

Annex 1: Configurations of the ESDC

European Security and
Defence College

Annual Report 2025



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The European Doctoral School on CSDP

Chair: Foteini Asderaki

Configuration Coordinator: Maria Penedos

In 2025, the European Doctoral School on CSDP continued to strengthen its role as a central platform for doctoral education and research on CSDP within the broader framework of the CFSP. Through its structured supplementary programme, the Doctoral School supported advanced doctoral research while fostering closer links between academia, policy, and practice in the field of European peace, security, and defence.

Participating Institutions

In 2025, the Doctoral School network continued to expand and consolidate, reaching 80 participating institutions, primarily from Member States. EU bodies, including the European Defence Agency, the European Union Institute for Security Studies, and the EU Satellite Centre, remained actively involved in the Doctoral School's activities.

The steady growth of the network reflects the increasing visibility and academic credibility of the Doctoral School as a reference framework for doctoral research on CSDP.

Recent Achievements

The year 2025 was marked by substantial academic and organisational progress. During the year, two competitive selection processes were conducted (in March and December 2025), resulting in the admission of 25 new PhD fellows. This significantly strengthened the Doctoral School's academic community and further consolidated its role as a leading platform for doctoral research on CSDP.

During the same period, ten PhD fellows successfully graduated, highlighting the

programme's maturity and its capacity to support doctoral candidates through to completion.

From a governance perspective, the Doctoral School ensured regular academic oversight through the work of the Doctoral School Working Group and the Executive Academic Board. Six Working Group meetings were held in 2025, including:

- 17-18 February (Brussels);
- 31 March – Extraordinary (Piraeus);
- 30 June (Thessaloniki);
- 9 September (Brussels);
- 25-26 November (Brussels); and
- 16-17 December - Extraordinary (online).

In addition, three thematic Task Forces continued their work in the areas of academic governance and legal engagement, research publications and visibility, and EU security and defence funding advisory support.

Training Activities

In 2025, the Doctoral School delivered the following academic and training activities:

- Research Methodology Course, University of Piraeus, Greece (April);
- Annual Conference, Ludovika University of Public Service, Budapest, Hungary (May);
- Doctoral School Summer University, Supreme Joint War College, Thessaloniki, Greece (June-July).
- Advanced Research into Hybrid Threats, "Mihai Viteazul" National Intelligence Academy of Romania, Brussels (October).

These activities brought together doctoral

fellows, academics, and practitioners, providing advanced methodological training, thematic expertise, and opportunities for academic exchange and networking.

Impact

Throughout 2025, the Doctoral School continued to foster a strong interdisciplinary and transnational research environment, bringing together doctoral candidates, senior academics, and professionals from across Europe. The programme contributed to enhanced cooperation among EU Member States and supported the development of a shared European strategic culture in security and defence.

Publications

In 2025, the Doctoral School continued to support academic dissemination through contributions to ESDC publications, including ongoing work linked to ESDC University Books. Publication activity remained a strategic priority, with a growing focus on research quality, visibility, and policy relevance.

Priorities for the Next Academic Year

Building on the progress achieved in 2025, the Doctoral School identified a number of priorities for the following academic cycle. These include strengthening post-doctoral engagement, expanding learning and networking opportunities, and enhancing



80 participating institutions



60 active fellows



10 graduates in 2025

Graduates and active fellows increasingly contribute to policy development, analysis, and implementation within EU institutions, national administrations, and research organisations. The Doctoral School thus reinforces the EU's capacity to address complex security challenges while enhancing the professional prospects of its doctoral fellows.

physical and virtual mobility through Erasmus+.

Further emphasis will be placed on increasing research impact through high-quality publications, strengthening links with industry and think tanks, and encouraging joint participation in EU-funded projects. Visibility will be enhanced through participation in conferences and dedicated events involving university leaders and senior EU officials.

European Initiative for the Exchange of Young Officers, inspired by ERASMUS

Chair: Harald Gell

Configuration Coordinator: Christoforos Christoforou

EMILYO, the European Initiative for the Exchange of Military Young Officers, inspired by the Erasmus programme, promotes exchanges of cadets, midshipmen, students, military officers, teachers and instructors from basic officer education institutions around the EU. Moreover, under the auspices of EMILYO, these education institutions have developed new courses and academic semesters, with the number of common modules now standing at 58, or 153 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) credits. EMILYO is having a long-term sustained positive impact on European peace, security and defence: exchanges of young officers during their initial training and the harmonisation of military education are crucial for long-term interoperability and a common European peace, security and defence culture.

Participating institutions

Every EU Member State, which offers basic officer education, is a member of EMILYO. In total, 70 military institutions, located in 25 Member States plus Norway, are members. In the 2024-2025 academic year, 48 of these institutions, from 21 Member States plus Norway, took part in EMILYO-led activities.

Achievements

The EMILYO Implementation Group met four times during the 2024-2025 academic year. Numerous other exchanges, events and meetings were also organised throughout the EU. Indeed, this academic year saw the highest number of EMILYO

exchanges and the highest number of EMILYO organised training days ever. Notable events included the European Union Military Academies Commandants' Seminars and the European Union Air Force Academies Commandants' Conference, which took place in Warsaw and Dęblin in 2025 under the auspices of the Polish Military University of Technology and the Polish Air Force University.

The event was organised to coincide with the Polish Presidency of the EU. In addition, the International Military Academic Forum was held in Constanța in 2025 under the auspices of the Naval Academy 'Mircea cel Batran' in Romania. In total, 4,962 cadets, midshipmen and students participated in Military Erasmus activities, up from 4,652 in the previous academic year with a training growth of 7%. 330 events were held under the programme, and 160,901 days of training were organised. These figures are consistently impressive.

Priorities for the next academic year

EMILYO will seek to ensure that all Basic Officer Education Institutions of all Member States are involved in the European Initiative for the Exchange of Military Young Officers inspired by Erasmus.

EMILYO will review and update the existing common modules according to the SQF-MILOF guidelines and priorities, and create new modules based on the most current requirements. EMILYO will seek to implement the

European Common Technical Semester on Defence and Security and launch new projects for international semesters in the fields of air defence, logistics and the navy.

EMILYO will encourage all EU institutions to organise EMILYO activities and/or to send cadets/midshipmen/students. EMILYO will seek to ensure all EU Member States opt-in the EMILYO Framework Agreement for facilitating exchanges of military students and lecturers.

EMILYO IMPLEMENTATION GROUP MEETINGS:

9-11 September 2024 (63rd), Brussels
18-21 November 2024 (64th), Shumen
24-26 February 2025 (65th), Larnaca
2-4 June 2025 (66th), Constanța



25 Member States



70 Network Members and 1 Associate Network Partner



4 962 Cadets trained

77% Male

23% Female



160 901
Training Days



7% Cadets trained
growth



66th EMILYO Implementation Group Meeting and the International Military Academic Forum 2025, held at the 'Mircea cel Bătrân' Naval Academy in Constanța 2-6, June 2025.

Climate Change, Environment, Security and Defence Configuration (CCESD)

Chair: Monika Psenner

Configuration Coordinator: Esther Breffka

In its second year following inception, the Climate Change, Environment, Security and Defence (CCESD) configuration has consolidated its role as the dedicated training platform for advancing the integration of climate and environmental considerations into EU security and defence training. In line with its mandate derived predominantly from the Joint Communication on the Climate-Security Nexus (2023), the EU Policy on CSDP Training (June 2024), the Niinistö Report (November 2024), the strategic orientations set out in the White Paper on European Defence (March 2025), and the EU Preparedness Strategy (March 2025), the CCESD configuration fostered cross-sectoral cooperation and promoted a shared understanding of climate- and environment-related security risks in support of the EU's broader objective of reinforcing strategic foresight, interoperability and operational effectiveness in an increasingly complex and risk-prone security environment.

During the reporting period, the CCESD configuration made significant progress in strengthening its working arrangements and expanding the CCESD network. A clear governance framework was established, supported by an active chairpersonship, a reinforced ESDC coordination function and a vice-chair role. Membership continued to grow steadily, with additional training institutions and stakeholders from within and beyond the EU joining the configuration. Since the CCESD's kick-off meeting in February 2024, 13 training institutions joined the configuration as CCESD members and 10 representatives

from the EU, EU MS, and/or international organisations as observers. As of February 2026, the configuration has 21 CCESD members and 19 observers. This expansion reflects the increasing demand for expertise on the nexus between climate change, environment, security, and defence, as well as the recognition of the configuration's added value in translating strategic guidance into target-group-oriented training approaches.

The configuration's work was supported by dedicated task groups covering four key thematic areas: 1) environmental management; 2) environmental crime; 3) the climate-energy-defence nexus; and 4) the climate-peace-security nexus. These task groups provide a flexible and expert-driven mechanism to address priority capability gaps identified at EU level and to develop the skills required for EU and CSDP personnel to respond to current and future challenges, including:

- C- Combating environmental crime in support of the EU's Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crisis (January 2018);
- Advancing CSDP missions and operations' environmental management, as foreseen in the EU Strategic Compass (2022) and Civilian Compact (2023);
- Mainstreaming the climate, peace, and security nexus in the EU and EU Member States' external action (Council Conclusions on Green Diplomacy, 2024);

- Creating a strategic awareness of how climate change exposes gaps in military capabilities, offers opportunities to gain strategic advantage, and opens up new operational environment, and support climate adaptation, including energy security, for operational readiness (Climate Change and Defence Roadmap, 2020)

Regular configuration and task group meetings - primarily held online - ensured continuous exchange and alignment of activities. A dedicated CCESD workspace on the ESDC HIVE platform facilitated information-sharing, collaboration and transparency among members.

Engagement with external partners was intensified, including EU institutions (notably DG INTPA, DG ECHO, JRC, DG CLIMA and DG ENV), agencies such as the European Defence Agency (particularly within the Consultation Forum for Sustainable Energy and the Incubation Forum for Circular Economy in European Defence - IF CEED), EUISS, and EU Member States-based organisations such as the European Centre of Excellence for Civilian Crisis Management. Strategic partnerships were strengthened with NATO and the United Nations (notably UNITAR). A milestone in this regard was the signing of a Cooperation Agreement between the NATO-accredited Climate Change and Security Centre of Excellence (CCASCOE) and the ESDC. Through these interactions, the CCESD configuration enhanced coordination, policy coherence and resource efficiency, avoiding duplication while reinforcing the EU's commitment to a comprehensive and cooperative approach to climate security and resilience, as emphasised in the Niinistö Report.

Reflecting the EU's growing emphasis on horizontal crisis management and cross-sectoral preparedness, the configuration increasingly acted as a convenor, connecting EU-led and Member States' initiatives aimed at strengthening long-term resilience. Bridging policy, practice and research communities and mapping potential linkages have become central to its approach. Training activities conducted jointly with diverse partners ensured alignment and promoted a



Climate change and disaster risk management course for the State Emergency Service of Ukraine, Rzeszow, Poland

common understanding of climate-related security risks.

The configuration also contributed to the "partnering" pillar of the EU's Strategic Compass and the implementation of the Joint Communication on the Climate-Security Nexus by supporting EU-level dialogue and strategic reflection. Thanks to the outstanding work, dedication and initiative of the configuration's ESDC coordination desk, it provided substantive input to EU-NATO Structured Dialogues on Climate Security

and Energy Security, supported the development of Security and Defence Partnerships with like-minded partners such as the United Kingdom, and engaged with the EU Climate Defence Network. Expertise and lessons identified were shared at key events, including the Annual Seminar of CSDP Environmental Advisors and Focal Points, the Climate-Energy-Defence High-Level Event under the Danish Council Presidency, the Berlin Climate Security Conference, and UNITAR's 3UIRC Conference. Through these engagements, the configuration acted as a practical diplomatic instrument, strengthening international cooperation and contributing to the development of communities of practice.

Substantial progress was achieved in training delivery, curriculum development and quality assurance, directly supporting the objectives of the EU Policy on CSDP Training.

Existing residential and hybrid courses on climate change and security and disaster risk management were delivered by different CCESD-members in diverse contexts, using more learner-centric and practice-oriented methodologies. Tailored, on-demand training - such as on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management for the State Emergency Service of Ukraine - demonstrated flexibility, adaptability and responsiveness to emerging needs.

At the same time, a broad portfolio of new and updated training products advanced significantly. Curricula on environmental management for CSDP missions and operations, hydrodiplomacy, energy security and preparedness training for environmental advisors were initiated or brought to pilot-ready stage. The development and piloting of preparedness training for environmental advisors contributes to ensuring a qualified pool of

experts available for deployment to CSDP missions and operations. The development of an environmental crime online module and the revision and adaptation of the energy security training further strengthen the EU's capacity to embed resilience, sustainability and operational readiness across the CSDP and wider CFSP framework.

Guidance materials were drafted to mainstream climate and environmental considerations across existing ESDC training activities, promoting horizontal integration in line with EU strategic documents. Modules on evidence-based analysis and foresight were integrated in cooperation with ESA, SATCEN and JRC, enhancing analytical capabilities. Dedicated e-learning modules, including on environmental crime, continued to be developed to improve accessibility, scalability and flexibility.

Innovation in training approaches remained a priority. The adoption of the Climate Defence Fresco, in close cooperation with the French Ministry of the Armed Forces, including a Training of Trainers format, addressed identified gaps within the EU climate and defence community. By enabling interactive and applied exploration of climate and environmental risks, this initiative supports Member States' efforts to prepare their armed forces for climate change and aligns with the White Paper's emphasis on capability development and readiness.

Overall, the CCESD configuration's activities in 2025 demonstrate steady progress towards a coherent, comprehensive and forward-looking EU training offer on climate, environment, security and defence.

SSR.DDR

Chair: Kurt Meissner

Configuration Coordinator: Fernando Angelo

The ESDC Executive Academic Board in support of EU SSR and DDR Training is a project-focused configuration of the Executive Academic Board (EAB) of the ESDC. It was established in 2010 to enhance SSR expertise through a training mechanism within the EU. In 2023 it was extended to include the DDR thematic in order to optimise the coordination and coherence of both SSR and DDR training for the EU and its Member States. The EAB SSR.DDR Board is Co-Chaired by Kurt Meissner (AUT MoD) and Magnus Jacobson Silverryd (SWE Folke Bernadotte Academy). Both Co-Chairs are appointed till June 2026.

The mission is to support the optimization of the coordination, coherence and quality of EU SSR and DDR education and training provided by Network members of the SSR/DDR board and Associated Network partners.

The SSR and DDR Board also serves as a forum for all engaged and interested stakeholders to share best practices and experiences in the area of SSR and DDR training. The SSR and DDR Board ensures that relevant SSR and DDR course curricula are reviewed and revised in line with the ESDC guidelines.

In accordance with the annual work plan the Co-Chairs are responsible, in coordination with the ESDC secretariat, organising three hybrid meetings of the configuration to take place in Brussels/online. The meetings are open to Network members of the SSR/DDR board, Associate Network Partners and on invitation representatives of the EEAS and other Subject Matter Experts.

Furthermore, the EAB SSR.DDR is designated Civilian Coordinator for SSR Training (CCT SSR) and Military Discipline Leader for military support to SSR and DDR (Mil DL SSR & DDR).

Network members of the SSR/DDR board are the training institutions from EU Member States involved in SSR and DDR training.

Current Network members are

- Swedish Folke Bernadotte Academy FBA (CIV)
- Italian Post Conflict Operations Study Centre Torino PCOSC (MIL)
- Romanian National College of Home Affairs – CNAI (POL)
- Austrian Centre for International Stabilisation Measures, Verification and Arms Control (MIL)

Associated Network partners

- Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF)
- Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies – BICC
- Georgian Defence Institution Building School Tbilisi (SSR) supported by PCOSC Torino
- POL Stefan cel Mare Academy of the MOL MoI (SSR) supported by CNAI

Activities conducted in 2025

Meetings of the Configuration
In 2025 hybrid meetings of the configuration were conducted on 13. June and 11. September.

Curricula review

In accordance with the bi-annual ESDC Curricula review cycle, the EAB SSR.DDR conducted a review of the ESDC SSR and DDR curricula, which are in the portfolio of the configuration.

- Core Course on SSR
- Basic Course on SSR
- In-Country Course on SSR
- DDR within the EU Integrated Approach

The reviewed Curricula were presented to the ESDC EAB in Feb 2025 and subsequently approved by the SC.

Review of the ESDC AKU 23 SSR project

EAB SSR.DDR is reviewing the existing Autonomous Knowledge Unit (AKU) 23 on SSR, which was developed by DCAF with hosting support by UNITAR. The decision was taken on 10 September 2025 at the configuration meeting with the Austrian Ministry of Defence as project funder. DCAF supports and leads the implementation, working jointly with the ESDC Secretariat.

The update will include a new chapter/section on EU policy. The AKU will remain SSR-specific and will not go into adjacent issue areas that do not directly concern SSR. Besides an English version, DCAF will also include a fully independent French version, including in its reference documents. The project completion is planned for March 2026.

Training and outreach

The Network members of the configuration conducted 2 Basic Courses on SSR and 2 Core courses on SSR. No ESDC DDR Course had been scheduled for the academic year.



EAB.Cyber

Chair: Stavros Stavrou

Configuration Coordinator: Giuseppe Zuffanti

The ESDC's EABEAB.CYBER configuration was established to provide cyber education to personnel of Member States and Union administrations.. The ESDC's activities include cyber awareness and advanced-level courses, as well as support for CSDP missions and operations, whilst ensuring complementarity with other Union efforts and initiatives.

In this respect, the EAB.Cyber works by contributing to the training needs of EU Member States in the cyber domain and its subdomains, in the field of the CSDP in the wider context of the CFSP, following a holistic approach: cyber defence, cybercrime, network and information systems security, and external relationships. At the same time, in line with the initial mandate of the Member States' Council Decision, the ESDC is defined as an important element of the European Union's cybersecurity and cyber defence policies. Both the EU's Cybersecurity Strategy for the Digital Decade and the EU Policy on Cyber Defence explicitly task the ESDC with critical roles in education, training, and capacity building. This strategic alignment, and the alignment with the priority highlighted by the White Paper for European Defence – Readiness 2030, the Niinistö Report on Strengthening Europe's Civilian and Military Preparedness and Readiness, and the EU Defence Readiness Roadmap 2030, ensure that the EAB.Cyber's activities directly contribute to the EU's strategic objectives of enhancing collective cyber resilience and defence

capabilities, in support of the CSDP.

Achievements

Whilst Europe has undergone significant changes over the past three years due to Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine, the EAB.Cyber, especially in 2025, has also had to evolve in order to remain relevant in addressing the challenges facing European cybersecurity. This evolution is evident in the introduction and improvement of training courses in artificial intelligence, cyber ranges, foreign information manipulations and interference (FIMI), hybrid threats, cyber diplomacy as well as courses designed to support the EU's Cybersecurity Agency (ENISA)'s European Cybersecurity Skills Framework (ECSF), and specific courses for, from and with Ukraine.

In 2025, the EAB.Cyber's actions were further enhanced by strong partnerships with the EEAS/SECDEFPOL 2-Hybrid Threats and Cyber, ENISA, the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC), and the European Defence Agency (EDA). The EDA was an important contributor to the creation of the cyber configuration and continues to provide support and resources in the development of new training courses for the benefit of EU Member States.

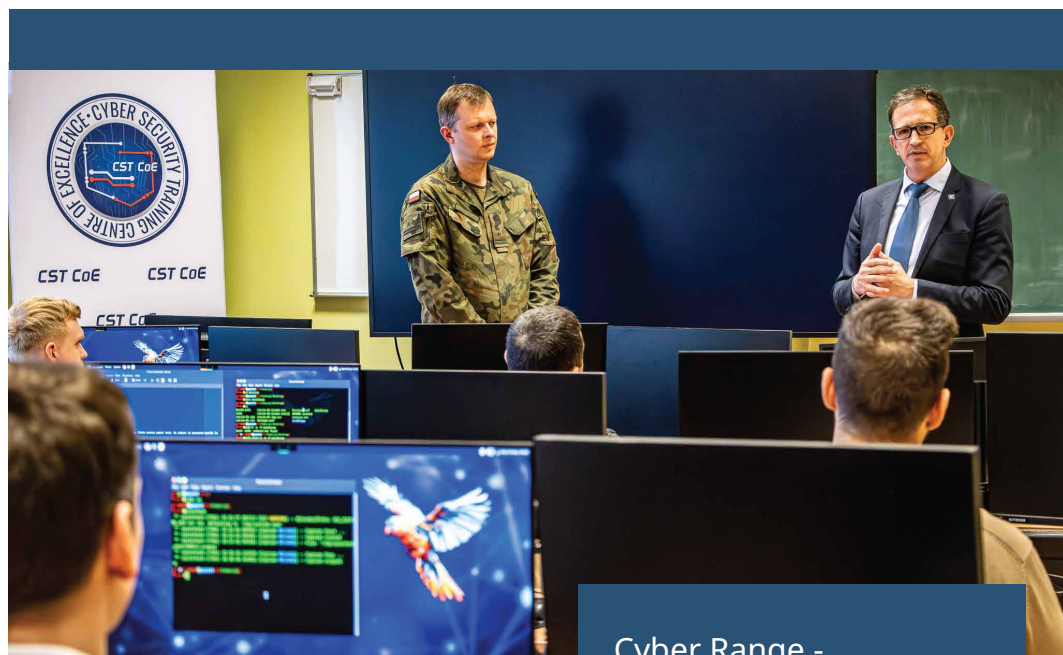
The EAB.Cyber's objective for 2025 was to engage in capacity building and relations with partners by building a network capable of delivering high-quality training

activities, as well as pursuing strategic cooperation between the EU and third countries with the aim of developing stronger collaboration and enhancing cyber-society resilience. These actions also foster trust and promote shared values with the EU's external partners. Recent developments include the approval of the Memorandum of Understanding with the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence, whilst continuing to cooperate with ENISA under the existing MoU, as well as fostering partnerships with countries in the Eastern Partnership, the Western Balkans, the Indo-Pacific region, and, notably, Ukraine.

The EAB.Cyber plays a pivotal role in fostering cooperation and dialogue on cyber security and defence, as evident in the EU-NATO Structured Dialogue and the EU-Ukraine Cyber Dialogue. By facilitating the exchange of expertise, best practices, and resources, in 2025 the EAB.Cyber demonstrated the ESDC's commitment to building a stronger, more resilient cyber ecosystem, enhancing collective resilience against cyber threats and promoting cooperation between the EU and its external partners, including Ukraine and NATO, in support of EU cyber policies and security and defence priorities.

The EAB.Cyber is regularly involved in policy development where it actively contributes to policy and strategy documents. The EAB.Cyber, through its engagement with partners such as the EEAS/SECDEFPOL 2, the EDA, the EU Military Staff (EUMS) and DG CNECT, and its full support for the Cyber Skills

Academy EU initiative, has provided and continues to provide a vital feedback loop. It translates the practical challenges and successes observed during its EAB.Cyber activities into actionable insights for policymakers. This unique position allows the ESDC to inform and shape future EU cybersecurity / cyber defence and security policies, making it an indispensable component of the EU's strategic framework.



Cyber Range -
Cybersecurity in Practice
Warsaw, Poland

The EAB.Cyber, guided by the EAB.Chair and supported by one coordinator for cyber and cyber training managers in the ESDC Secretariat, hosts 53 ESDC network members and associative network partners out of the approximately 280 members of the ESDC network in total.

In 2025, the EAB.Cyber courses constituted approximately 24% of the ESDC's total training programme co-financed by the ESDC. Furthermore, a number of courses under the EAB.Cyber are defined as technical courses as they require specialised tools and expertise, as well as specific arrangements to facilitate

interactive and experiential learning activities, including table-top exercises, to provide a realistic and immersive learning environment.

Also in 2025, the EAB.Cyber reviewed and updated over 25 ESDC cyber curricula, in order to further align with the EU Cybersecurity Strategy for the new decade, the EU Policy on Cyber Defence and the Strategic Compass of the EU. Building on ENISA's ECSF, the EAB.Cyber has updated a number of ECSF-aligned curricula.

Impact

- 36 cyber training activities were organised under the aegis of the ESDC (an increase of 20%) for 892 participants (57% civilians 31% military, 5% diplomats and 6% police).
- 27 Member States participated
- The ESDC successfully contributed to over 30 high-profile cyber events, including conferences, EU delegations, exercises and workshops.

Priorities for the next year:

- Building on the ongoing development of AI courses, continue to focus on emerging technologies such as deep learning and artificial intelligence.
- Continue supporting and contributing to the ongoing EU Cyber Skills Academy initiative by enhancing specialised cyber training and cooperation with key EUBA, in order to close the cybersecurity talent gap and strengthen the EU's digital resilience.
- Continue supporting the EU Cyber Skills Academy by deepening collaboration with ENISA and developing more courses aligned with the ECSF.
- Continue to enhance EU-NATO Cooperation on Cyber Training
- Continue to foster strategic

partnerships and deepen cooperation on training and education with key regions, including Ukraine, the Eastern Partnership, the Western Balkans, the Indo-Pacific, and MENA, to promote mutual understanding and capacity building.

- Cyber e-learning development: revision and enhancement of online modules to support advanced training and education.
- Strengthen partnerships with key EU entities, including ESEC, ECCC, EUROPOL, JRC, and CEPOL, to enhance cooperation and collaboration.
- Cybersecurity/ cyber defence/ cybercrime: enhance cooperation and knowledge sharing between military and civilian domains to develop cyberspace-specific skills, improving collective resilience and supporting the EU's digital sovereignty and security goals.

Conclusion

To conclude, the EAB.Cyber has continuously evolved from its inception until now, following the expansion and use of cyberspace in security and defence and providing relevant training and education aligned with the strategic mandates of Member States, EU strategic documents and EU institutions, bodies and agencies.

Key efforts for 2026 will include continuing the development of AI courses with an emphasis on deep learning, supporting the EU Cyber Skills Academy in addressing the cybersecurity talent gap, and enhancing collaboration with ENISA to align courses with the European Cybersecurity Skills Framework. Emphasis will be placed on fostering EU-NATO cyber training cooperation and building strategic partnerships with regions such as Ukraine and the Western Balkans to boost capacity building. The EAB.Cyber will

revise cyber e-learning modules and strengthen ties with EU entities such as EUROPOL to enhance cooperation.

Finally, the EAB.Cyber will continue to integrate best cybersecurity practices across military and civilian domains, responding to evolving cyber threats whilst promoting digital sovereignty and resilience. This aligns with the priority highlighted by the White Paper for European Defence – Readiness 2030, the Niinistö Report on Strengthening Europe’s Civilian and Military Preparedness and Readiness, and the EU Defence Readiness Roadmap 2030, all of which contribute to the development of the CSDP of the European Union.



53 Institutions



892 Participants

251 Women
641 Men

31% Military
5% Diplomat
57% Civilian
6% Police



36 Trainings



9 Non-specialised trainings



26 Specialised trainings



1 Seminar



20% Increase



European Higher Military Education/-EU War Colleges Initiative

Chair: Didier Oustric

Configuration Coordinator: Jugoslav Jozić

The European Higher Military Education / EU War Colleges Initiative aims to unite the EU Member States' war colleges to promote a common security and defence culture, share best practices, create partnerships and joint projects, and facilitate exchanges of trainers and trainees. Among its objectives is the creation of a one-week European Higher Military Education EU Common training module in the War Colleges or equivalent entities, to be included, on a voluntary basis, in the curricula of EU Member States' war colleges or equivalent entities.

In addition, under the aegis of the ESDC, a two-week EU operational planning exercise in the context of a high-intensity conflict could be organised simultaneously in different European war colleges, with officers from other EU colleges invited. Some Ukrainian officers with high intensity conflict experience could also be invited to participate. Participating institutions

This configuration is based on an initiative of the French Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2022. Seventeen Member States are currently involved: Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden.

Achievements

The main achievement so far has been the first implementation of the common module at the Hellenic War College in Thessaloniki in April 2025, with officers from Cyprus, Romania and France. The

module is complemented by Autonomous Knowledge Units (AKUs) developed by the ESDC and used as an e-learning platform for the courses provided.

Italy and Romania also organised the course for their own students, delivering the lectures independently over several months in 2025, with e-learning support from the ESDC (AKUs).

Moreover, the implementation of the common module was presented to the EU Military Committee on 1 April 2025 and received the full support of the Chairman, who has written to the Chiefs of Defence of the 27 EU countries to encourage its implementation. This was accompanied by a CMC video highlighting the importance of CSDP training and education at the operational and strategic levels.

Priorities for the next academic year

The forthcoming academic year will mark the consolidation and implementation phase of the common module, which has already been agreed and implemented. At least five more countries are expected to implement the module in their respective curricula: Croatia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Slovakia and Spain.

European Military Secondary Schools Forum

Chair: Symeon Zambas

Configuration Coordinator: Christoforos Christoforou

The European Union Military Secondary Schools Forum (EUMSSF) is a configuration under the EAB of the ESDC that brings together military secondary schools with the aim of developing common educational modules, promoting a shared culture of peace, security, and defence, and strengthening the European dimension of military secondary education.

The Forum facilitates the exchange of best practices, the establishment of partnerships and joint projects, and the mobility of trainers and trainees, fostering early engagement with European values and security and defence-related issues.

Participating institutions

Established in 2019, the EUMSSF currently brings together 19 member schools from 10 EU Member States (Austria, Belgium, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Portugal and Romania) and 3 Associate Partners (Serbia and Ukraine).

Young people are key actors in change, innovation and reconciliation. Their meaningful, inclusive and effective engagement is essential for building resilient and informed societies. In this context, the EUMSSF represents a significant contribution to strengthening youth awareness of the European Union and its core values.

Achievements

From 24 to 28 March 2025, the Portuguese Military School 'Colégio Militar' organised the course 'EU History and Core Values' in Lisbon. The activity brought together 33 students from 6 EU Member States



(Belgium, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Portugal, and Romania) and 1 candidate country (Ukraine).

In addition, the Romanian School, Colegiul Național Militar "Ștefan cel Mare" organised, for the first time, the pilot Course International Military Skills Camp in Diham, Romania from 7 to 11 July further expanding the Forum's training offers. 32 students from 5 EU Member States (Belgium, Estonia, Latvia, Netherlands, and Romania) and 1



candidate country (Ukraine) participated.

On 12 September 2025, a special ceremony for the third EUMSSF Essay Writing Olympiad was held in Brussels. Launched in 2019, the Olympiad is open to students in their penultimate year at military secondary schools across the European Union and encourages critical reflection on EU-related themes. The three laureates were invited to participate in the Forum's 18th meeting receiving their prizes.

Priorities for the next academic year

- Increase membership by encouraging all EU Member States with military secondary schools to join the Forum.
- Further develop the course on EU Institutions and promote its implementation as a pilot EUMSSF activity.
- Expand exchange opportunities for both pupils and trainers.



10 Member States
and 2 Third Countries



18 Network Members and 3
Associate Network Partner

The Sectoral Qualification Framework for the Military Officer

Chair: Lucian Ispas

Configuration Coordinator: Stanislava Kraynova

SQF-MILEG is a project-oriented EAB configuration established in November 2021 to facilitate and support EU Member States' voluntary implementation of the Sectoral Qualifications Framework for the Military Officer Profession (SQF-MILOF). It currently meets on a biannually basis and comprises Member States' delegates from human resources management and training departments which work on the military qualifications, as well as experts on education and training. Within the framework of the agreed SQF-MILOF implementation protocol, SQF-MILEG stands as a pivotal force to facilitate and accelerate the alignment of national military qualifications.

Participating Member States

Eight Member State representatives have attended regularly the SQF-MILEG meetings during the 2025-2026 academic year. Two Member States have already signed the implementation protocol, and there is an expectation that two more will follow suit in the near future.

Achievements

SQF-MILEG has now reached a consolidation phase and is actively expanding its cadre of national experts through SQF-MILOF familiarisation courses, which have improved participants' skills as regards SQF-MILOF. SQF-MILEG has now reached a consolidation phase and is actively expanding its cadre of national experts through SQF-MILOF familiarisation

courses, which have improved participants' skills as regards SQF-MILOF. To further strengthen the expertise within member states, a SQF-MILOF Advanced Course has been approved as a standard course specifically designed to train the trainers, ensuring the consistent and effective dissemination of SQF-MILOF principles and practices.

Priorities for the next academic year

Finalisation of the Military Qualifications Database (MQD)

The ESDC Secretariat will finalise the development of the digital platform, hosted by the ESDC website, to accommodate the Military Qualifications Database (MQD). After its operationalisation, the database will be populated with levelled qualifications so that interested users can compare similar qualifications and access useful details about military qualifications offered by the MS (the primary objective of SQF-MILOF).

Update the SQF-MILEG webpage

To support transparency and accessibility of qualification data, the ESDC Secretariat will restore and improve the SQF-MILEG webpage to host the SQF-MILOF package publication, SQF-MILOF Navigator, MQD and other relevant information about this group.

Configuration meetings frequency and structure

The number of configuration meetings is



going to be reduced to two per academic year to improve efficiency and participation, with one meeting held back-to-back with an SQF-MILOF course and one meeting in September. It is important to hold the meetings in physical format to maintain stronger connections and improve collaboration.

SQF-MILOF high-level event

The annual organisation of a high-level event (seminar) under the EU Council presidency aims to boost the visibility and engagement of the configuration's work.

Bachelor Programs Levelling and Implementation

Levelling military qualifications against SQF-MILOF levels is one of the key directions for the implementation at the national level of this initiative. For the academic year 2025-2026, the group will focus on levelling Bachelor's degree programs and military officer basic courses across member states.

The goal is to collect levelled program data from the national academies with the assistance of the EMILYO Implementation Group under LOD 2 which is leading the coordination and data collection. Several countries, including Romania, Bulgaria, Austria, Italy and Spain have already levelled some of their programs, providing models to others. This initiative supports cross-country recognition and facilitates academic exchanges by creating a common reference point for military education qualifications across member states.

Presenting results at international forums such as the International Military Academic Forum (IMAF) is planned to raise awareness and promote further adoption.

Role of Ministries of Defense and Academies in Implementation

MOD representatives are the intended key audience for configuration meetings, as they hold the primary responsibility for implementing the SQF MILOF at the national level, while academies serve as the experts managing curriculum alignment and program levelling. Implementation efforts require MODs to endorse and push down the qualification framework, including signing protocols and supporting national rollout. Academies contribute by levelling programs, developing new modules aligned with the SQF, and ensuring educational harmonization. The group emphasized the complementary roles of MODs and academies, with MODs providing policy direction and academies delivering technical expertise in education and training. Engagement with MODs will be increased through conferences and targeted communication to improve their participation and ownership of the framework.

SQF-MILOF Courses

One of the direct ways to support implementation at national level is the organisation of familiarisation and advanced course. Two such courses have been scheduled to be organised in 2026: SQF-MILOF Advanced Course, organised by the Bulgarian Naval Academy in Varna, Bulgaria (Jun 26) and SQF-MILOF Familiarisation Course, organised by CESEDEN in Madrid, Spain (Sep 26).

Working Group for Missions and Operations Training

Chair: Irene-Maria Eich

Configuration Coordinator: Isak Enström

Established in 2015 as a sub-configuration of the ESDCs Executive Academic Board (EAB), the Working Group for Missions and Operations Training (WG-MOT) brings together approximately 40 representatives from relevant national training actors of EU Member States, EU institutions, bodies and agencies, as well as CSDP structures. International organisations and EU-funded projects participate as observers.

For CSDP missions and operations to successfully deliver on their mandates, personnel must be equipped with the necessary understanding, knowledge and skills. The WG-MOT aims to enhance coordination, coherence and quality of training for CSDP missions and operations personnel. It plays a vital role in aligning training activities with identified requirements and lessons learned, thereby strengthening the links between deployed personnel and EU crisis management structures.

Key Achievements in 2025

Mandatory training; PDT and HEAT

In accordance with the “EU Policy on Training for CSDP” (2024), Pre-Deployment Training (PDT) and Hostile Environment Awareness Training (HEAT) are mandatory preparatory courses prior to deployment. These two courses therefore remained top priorities for the WG-MOT. In 2025, both were organised on a monthly basis to accommodate the often short timeframe between staff selection and deployment.

For HEAT, this resulted in eleven iterations in 2025 — a necessary increase given rising demand, particularly as several CSDP missions were elevated to high-risk status, making HEAT a mandatory requirement.

Through its established HEAT subgroup of experts and practitioners, the WG-MOT continued advancing harmonisation and standardisation efforts of HEAT (see dedicated chapter).

Given the high frequency of course delivery, the WG-MOT played a crucial role in designing and deconflicting the annual training calendar. This ensured regular scheduling, facilitated planning by seconding authorities, and enabled participants to attend PDT and HEAT back-to-back prior to deployment.

Expansion of Duty of Care (DoC) Training Portfolio

In 2025, the WG-MOT placed increased emphasis on Duty of Care (DoC)-related training.

- The Mission Medical Security (MEDSEC) course was introduced as a pilot in May 2025 and subsequently approved as a standard ESDC course.
- The Introduction to Medical Advisory and Duty of Care for Healthcare Providers in CSDP Missions was successfully piloted in September 2025 and is up for approval to become a standard ESDC course.

Both courses are delivered by the Swedish



Civil Defence and Resilience Agency (MCF).

- The Mission Security Officer (MSO) course was also extensively discussed throughout the year. Trainer teams travelled to Sweden to observe its implementation. Following approval of the pilot phase, the German Federal Police Academy is currently preparing to organise the pilot iteration in May 2026 in Lübeck.

The expansion of DoC-related courses under the ESDC framework represents a significant development. These courses are essential for enabling CSDP missions to operate effectively in increasingly challenging environments. This development also aligns the WG-MOT course portfolio with the new “Security and Duty of Care Policy for Civilian CSDP Missions” approved in 2025. Close collaboration with CivOpsHQ experts remains crucial to ensure that course content responds directly to mission-specific needs.

New and Evolving Course Initiatives

- *Leadership in Diverse and Multicultural Contexts:* Following WG-MOT deliberations and formal EAB approval, this course was piloted in December 2025 by ZIF and the German Federal Police Academy and is up for approval to be accepted as a standard ESDC course.
- *Train the e-Trainer:* Spearheaded by LAFP NRW, this course was accepted as a standard ESDC course at the beginning of 2025 and delivered as part of the annual ESDC programme in December 2025. This online course serves as an important complement to the existing, well established, residential Training of Trainers (ToT) course.
- *Team and Conflict Management in Peace Operations (TCM):* Designed specifically for in-mission settings, this course is organised in partnership between ZIF

and the German Federal Police Academy. It has previously been delivered within EUMM Georgia, EULEX Kosovo. In September 2025 held in EUPM Moldova, upon specific request from the mission.

Curricula revision and configuration expansion

The yearly curriculum revision in February 2025, examined the following 3 courses:

- Pre-Deployment Training for CSDP Missions and Operations (PDT)
- Training of Trainers (ToT)
- Comprehensive Protection of Civilians (CPoC)

The WG-MOT experienced in 2025 an increased interest with elevated participation in its meetings (both physical and online). New members joining the group in 2025 include: Centre for Security and Development (CSD) Netherlands, Swedish Civil Defence and Resilience Agency (MCF), Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC), Clingendael Institute Netherlands, French Gendarmerie.

Outlook for 2026

In 2026, the WG-MOT will continue its close engagement with its two core courses — PDT and HEAT — both in terms of content development and organisational planning, ensuring that scheduling and iteration frequency remain aligned with operational demand. The HEAT subgroup will finalise a certification mechanism for potential HEAT providers, incorporating new parameters once the updated HEAT policy for civilian CSDP missions has been finalised and approved.

Further development is planned for Duty of Care-related courses, including Psychological First Aid Training and

Peer-to-Peer Support Training.

Finally, the WG-MOT intends to explore structured collaboration with the EU-funded EU Training Initiative (EUTI), both regarding course delivery within CSDP missions and in connection with its envisaged conceptual support to EU institutions.

