



2024/3116

10.12.2024

COUNCIL DECISION (CFSP) 2024/3116

of 9 December 2024

on the European Security and Defence College and repealing Decision (CFSP) 2020/1515

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on European Union, and in particular Article 28(1) and Article 42(4) thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy,

Whereas:

- (1) On 19 October 2020, the Council adopted Decision (CFSP) 2020/1515 ⁽¹⁾, which established a European Security and Defence College ('ESDC').
- (2) On 21 March 2022, the Council approved the Strategic Compass for Security and Defence (the 'Strategic Compass'), with the objective to make the Union a stronger and more capable security provider, including by effectively implementing the Union's integrated approach, as well as reinforcing the Union's civilian and military CSDP missions by providing them with more robust and flexible mandates, and promoting rapid and more flexible decision-making.
- (3) On 22 May 2023, the Council agreed to the EU Civilian CSDP Compact, which seeks to enhance the effectiveness, impact, flexibility and robustness of civilian missions, in order to tackle emerging and future security challenges.
- (4) On 12 December 2023, the Political and Security Committee endorsed the EUCTG-EUMTG Strategic Guidance on CSDP Training, and recommended revising Decision (CFSP) 2020/1515 to further support Member States in effectively and efficiently implementing the EU Policy on CSDP Training.
- (5) In the '2024 EU Policy on CSDP training', the ESDC is designated as the principal organ responsible for implementing the policy and for coordinating CSDP training activities. This designation is made without prejudice to the competences of Member States.
- (6) The ESDC enjoys legal capacity, but relies in practice on the administrative structures, facilities of the European External Action Service (EEAS) for its functioning. In order to enable ESDC to carry out its mission, it is necessary to adopt certain provisions as regards the composition and status of ESDC staff, as well as the administrative support and facilities provided by the EEAS.
- (7) Decision (CFSP) 2020/1515 should therefore be revised. In the interest of legal clarity, that Decision should be repealed and replaced by this Decision,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1

Continuity

1. The European Security and Defence College (ESDC), established by Decision (CFSP) 2020/1515 shall continue to operate, in accordance with this Decision, which repeals and replaces Decision (CFSP) 2020/1515.
2. This Decision shall not affect existing rights, obligations, rules or decisions adopted under Decision (CFSP) 2020/1515.

⁽¹⁾ Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/1515 of 19 October 2020 establishing a European Security and Defence College, and repealing Decision (CFSP) 2016/2382 (OJ L 348, 20.10.2020, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2020/1515/oj>).

*Article 2***Mission**

The ESDC shall provide training and education in the field of the Union's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) in the wider context of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in order to develop and promote a common understanding of CFSP and CSDP among civilian and military personnel, and to identify and disseminate best practices in relation to various CFSP and CSDP issues through its training and education activities.

*Article 3***Objectives**

1. The ESDC shall contribute to enhancing the common European security and defence culture within the Union and to promoting the principles laid down in Article 21(1) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU). It shall, in particular, have the following objectives:

- (a) supporting the implementation of the EU Policy on CSDP training, whilst ensuring consistency with other activities of the Union, where appropriate, acting in line with the EU Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises, the Strategic Compass and the EU Civilian CSDP Compact;
- (b) ensuring the quality and coherence of CSDP training and education;
- (c) identifying, updating and responding to the training requirements of Member States, Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies, as well as of CSDP Missions and Operations, and ensuring that relevant staff have the necessary knowledge and skills, a common understanding of CSDP Missions' and Operations' functioning principles, and are familiar with Union policies, institutions and procedures in the field of CSDP, as well as are able to work efficiently on all relevant CSDP matters at all levels (political, strategic, operational and tactical);
- (d) enabling pooling and sharing of CSDP training and education through a network of civilian and military training providers in the Member States;
- (e) supporting national and international training centres through advice on international educational standards, good practices and the latest research on CSDP, including at PhD level;
- (f) developing detailed arrangements for standardisation and certification, including quality assurance mechanisms for pooled and shared CSDP training;
- (g) supporting the Union's partnerships in the field of CSDP, in particular partnerships with countries participating in CSDP missions and operations;
- (h) supporting the Union's public diplomacy initiatives through its training activities in the European neighbourhood and beyond;
- (i) fostering synergies and complementarity between the civilian and military dimensions of CSDP, including through training in different domains.

2. In addition to the objectives set out in paragraph 1, the ESDC shall accomplish any other task in accordance with its mission, as to be decided by the Steering Committee, on an annual basis, with the EEAS and the ESDC secretariat acting in a support capacity.

*Article 4***Governance, implementation and reporting**

- 1. The Steering Committee shall be the decision-making body of the ESDC.
- 2. The ESDC shall work under the overall responsibility of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (High Representative).
- 3. The overall steering of the ESDC's priorities and activities is the responsibility of the Council. The ESDC shall regularly inform the Council on its activities. It shall submit to the Council each year a report on its activities covering the previous calendar year.

*Article 5***Legal capacity**

1. The ESDC shall have the necessary legal capacity to fulfil its tasks and attain its objectives, and in particular to conclude contracts and administrative arrangements necessary for its functioning, to acquire or dispose of movable and immovable property, to procure services and supplies and discharge its liabilities, to hold bank accounts, and to be a party to legal proceedings.
2. Member States shall ensure that the ESDC enjoys the legal capacity accorded to legal persons under their laws. Any liability that may be incurred by the ESDC shall be covered by the funds made available to it pursuant to this Decision.

*Article 6***Structure of the ESDC**

The ESDC shall be structured as follows:

- (a) the Steering Committee, shall be the decision-making body of the ESDC, with responsibility for the overall coordination and direction of the ESDC training and education. Its role shall include giving direction on the content and priorities of the ESDC training programmes, and taking decisions on specific tasks, in line with the strategic priorities as defined by the Council;
- (b) the Executive Academic Board, representing the network provided for in Article 7, which shall provide academic advice and recommendations to the Steering Committee and be responsible for ensuring the quality and coherence of the ESDC training and education activities;
- (c) the Head of the ESDC, who shall also be head of the ESDC Secretariat, shall assist the Steering Committee and the Executive Academic Board in fulfilling their tasks, and shall be in charge of ensuring the overall quality and coherence of ESDC training and education activities;
- (d) the ESDC Secretariat, the role of which is set out in Article 13.

*Article 7***Network**

1. The ESDC shall be organised as a network bringing together providers of relevant training and education activities, namely civilian and military institutes, colleges, academies, universities, institutions, centres of excellence and other actors dealing with security and defence policy issues within the Union, as identified by Member States.
2. The ESDC shall establish close links and cooperate with the relevant Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies, in particular the European Union Institute for Security Studies.
3. The ESDC shall draw on the expertise of international, governmental or non-governmental organisations and other relevant actors, such as the national training and education institutes of third countries, as appropriate and in line with the Union institutional framework, which may obtain the status of 'associate network partners', the detailed arrangements for which shall be agreed by the Steering Committee.

*Article 8***Steering Committee**

1. The Steering Committee shall be composed of one representative member appointed by each Member State. It shall meet at least four times a year. Each member of the Committee may be represented or accompanied by an alternate member. A representative of the EEAS shall participate in the meetings of the Steering Committee, without the right to vote.
2. The Steering Committee shall be chaired by a representative of the High Representative. The Chair shall facilitate the discussions on strategic orientation, ensure policy coherence, and lead consensus-building efforts among members, to reinforce the ESDC's contribution to an efficient and effective CSDP.

3. The Steering Committee shall take the necessary decisions with regard to the fulfilment and oversight of the ESDC's mission, objectives, and the overall functioning of the network. The Steering Committee shall, in particular:
- (a) ensure the synergy and complementarity of activities between civilian and military training and related activities, while respecting national standards and certifications;
 - (b) approve the annual work programme of the ESDC, as well as annual budget proposals and any amendments thereto;
 - (c) approve the annual reports on ESDC training and education activities, and the recommendations contained therein;
 - (d) select and prioritise the training and education activities to be run under the ESDC, and approve, every year, any specific tasks for training and education activities to be conducted by the ESDC in accordance with its mission and objectives, taking into account the training requirements and available resources;
 - (e) adopt the curricula for all ESDC training and education activities; and,
 - (f) decide on the opening of specific ESDC training and education activities to third-country participation, in line with the Union institutional framework.
4. The Steering Committee shall provide overall guidance to the work of the Academic Board, the Head and the ESDC Secretariat.
5. The Steering Committee shall:
- (a) appoint the Chairpersons of the Executive Academic Board and its various configurations;
 - (b) approve the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Academic Board;
 - (c) approve the estimate of revenue and expenditure of the ESDC referred to in Article 10(7);
 - (d) approve any voluntary financial contributions referred to in Article 17.
6. The Head of the ESDC, the ESDC Secretariat, the Chairperson of the Executive Academic Board and, when appropriate, the Chairpersons of the various configurations of the Executive Academic Board configurations, as well as representatives of the Commission and of other Union institutions, of the EEAS, or of other Union bodies, offices or agencies, may participate in the meetings of the Steering Committee, without the right to vote.
7. The Steering Committee shall act by qualified majority, as defined in Article 16(4) of the Treaty on European Union. It shall act by simple majority for the approval of its rules of procedure, and for other procedural decisions.
8. Where the ESDC receives a multi-annual contribution from the general budget of the European Union, the Steering Committee shall approve the annual budget proposal, acting by unanimity.

Article 9

Executive Academic Board

1. The Executive Academic Board (EAB) shall be composed of senior representatives from civilian and military institutions, and other relevant actors identified by Member States, as determined by the Steering Committee, ensuring an appropriate reflection of the civilian-military balance in its composition and configurations.
2. Representatives of the EEAS and the Commission shall be invited to attend the meetings of the EAB.
3. Academic experts, and senior officials from Union institutions and Member States may be invited to attend the meetings of the EAB, as observers. When appropriate, and on a case-by-case basis, academic experts and senior officials who represent organs outside the network may be invited to participate in the meetings of the EAB.

4. The tasks of the EAB shall be to:
 - (a) support the implementation, through the network and the Secretariat, of the ESDC annual work programme;
 - (b) support the general coordination of ESDC training and education activities among all participating training institutes;
 - (c) review the standards of the training and education activities undertaken in the previous academic year, and feed into the development of quality assurance through standardisation and certification;
 - (d) ensure the systematic evaluation of all ESDC training and education activities, in particular through the streamlining of course evaluation and reporting; and,
 - (e) develop a tailored, needs-based approach for the implementation of a new quality assurance system, the scope of which should be assessed and decided upon by the ESDC Steering Committee.
5. To fulfil its tasks, the EAB may meet in various project-focused configurations, supported by the ESDC Secretariat as appropriate. The EAB shall draw up the Terms of Reference of those configurations, for approval by the Steering Committee. Each configuration shall report on its activities to the EAB at least once a year. On a proposal by the EAB or by the ESDC Secretariat, the Steering Committee may decide to extend or terminate the mandate of specific configurations.
6. The Rules of Procedure of the Steering Committee shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to the EAB and to any specific configurations.

Article 10

Head of the ESDC

1. The Head of the ESDC shall be responsible for the administrative and financial management of the ESDC and shall be the legal representative of the ESDC.
2. Under the overall responsibility of the High Representative, the Head of the ESDC shall ensure the operation of the ESDC, as well as a safe and inclusive working environment, while upholding a high degree of expertise, professionalism and ethical standards in the management of the ESDC Secretariat, and shall ensure efficiency and effectiveness in carrying out ESDC's activities.
3. The Head of the ESDC shall report to the Steering Committee for activities in relation to accomplishing the mission, objectives and tasks of the ESDC.
4. The Head of the ESDC shall advise and assist the Steering Committee and the Executive Academic Board on the overall organisation and management of ESDC training and education activities.
5. The Head of the ESDC shall be in charge of the annual reporting of the ESDC, including with regard to the financial spending, containing the state of play with regard to its mission and objectives, as well as in charge of the implementation of any possible strategic guidance given by the Council, following its endorsement by the Steering Committee.
6. The Head of the ESDC shall submit an annual work plan to the Steering Committee on the basis of the proposals submitted by members of the network provided for in Article 7, in close cooperation with the EEAS and, as appropriate, in relation to the financing, with the Commission.
7. The Head of the ESDC shall submit to the Steering Committee an estimate of revenue and expenditure for the ESDC, no later than 15 June each year. Following approval by the Steering Committee, the Head of the ESDC shall transmit the estimate of revenue and expenditure to the Commission.

Article 11

Selection of the Head of the ESDC

1. Candidates for the position of Head of the ESDC shall be persons with recognised expertise and experience in training and education, as well as relevant management experience of an appropriate level. Each Member State may put forward one candidate for the position of Head of the ESDC. Staff of the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies, including of the EEAS, may also apply for this position.

2. The pre-selection process shall be organised under the responsibility of the High Representative. The pre-selection panel shall be composed of three representatives of the EEAS. It shall be chaired by the Chair of the Steering Committee. On the basis of the pre-selection results, the High Representative shall submit to the Steering Committee a recommendation with a shortlist of at least three candidates, drawn-up in the order of the pre-selection panel's preference. The candidates shall present their vision for the ESDC to the Steering Committee, after which the Steering Committee shall be invited to rank the candidates in a written, secret vote. The candidate obtaining the highest number of votes cast, shall be appointed by the High Representative, for a period not exceeding three years. If the highest-ranked candidates obtain an equal number of votes, further votes between those candidates shall take place, as required, until a single candidate obtains the highest number of votes.

3. Notwithstanding the Head's political accountability to the Steering Committee under Article 10(3) of this Decision, the Head of the ESDC shall perform his or her duties as a member of the EEAS staff under the authority of the High Representative as Appointing Authority or Authority Authorised to Conclude Contracts of Employment respectively (hereafter 'Appointing Authority').

4. Six months before the end of the period referred to in paragraph 2 of this Article, the Steering Committee shall evaluate the Head's performance of his or her tasks, including with respect to accomplishing the ESDC's mission and objectives, with respect to the vision for the ESDC presented during the selection process set out in paragraph 2 and the results achieved, and on the basis of any elements brought forward by the EEAS in its role of supporting the High Representative, relating to the overall management performance. The Steering Committee shall either propose to the High Representative to extend the mandate of the Head of the ESDC, or shall decide to launch a selection procedure for a new Head of the ESDC. In the case of an extension, the total duration of the mandate of the Head of the ESDC shall not exceed five years.

5. The High Representative may decide at any time, with the consent of the Steering Committee, to terminate the assignment of the Head, under either Article 47(b)(ii) and (iii) of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants or Article 9 of Annex IX of the Staff Regulations of Officials (Staff Regulations), following, in the latter case, an administrative investigation launched by the Appointing Authority of the EEAS under Article 86 of the Staff Regulations.

Article 12

Deputy Head of the ESDC

1. The Head of the ESDC shall, provided suitable resources are available, be assisted by a Deputy Head of the ESDC in the exercise of all responsibilities falling on the Head, as set out in this Decision.

2. If the Steering Committee agrees on the appointment of a person on this function, the Deputy Head of the ESDC shall be an EEAS staff member or a staff member of another Union institution, body, office or agency seconded to the EEAS, and placed under the authority of the High Representative.

3. The Head of the ESDC shall organise the selection process in consultation with the High Representative and the Steering Committee. Candidates shall fulfil the criteria set out in Article 11(1). The successful candidate shall be endorsed by the Steering Committee and appointed by the High Representative for a minimum period of one year and a maximum period of three years, which may be extended up to two additional years.

Article 13

ESDC Secretariat

1. The ESDC Secretariat shall assist the Head of the ESDC in fulfilling the Head's tasks, and shall provide support to the Steering Committee and to the Executive Academic Board, including the various configurations thereof.

2. The Secretariat shall:

- (a) support the Steering Committee in all its work, and assist the Executive Academic Board in ensuring the overall quality and coherence of ESDC training and education activities;
- (b) offer support to its network to further enhance a common European Security and Defence culture, and assist network members in the coordination and organisation of the ESDC training and education activities;
- (c) enable Member State training providers to pool and share appropriate training;

- (d) advise on the conduct of training, including advocating for and supporting the development of quality assurance, through standardisation and certification mechanisms;
- (e) facilitate access to suitable speakers.

Article 14

Support by the EEAS

1. The EEAS shall bear the costs arising from the employment of the Head and of one assistant staff member, as well as the costs associated with hosting the Head and the Secretariat at its premises, including information technology costs.
2. The EEAS shall provide the ESDC with the administrative support necessary to recruit and manage its staff. For that purpose, the EEAS shall put in place an ESDC Statutory Staff Team as an administrative entity managed by the Head of the ESDC, in the latter's capacity as a member of the EEAS staff. The EEAS shall recruit and employ, at the request of the Head of the ESDC and under the Staff Regulations and the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants, contract agents assigned to the ESDC Statutory Staff Team.
3. The ESDC shall compensate the EEAS financially for the provision of administrative support. A service level agreement between the EEAS and the ESDC and approved by the Steering Committee, shall set out detailed arrangements for this compensation, which shall not exceed a total of 6 % of the financial reference amount, as provided for in Article 16(1).

Article 15

ESDC Staff

1. The ESDC staff shall consist of:
 - (a) national experts seconded to the ESDC Secretariat by Member States;
 - (b) administrative staff recruited by the EEAS for the purpose of performing their tasks within the ESDC Statutory Staff Team and paid from the ESDC budget;
 - (c) staff members from the EEAS or staff seconded to the EEAS from Union institutions and assigned to the ESDC Statutory Staff Team.
2. The ESDC may receive trainees, and visiting experts and fellows.
3. The number of posts to be allocated to the support of the ESDC shall be decided by the Steering Committee in light of documented needs and the availability of financial resources together with the draft proposal for the annual budget.
4. The Decision of the High Representative establishing the rules applicable to national experts seconded to the EEAS shall be applicable *mutatis mutandis* to national experts seconded to the ESDC by Member States and who fall under the authority of the Head of ESDC. Staff members recruited as EEAS staff assigned to the ESDC Statutory Staff Team shall continue to enjoy all rights and be subject to all obligations provided for in the Staff Regulations and the implementing rules adopted by the EEAS. The High Representative shall act as Appointing Authority for this staff.
5. In the event that an ESDC staff member assigned to a non-management post wishes to seek assistance in relation to acts or behaviour of other non-management staff, he or she may lodge a request with the Head of the ESDC or with the Deputy Head of the ESDC. The Head of the ESDC or the Deputy Head of the ESDC may seek administrative support from the EEAS to handle such requests, pursuant to Article 14(2) and may liaise with the EEAS authority competent for the staff assigned to the ESDC Statutory Staff Team. In that situation, the Head of the ESDC or the Deputy Head of the ESDC shall be empowered to adopt any necessary measure regarding seconded national experts, whereas the relevant EEAS authority may adopt any necessary measure as regards staff assigned to the ESDC Statutory Staff Team, under the rules applicable within the EEAS.
6. In the event that non-management staff wish to seek assistance in relation to acts or behaviour of management staff, they may lodge a request to the Director-General for Resource Management of the EEAS to whom the necessary delegation of power has been granted for the handling of such requests; in that case, the Director-General for Resource Management shall report to the High Representative, who acts as Appointing Authority, and shall propose any measure that he or she considers appropriate and commensurate to the situation. The Steering Committee shall be informed accordingly.

7. In all situations, requests for assistance shall be handled within the timeline provided for in Article 90(1) of the Staff Regulations, as interpreted by the Court of Justice.

Article 16

Financial arrangements

1. The financial reference amount intended to cover the expenditure of the ESDC during the period from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025 shall be EUR 2 933 303,62. The financial reference amount or amounts intended to cover the implementation of the ESDC expenditure for subsequent periods shall be decided by the Council.

2. All expenditure financed by the reference amounts set out in paragraph 1 shall be managed in accordance with the rules and procedures applicable to the general budget of the Union. The Commission shall supervise the proper management of the expenditure financed by the reference amounts referred to in paragraph 1. For that purpose, it shall conclude a grant agreement with the ESDC.

Article 17

Voluntary financial contributions

1. The ESDC may, where agreed by the Steering Committee, receive and manage voluntary contributions from Member States, institutes or other donors. Such contributions shall be identified as such by the ESDC.

2. Technical and financial arrangements for the contributions referred to in paragraph 1 shall be negotiated and agreed by the ESDC. Those arrangements shall include provisions on applicable rules governing the proper management of the expenditure financed by those voluntary contributions.

Article 18

Contributions in kind to training and education activities

The ESDC may receive contributions in kind. Each contributing Member State, Union institution, body, office, agency, institute, and the EEAS shall bear all costs related to its participation in the ESDC, including salaries, allowances, travel and subsistence expenses and costs related to organisational and administrative support of the ESDC training and education activities. Each participant in ESDC training and education activities shall bear all costs related to his or her participation.

Article 19

Implementation of projects

1. The ESDC may apply to participate in research and other projects in the field of CFSP. The ESDC shall participate as a project coordinator or as a project member. The Head, or his or her representative, may become a member of the 'advisory board' of such projects, or may delegate this task to one of the chairpersons of the Academic Board configurations or to a member of the Secretariat.

2. Contributions from those projects shall be accounted separately from the contribution under the financial arrangements referred to in Article 16 and from the voluntary financial contributions referred to in Article 17, and shall be used in line with the objectives of the ESDC.

Article 20

Participation in ESDC training and education activities

1. All ESDC training and education activities shall be open to participation by nationals of Member States.

2. The ESDC training and education activities may also be made open to participation by nationals of countries that are candidates for accession to the Union and, as appropriate, by nationals of other third States, and by members or staff of international organisations in a reciprocal manner, as well as of relevant NGOs, in particular for the training and education activities referred to in Article 3(1)(h).

*Article 21***Security regulations**

The Decision of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 19 June 2023 on the Security Rules for the European External Action Service shall apply to the ESDC.

*Article 22***Access to documents**

Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽²⁾ shall apply to the ESDC.

*Article 23***Protection of EU classified information**

Council Decision 2013/488/EU ⁽³⁾ shall apply to the ESDC.

*Article 24***Review**

Not later than 10 December 2029, the High Representative, informed by the views of the Steering Committee, shall present a report to the Council on the implementation of this Decision accompanied, as appropriate, by proposals for its review.

*Article 25***Entry into force**

This Decision shall enter into force on the date of its adoption.

*Article 26***Publication**

This Decision shall be published in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

Done at Brussels, 9 December 2024.

For the Council

The President

NAGY I.

⁽²⁾ Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2001 regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents (OJ L 145, 31.5.2001, p. 43).

⁽³⁾ Council Decision 2013/488/EU of 23 September 2013 on the security rules for protecting EU classified information (OJ L 274, 15.10.2013, p. 1).