



## Evolution of the Royal Higher Institute for Defence through Belgian history

In 1870, at the instigation of King Leopold II, the *École de Guerre* was founded and located in the premises of the *Abbaye de la Cambre* in Brussels. Its mission was mainly to educate and train to general staff work Belgian officers having already served several years in their units. In 1908-1909, the *École de Guerre* moved to the newly built complex of the *École militaire* near the *Parc du Cinquantenaire* in the building located along the *Avenue de Cortenbergh*.

After the First World War in 1919, the *École de Guerre* became by royal decree an autonomous training establishment and was placed under the direct authority of the Minister of War (the title would later become "Minister of National Defence"). The education of staff officers, that initially lasted around 3 years, was extended with traineeships in different types of staffs to a total duration of 6 to 7 years and leads to the title of "*breveté d'état-major* (BEM)". During the 30ies, more courses were added to the initial one in order to train different types and levels of active-duty as well as reserve officers. A number of foreign officers could also follow some courses.

After the Second World War, the different courses were reorganised into a more structured curriculum spread over different periods of the Belgian officers' careers in order to prepare them to serve in different levels of staffs from brigade to army corps.

In 1978, the *École de Guerre* was renamed "**Royal Higher Institute for Defence**" (RHID) and reorganised into a threefold structure (an administrative pillar, an education pillar and a Centre for Defence Studies) that obtained renown at national and international level. Henceforth, the following main courses were proposed: a course on staff techniques, a course for senior officer candidates, a higher staff course, a higher course for military administrators (from 1997 onwards) and, since 2005, the High Studies for Security and Defence. Other more specialised courses and seminars were also added.

In 1991, being cramped in its premises along the *Avenue de Cortenbergh*, the RHID moved into the St Anna barracks in Laeken.

In 2006, it was decided to merge most of the education and training for officers into the Royal Military Academy by creating the Defence College as a department for continuing education for officers within this structure. Pending completion of renovation works of the Royal Military Academy, part of the RHID was located in the Panquin quarters at Tervuren, from where they could move back in 2007 to the *Avenue de la Renaissance*, from then on called "*Campus Renaissance*".

At the same time, the RHID was completely reformed and obtained by royal decree new missions, as a "think tank" for security and defence and as a "smart hub" for scientific and technological research in the security and defence domain. The RHID is currently placed directly under the authority of the Minister of Defence.

Today, the RHID assumes two interlinked roles in support of the Ministry of Defence and of the Nation. First, in its role as a "think tank" for security and defence, it realises the objectives of deepening and disseminating knowledge by organising conferences, colloquia and seminars as well as publishing papers by researchers. The High Studies for Security and Defence, in the form of a course composed of seminars and visits, provides training in these fields for high-level staff, both from Defence and the civil sector, and promotes reflexion, debate and networking between participants. Through national and international partnerships, the RHID has developed an extensive network to exchange ideas and experiences. In its role as a "smart hub" for scientific and technological research, it is responsible to manage and facilitate the scientific and technological research programme of the Ministry of Defence, including the security and defence studies. More than ever, the RHID looks forward to foster growth of the Belgian scientific and technological research in the defence and security domain, to restore and reinforce the links between government, academia and industry in this perspective, and to promote and facilitate Belgium's and Belgian Defence participation in national and international research programmes.