-learning environment). Within these roles each learner has to take part in different activities and is supported by various options of the electronic network.

Pre-course Phase

The first step starts when a learner applies for a seminar and is accepted as a participant. Once accepted, the learner is also authorised to use the electronic network.

If a self-paced learning module is used as a pre-course assignment for a CEPOL course, it should be characterised as blended learning which has the following advantages:

- Harmonising the pre-entry level;
- Creating more time/space for effective classroom learning, which includes group work, networking, the facilitation of teachers and trainers, etc.;
- Getting to know specific professional expressions (in the English language) prior to the course.

Electronic Network

In the electronic network, a learner will have the opportunity to utilise several important areas:

- **Learning Management System (LMS):** A software package that enables the administration of the participants as well as the management within an e-learning-environment to deliver content and e-learning-modules to single learners or to groups of users. LMS can also be a link to a knowledge management system among other things containing earlier acquired experiences from previous

Instructor-led Training and/or conclusions of discussions from the post-course phase and/or FAQs.

- **Content Management System (CMS):** a CMS is a software-system that is used for managing and publishing web-content in an easy way and that enables fast access to files, documents and so on.
- **Document Management System (DMS):** The DMS will allow for uploading and downloading of documents (course material, C.V.s, etc.) and can be restricted to trainers and participants on a specific course, for example. Links can also be made to other key information required for the course;
- **Discussion Forum:** A web application which allows users to post and answer questions, as well as share links to relevant content. Users have the opportunity to get in contact with other participants and/or instructors of a course or seminar. The Discussion Forum also allows instructors to gather expectations of participants to prepare the seminar more precisely.

E-Learning-Modules

One core element of the pre-course phase is the availability of learning and preparatory materials for the participants. E-learning modules can be used instead. If available and part of a curriculum, it is strongly recommended to use these e-learning-modules for reasons of effectiveness. Besides it contributes to gain return of investments (see point 8.2). In a long-term perspective, the aim of CEPOL should be that there is (are) one (or more) e-learning-module(s) accompanying each Instructor-led Training.

These e-learning-modules should be produced by CEPOL itself or according to the requirements and regulations of CEPOL.

The major advantage of using e-learning-modules in this part of a training activity is that within a seminar group there are big differences in approaches, skills and knowledge. Sometimes one participant is a newcomer another is an expert. Each instructor has to consider the gap between the weakest and the strongest participant and this can influence the training in a negative way (the strongest might be unchallenged, the weakest overburdened). By using an e-learning-module before attending the Instructor-led Training, each participant could be at the same level at that point if he attends the seminar. The instructor then has a guarantee that all participants have a minimum of the same knowledge and each participant has at least a minimum of knowledge.

Course Phase

During the course phase, the function of e-learning is to provide support to the participants. This can happen in three different ways:

- E-learning-modules: naturally all e-learning-modules that belong to the pre-course phase can also be used during the course phase;
- Electronic library: the library contains various e-learning-modules which are produced by CEPOL member states and provided for the CEPOL-platform;
- Probably these e-learning-modules will only be available in different designs and concern different topics. But as far as they are interesting for the seminar and the participant, these e-learning-modules can be used as an additional information source. This area can also be used by a learner prior to attending an Instructor-led Training;
- Virtual Classroom: an online environment where instructors and participants can interact using tools such as desktop sharing, document sharing, electronic whiteboards and chat;
In an Instructor-led Training this tool could be used to communicate with experts in other countries for a short lesson (two hours maximum).

Beside the above, there is also the option to use the DMS area like in the pre-course phase as far as necessary.

Post-course Phase

After attending an Instructor-led Training each participant can fulfil two roles:

1. Participants become part of a Community of Practise (CoP), currently for a period of 3 months. In this community they can share knowledge and materials with a national reference. After this period, they change into CEPOL's comprehensive knowledge management system. In this role they can cooperate and use Discussion Forums to discuss various issues of their police work or they can post questions in a FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) area. In this way, knowledge is growing and creates content.
2. Each participant is able to be a multiplier on a national level. Participants have contact with other colleagues. These contacts are primarily in the field in which they are working, but also to colleagues in many other fields of police work. Using these contacts they can communicate the idea of CEPOL and the benefits of attending a CEPOL activity and encourage and motivate other colleagues to take part.

If participants are convinced that a CEPOL activity benefits their daily work and that attending a certain seminar has made sense for them, they are also able to see the added value of CEPOL in general. With this attitude acceptance of CEPOL, CEPOL's activities and at last e-learning can grow steadily. Acceptance is an important prerequisite to build up a new learning culture that is necessary on an international level of education. This also includes developing an e-learning culture. At the end of

this process there is a circular flow of knowledge management and learning on a European level.

In the multiplier role, former participants can also gather information and content that could be important for police officers in other countries. In close contact with persons in their home country, e.g. to the Module Advisers who are responsible for updating CEPOL's Common Curricula, they can contribute content to CEPOL's knowledge management system.

Content generated from both activities – as a member of a CoP and as a multiplier - can be restored to CEPOL's electronic network or can provide a solid basis for updating CEPOL's e-learning-modules.

Advantages and Disadvantages

This list stresses the very important points and also critical success criteria for developing an e-learning-architecture, from the present perspective.

Creating a new learning culture

E-learning can be a very effective tool when dealing with knowledge (facts, procedures) and some skills like problem solving. But it needs changes in attitudes that are very difficult to achieve. Therefore introducing e-learning into the learning environment needs to be done with care. It sometimes meets resistance from trainers when they wrongly perceive that e-learning is taking over their work. Sometimes they are not used to the phenomena of an electronic environment and sometimes – being respected lecturers – they realise that content can be uploaded and therefore their role will shift from lecturer to learning facilitator.

The learner also sometimes needs to overcome perceived barriers. Most important evolution for learners is the shift from e-learning users to e-learners. It is recommended that the usage of e-learning is dealt with in the courses and seminars for trainers and course managers/developers.

But despite the difficulties, a long time perspective is that it will be necessary to create an e-learning culture (based on a new learning culture). An e-learning system as described above is mainly based on the principles of knowledge management. A knowledge management system represents more than only an account of single components. Knowledge management refers to a process of sharing knowledge, expertise, materials and so on. To prepare people (in particular police officers) to share knowledge it is important to build a climate of reliance and to create common values, attitudes and (maybe) also a common history – components that we subsume under the general term culture. Culture cannot be changed from one day to another, it takes time and so the development of an entire e-learning system will grow slowly.

Content-Production

One of the most important decisions is how to produce e-learning content. There are two possible options to get e-learning-modules:

A) Usage of available e-learning-modules of member states

Advantages:

- Content is available and does not cost supplementary money;
- Modules from the member states can always be used as additional source of information and learning.

Disadvantages:

Content does not really fit to the needs of Instructor-led Training (e.g. because often the focus is only on national needs and laws).

B) Production of e-learning-modules by CEPOL or according to the requirements and regulations of CEPOL:

Advantages:

- The same design (visual, layout and style) can be applied to each CEPOL e-learning-module ensuring each user feels familiar with a new e-learning-module if they have worked on another one before;
- The content is close to the needs of CEPOL and the structure of Instructor-led Training.

Disadvantages:

- In principle there are two possible ways: make it or buy it. If content is produced externally, costs are potentially high (e.g.: e-learning content produced by a commercial company costs about €50,000-€70,000 per hour running time of the programme);
- If content is produced by CEPOL itself the entire process has to be organised and financed. This means a budget and human resources or alternative ways of producing e-learning content.

Need of Coordination

To run an entire system causes a higher need of coordination. There are a lot of people and organisations involved (including Committees and Working Groups) which have to cooperate in an efficient way. So the effort for coordination (money, perhaps human resources) will increase.

Increasing Quality

With the obligation to complete an e-learning-module before attending an Instructor-led Training, all training activities become serious events – not only for the personal enjoyment. It includes a certain commitment to being part of a growing CEPOL network and according to this, also personal responsibility in the role of participant.

If there is a comprehensive approach to CEPOL activities as outlined in this paper, there are different ways to deal with knowledge, different ways of learning and the entire system should increase the competencies of participants. At the end accompanying participants with this e-learning system should also enhance the quality of CEPOL's training activities.

Notes

When in this document the term

- instructors is used it includes teachers and trainers,
- training is used it includes education.