During our daily routine everybody experiences failure and success. With proper analysis we can identify the reason and derive lessons in order to avoid future repetition of these mistakes and allow others to benefit from previous experiences. The same is true for military operations, exercises and trials.

NATO ordered by the “Bi-Strategic Command Directive 80–6” all headquarters and organizations of the Allied Command Transformation (ACT) and Allied Command Operations (ACO) to implement a Lessons Learned and Best Practice process.

Although COE CSW is not part of the NATO command structure, COE CSW decided to implement a Lessons Learned and Best Practice process.

In order to perform an effective Lessons Learned and Best Practice process a project team within the Analysis and Implementation Branch was established. That team was tasked to develop a directive to provide a clear guideline for the process to the staff of COE CSW.

Beside the process itself there are two other major areas.

The structure of the Lessons Learned process is divided into an administrative and managerial part. The administration takes care of the database, the processing of new observations and the organization of the internal Lessons Learned Working Group. The managerial part discusses new observations and decides about remedial actions.

To achieve the aim of the Lessons Learned Process good working and demand oriented tools are necessary. COE CSW implemented a database which can be handled by anyone with in the COE CSW. The database is capable to record new observation as well as to work as a research tool.

To ensure the consistency of the process and to encourage the staff members periodical training and briefings about the Lessons Learned is provided to the staff.

Observations made during the exercises Northern Coast and DANEX helped to conduct “Surface to Surface Missile”, “High Speed Boat Operation”, “Force Protection” and “Detection-Defense Against Divers in Anchorage” trials on a very sophisticated level and to improve in complexity every year. Another example for the beneficial factors of the Lessons Learned process was the smooth and efficient planning of Northern Coast Trials taking place in Danish Waters/Baltic Sea and Maritime Security Conference, taking place in Halifax, Canada.

The next project milestone will be the capability to share Lessons Learned with other COEs respectively NATO organizations. Due to that commitment COE CSW participates regularly in the Lessons Learned conference organized by the JALLC (Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre).

Further on COE CSW has the vision to open its Lessons Learned database to the maritime community of interest to share all knowledge in order to benefit from each other. Even the industry may possibly use the database in future to participate in the process. By pooling of common interests of industry and military entities COE CSW can acquire new projects in order to provide its unique knowledge about “Confined and Shallow Waters” to the customer.

The key to success in all organizations is the will to cooperate with others who have already the necessary information. Especially in the military experience and information do make the difference.

A learning organization for confined and shallow waters’ community of interest!