



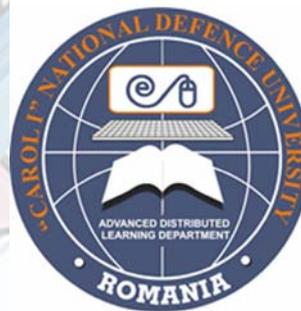
DEVELOPING THE ADVANCED DISTRIBUTED LEARNING CAPABILITIES IN "CAROL I" NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY

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Abstract: Education and training area has been very much transformed due to the large use of the technology. More and more military institutions and universities use different aspects of technology for educational purposes. According with this trend "Carol I" National Defense University started few years ago to improve its capabilities in delivering the education and training services using the power of communication and information system. The aim of this paper is to underline a few capabilities of the integrated Advanced Distributed Learning system developed in our university.

Keywords: E-Learning; military training; ADL system; online courses.

Advanced Distributed Learning Department (ADL Ro) was set up on 1st October 2005 as a functional structure of education under the aegis of the "Carol I" National Defense University". The specific features of the department's activity were given by its fundamental goal of generating a student centred educational network. Such aim would be achieved through the development of didactic content and through its spread with the aid of specific instruments, all these being done in the spirit of a modern education based on the usage of information and communication technologies.



Starting practically from scratch, year by year, step by step, learning from others' experience, but also through impressive effort and own research, the department succeeded, in a relatively short period of time, in defining its identity and to stand out at both, national and international levels.

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It was not easy, but with a lot of work, involvement, selflessness and team spirit, in time, the results started to come into view.

At present, the department's activity is acknowledged as one of the best, due to its international partnerships with civil and military institutions that have similar concerns, due to its attendances at numerous conferences and of course, because of its outcomes in the e-Learning area as well as in other related domains.

Taking in account that the department was founded one year after Romania's adherence to NATO, its orientation to the alliance's system of education and training came naturally. This represented the reason why, one its courageous objective, proposed and accomplished, was to be integrate in the NATO's ADL system. Therefore, "Introduction to NATO", the first online course in the Romanian army, was released in May 2006, as a result of collaboration with the NATO Defence College from Rome. Up to the present, 1180 students have graduated the course in 21 series having received certificates that are also recognised by the NATO College.

Similarly, other courses were launched as a result of some memoranda with Euro-Atlantic institutions. For example, the "Conflict Management and Negotiation Course" is provided as a result of the cooperation with the Inter American Defence College. Also, "Law of Armed Conflict Course" was launched with the support of International Relation and Security Network and due to the fact that the Department is member of the Partnership for Peace Consortium ADL Working Group.

With regard to international activities, it is important to be mentioned the involvement in the NATO's Working Group designated to deal with individual training and educational development, in which, the first ADL director, professor PhD, Ion ROCEANU held the position of vice president for the ADL subgroup.

In addition, the department's staff took part in other international events related to E-Learning. In all these occasions, the department personnel presented its experience resulted in the online course management, tutoring support, in the creation of standardised digital content and the lessons learnt in area of E-Learning.

The contributions to the flourishing of ADL systems in NATO, determined





the most important institution in the domain of research, development and standardisation in e-Learning from USA, to invite the Romanian team to become their partner and, therefore, to participate actively in achieving the mutual objective of promoting quality as well as collaboration in this area. So, on 30th January 2009, was signed the memorandum between the "Carol I" National Defence University and the ADL Co-Laboratory programme within the framework of the USA Minister of Defence. Through this memorandum, the ADL Department performances in the area of e-Learning were recognised and it was awarded with the position of member in the ADL Excellence Partnership Network. It is important to underline here, that on 2009 there were only 7 members in the partnership outside the USA. From Europe, only Great Britain and Norway succeeded such an acknowledgement, which pictured Romanian's achievement even more significantly.

The experience gained after the ADL system implementation in the "Carol I" National Defence University", made the university's representative be chosen as a member in the mobile NATO team charged with the implementation of the ADL system in other countries such as Poland and Bulgaria. For this reason, today, the Department's logo can be found on the portals of other universities and military institutions for which Romania has offered consultancy.

Establishing a membership with the national and international scientific community represented a priority. In an attempt to reach it, starting with 2004, the international conference: "E-Learning and Software for Education" has been organised. Up to the present, this event has been growing and it very much appreciated. At this scientific event, ideas have been outspoken by the most important personalities in the E-Learning domain coming both from military environments and civil ones. Just as an example, in the 2013 edition, more than 280 participants have taken part representing 25 different countries. The high scientific level of this conference has made possible the articles' indexation in 4 international data bases which offer a remarkable external visibility. In 2014, at the 10th edition of the conference, there have already been received 470 article themes from more than 45 countries.

Going further with the achievements, it is important to emphasise the participation in national and international scientific projects as either coordinator, or partner. One of these projects was "Optimised Educational Process in the Competences of the Knowledge Society Vision" that was set up by the Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation through the Management Unit Externally



Financed Projects in partnership with SIVECO Romania, as well as with the "Carol I" National Defence University. This project won the golden medal in the "Project Excellence in Medium-Sized Projects" category. It was for the first time in the competition history that this award had been given to an educational project. The project goal was to make the learning activity more accessible with the aid of interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary educational processes orientated towards the development of skills required in the modern society. Moreover, it also followed the modernisation of the educational system through the popularisation of information and communication technologies including the multi-touch ones. The "Carol I" National Defence University was one of the initiators of the project and in quality of partner of Advanced Distributed Learning Initiative, the main role in the project was to ensure compliance with international standards, particularly SCORM 2004 for the digitization of the curricular content and of the didactic materials. The award obtained embodies an important acknowledgement of the techno-scientific level of both The "Carol I" National Defence University and the Ministry of National Defence.

The Department is currently involved in another major project, Games and



Learning Alliance, which aims to create a network of excellence in the area of serious games at European level. We should underline that Romania is the only participant among the other 31 that come from the Eastern Europe.

The department has succeeded in creating an integrated system based on a



portal connected to 3 different educational platforms, each of them having a specific purpose. This has been possible through the development of a Data Centre endowed with the entire necessary infrastructure needed to support such a system as well as an independent INTERNET network.

This integrated system provides for interested persons various educational services. Besides online specialization courses where students are awarded with certificates, there are also online courses with unrestricted access, for which certificates are not given. Moreover, the department provides technical support for master degree and Ph.D. programmes as well as for courses held by other structures of the university. For the training of the military personnel that are about to enrol in various missions, the departments come up with a series of online courses designed to familiarise with the mission characteristics and specificities (ISAF Operation, Atlanta Operation, European Union Military Staff).

On the European Security and Defence College (ESDC) request, ADL Ro provides the support for their system called Internet Distance Learning (IDL). This support involves the implementation of a dedicated educational platform (ILIAS), its personalization, updates, security and in the same time provides the necessary training for the courses administrators and tutors. For European Security and Defence College, ADL Ro ensures the digitisation of the traditional content in a standardised one. It is necessary to mention here the sequencing, an aspect we have not initially used, but one which we have developed as soon as the ESDC has asked for it. The collaboration with ESDC enriches the international image of the "Carol I", National Defence University and gives it the opportunity of using the College's courses. It is rewording to find on their platform phrases such as: "Powered by Romanian ADL Department" or "Copyright ©2014 Advanced Distributed Learning Department. SCORM 2004 Conformed by Romanian ADL Team". The collaboration with this college enhanced the ADL Ro with the most requested and updated course: the European Security and Defence Policy which contains several modules, each of them developed by a European institution or a leading figure in the European political space.

Another department's achievement is the enlargement of the Advanced Distributed Learning system to other educational institutions owed by the Romanian Army. This idea started from the fact that these institutions have requested support to implement their own ADL system in their structure. Actually, there has been implemented the online platform called "Ro Army" where specific



domains are designed to serve military institutions only. For the Human Resources Management Department (DMRU), a special domain has been developed on the same platform been emphasised the need to use electronic resources as well as online communication technologies for projecting and organising a linguistic course in order to make it accessible in a distant learning system. We are talking about a programme conceived with the purpose of exercising the skills acquired during classic lectures. It addresses especially those who have graduated foreign languages courses and want to keep their abilities in good conditions or even perfect them through individual study under the guidance of a teacher. At the moment, the first 4 modules has been designed and started to be used in the framework of Foreign Languages Educational Centres. The 5th module should be finalised by the middle of 2014.

During 2013, another project that uses the "Ro Army" platform has been elaborated by DMRU with the ADL Ro support. This new programme is used as an initial testing for those who are interested in learning English. It is in charge with the distribution of the military stuff in proper courses on the basis of their level of knowledge (familiarising, pre-intermediate, intermediate, advanced, etc.). Therefore, in the period June-July 2013, more than 1100 people were tested online with the aid of "Ro Army" platform at all 4 abilities: reading, listening, writing, and speaking.

Technology is moving fast and in order to keep up with it, it is compulsory that the system should adapt rapidly. The ADL system is not perfect and it does not intend to replace the traditional educational systems, but it brings advantages regarding costs, the opportunity of delivering the content in real time where needed and the possibility of a larger number of students without affecting the current tasks of the provenance structures, ensuring as well the accomplishment of the criteria imposed by the NATO. Because of all these qualities of interoperability, durability, efficiency, of the possibility of saving time and money, it might supply for all the educational modules that nowadays develop in a centralised way.

As a conclusion, it could be said that, with all its gained experience, the "Carol I" National Defence University might be a key element in the development of the modern educational system of the Romanian Army, through the implementation on a viable and functional ADL system.



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