



**BILC POLICY RECOMMENDATION
on the
Longevity of STANAG 6001 Language Certificates**

Background: Language skills are known to diminish over time if not used and maintained. The rate at which language skills deteriorate varies strongly from one person to another, and from one language to another. Research findings suggest that, in general:

- the more remote the foreign language is from the individual's native language, the faster the language competence deteriorates
- the productive skills (speaking and writing) tend to deteriorate faster than the receptive skills (listening and reading)
- individuals who acquired the language at a very early age lose their language skills faster than those who learned the language at an advanced age
- the higher the level of language proficiency attained, the slower the loss of language competence
- the more time was spent on learning the foreign language, the slower the loss of language competence
- relearning lost language skills takes considerably less time than acquiring language skills for the first time

The BILC community agreed that due to all these variables it is very hard to determine an appropriate maximum period that a STANAG 6001 test score can be considered valid and meaningful. In fact, a STANAG 6001 language certificate shows no more than that on a particular date a candidate demonstrated language skills at a specified proficiency level.

Recommendation: Individual users of the certificates (such as employers, government bodies and educational institutions) should choose themselves how long to accept results for. Some users may only accept STANAG 6001 certificates taken within the last 2 or 3 years – for instance in very high-stakes situations – while others may take into account evidence that the candidate has taken action to maintain or improve his or her language competence since taking the STANAG 6001 test.

BILC recommends that employers/educational institutions ask for some further proof of an individual's language proficiency level if the STANAG 6001 test was taken more than 3 years previously. Generally, it is not advisable to accept STANAG 6001 language certificates that are older than 5 years.

Users of language certificates should bear in mind that for certain positions – given that in military environments insufficient language skills may present serious operational risks – NATO recognizes only STANAG 6001 certificates which are not older than 3 years.