

Autumn meeting of the Gaming Initiative Europe

Brno, Czech Republic, October 24-27, 2024

Europe needs to be stronger and safer, was the main theme and message of the autumn meeting of the Gaming Initiative Europe (GIE). The GIE meeting was successful and confirmed its importance as an important platform for cooperation and exchange of views between Member States. A new three-member GIE Presidency for the period 2024 to 2026 has been confirmed. Slovakia will host the next GIE meeting in the spring, and Slovenia in autumn 2025.

The GIE brings together national associations of reserve officers from 13 European countries and has since 2004 focused mainly on issues related to European security policy and the armed forces. The regular autumn meeting of the GIE, which took place from 24th to 27th of October 2024 in Brno, Czech Republic, was attended by representatives of 11 Member States: Albania, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Moldova, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Germany and Switzerland (North Macedonia and Poland were absent).

Opening of the meeting

On behalf of the organizers, the participants of the meeting were addressed by Prof. Pavel Bílek, President of the Atlantic Council of the Czech Republic, and Colonel Miroslav Tlamicha, Czech National Representative in the GIE and Co-President of the GIE, Cdr. Giuseppe Filippo Imbalzano (Italy). The host of the autumn meeting of the GIE was the University of Defence in Brno. The Vice-Rector of the University, Petr Hlavizna, informed the participants about the rich history of this military higher education institution of the Czech Armed Forces, which dates to 1899, when it operated as the Czech Institute of Technology. The Defense University was established in 2004 and serves as a center for education, learning, research, and training of military professionals. The participants of the conference took the special opportunity to participate in the swearing-in ceremony of the new students at the university, which took place on the first day of the meeting, October 25th in the morning.



Security in Europe – the main topic of the meeting

Prominent Czech lecturers from academia and the armed forces spoke on the main topic, and national representatives also presented their views. Presentation by Dr Zdeněk Petraš entitled ***European Defence or Defence of Europe?*** has raised several questions related to the possibilities of creating a common European army, as well as the dependence of European defense on US capabilities and leadership. Noting that the current consultation and cooperation between NATO and EU is insufficient and that there is too much rhetoric and not enough action, the lecturer believed that the Europeanism of European defense is necessary. Prof. Pavel Bilek gave an interesting lecture on the constitutional state and Euro-Atlantic security. He stressed the need for NATO to remain strong and structured in the coming years to fulfil its role. He also stressed that concerns about human rights and governance standards prevail in Europe and concluded that Europe needs to be stronger. In their presentations, national representatives specifically addressed national security trends and challenges, the Russian threat to Europe, the need to rapidly modernize the armed forces, the need to protect critical infrastructure and how to respond quickly enough with personnel and equipment.



Current Issues

On the second working day of the meeting, internal GIE issues were discussed – the adoption of the minutes from the previous meeting, the maintenance of the GIE website, the adoption of changes to the GIE logo and the confirmation of the announcement of hosting the next GIE meetings. The GIE's spring meeting will be held in Slovakia in the first half of May 2025, likely on the topic of resilience, which will be confirmed after coordination with their Ministry of Defense. The autumn meeting of GIE 2025 will be held in Slovenia. In 2026, Italy will host the Spring Meeting and Moldova will host the Autumn Meeting. Albania has announced the hosting of the GIE Spring Meeting in 2027.

New GIE Presidency

At the end of the meeting, the new President of the GIE, Mr. Sebastian Soellner (Germany), was confirmed for the period 2024 to 2026, and Mrs. Nevenka Kovač (Croatia) as the new Vice-President of the three-member Presidency of the GIE. The outgoing President of the GIE, Philipp Leo (Switzerland), is the third member of the Presidency according to the Constitution of GIE).

Cultural program

The Czech organizers paid a lot of attention to this part of the program. On October 25th a tour of the site, where the Battle of Austerlitz took place, was organized. Participants had the opportunity to learn more about the significance of the battle, the circumstances and the context of the conflict, in which the French general Napoleon Bonaparte reached the peak of his career on December 2nd, 1805. The Battle of Austerlitz (also known as the Battle of the Three Emperors) was one of Napoleon's largest and most famous battles, ensuring Napoleon's supremacy in Europe. On this occasion, the participants paid tribute to the soldiers who fell in battle.



After the end of the meeting on October 26th, a tour of the sights was carried out, namely bunker 10-Z, the most mysterious underground shelter in Brno from the communist era, built under the Špilberk Castle, which originally served as a shelter for air attacks in World War II, but was restored in 1959 as an atomic shelter and then a UNESCO Czech heritage. Špilberk Castle was built in the 13th century during the reign of the Přemysl dynasty to protect the Czech lands and the city of Brno.



Conclusion

The autumn GIE meeting 2024 in Brno proved that this initiative is relevant, as it represents an important platform for the exchange of views between Member States, and that it attracts the attention of many countries (Albania informed members that Kosovo and Bulgaria are interested in GIE membership). The topicality of the discussions, the quality of the lecturers and the dynamic discussion of the participants marked this year's autumn meeting of the GIE.

Text: Nevenka Kovač (Croatia) and Martin Jugovec (Slovenia)

Photos: meeting participants GI II-2024