



DocSch WG

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Charter

of the
European Doctoral School
on the **Common Security and Defence Policy**

References:

1. Council Decision (CFSP) 2024/3116 of 9 December 2024 on the European Security and Defence College and repealing Decision (CFSP) 2020/1515
2. ESDC/2017/054, Minutes EAB 22-23 February 2017
3. ESDC/2017/091, Minutes SC 24 March 2017
4. ESDC/2017/062, SC Speaking points Head of ESDC, 24 March 2017

Preamble:

The Members of the European Doctoral School on the Common Security and Defence Policy:

Being committed to supporting reflections on the European Union and its Common Security and Defence Policy in the wider context of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) by reinforcing a European security and defence culture for all concerned parties.

Acknowledging that this culture can be sustained only with a reliance upon high-level and critical scientific thinking.

Being aware that persons involved in CSDP have expressed strong interest in transforming European experience and expertise into scientific research at the highest level and that doctoral programmes serve this purpose.

Noting that the existing offer of doctoral programmes within the European Union does not provide opportunities for all interested parties to engage in doctoral training specifically focusing on CSDP and highlighting the multi-disciplinary and comprehensive approach that characterises it.

Acknowledging that the relevant expertise for accompanying high-level research on CSDP (in the wider context of CFSP) is met in the European Higher Education Area's academic institutes and in non-academic civilian, military and special status bodies.

Taking into consideration the EU's priority to enhance cooperation between education, research and innovation and to develop interaction between European Higher Education Area and European Research Area.

Recognising the rapid evolution of the security environment, including cyber threats, hybrid warfare, artificial intelligence, climate-related security challenges, and emerging technologies, which requires adaptive and forward-looking doctoral research and education.

Acknowledging the transformative impact of digital technologies on education and research, and the need to harness these technologies while maintaining academic integrity and rigour.

Being confident that institutions accredited to award doctorates and conduct postdoctoral research will benefit from an enhanced connection with specialised and practical expertise found in non-accredited bodies and institutions and that those bodies and institutions will benefit from the accredited excellence of academic institutions to reinforce their actions and make them more visible through scientific channels.

Committing to developing the mobility of knowledge, skills and competence among institutes and bodies that develop and implement expertise on European security and defence, making the best use of the most innovative, inclusive and internationalised education and training methods, and encouraging the recognition of research and learning outcomes across the European Union.

Building on the experience and network of the European Security and Defence College to support the creation of a pool of high-level scientific researchers reflecting on CSDP.

Following the decision to create the European Doctoral School on the Common Security and Defence Policy and the success of the programme during 2019-2026.

Committed to the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion, and to ensuring that the Doctoral School is accessible to all qualified candidates regardless of background, disability, or personal circumstances.

Have agreed on the following provisions for the coordination of the project to which they are committing.

Article 1

Objectives and organisation

1. The European Doctoral School on the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) aims to facilitate Philosophiae Doctoral (PhD) studies and research on CSDP in the wider context of CFSP, and to pool and share the relevant expertise of the European Higher Education Area's academic institutes and of non-academic civilian and military bodies.
2. It makes this expertise available to scientific research, in the framework of PhD curricula conducted by its network institutions, in the form of supplementary programme of doctoral, postdoctoral and research-related training on CSDP, linked with knowledge, skills and competencies. The provisions of this Charter and its subsequent procedures only complement those governing the PhD curricula of accredited network institutions, and do not replace the doctoral requirements of the lead institution.
3. It is based on a network of voluntary military and civilian higher education institutions and European Union agencies and bodies acting in the field, which may or may not be accredited to offer doctoral courses and diplomas.

4. The European Doctoral School on CSDP is coordinated by the European Doctoral School on CSDP Working Group, which is a specific configuration of the Executive Academic Board of the ESDC.
5. The Doctoral School will operate in accordance with the principles of academic freedom, research excellence, and the highest standards of scientific integrity.

Article 2

Network institutions

1. The network of the European Doctoral School on CSDP consists of:
 - a. higher education institutions from the European Union accredited by their national authorities to offer doctoral diplomas/degrees (hereinafter 'accredited institutions¹');
 - b. research, education and training institutions of European Union Member States not accredited to offer doctoral diplomas, but which have relevant CSDP expertise and are members of the European Security and Defence College network (hereinafter 'non-accredited institutions');
 - c. European Union agencies and bodies that are active in CSDP in the wider context of CFSP (hereinafter 'non-accredited agencies and bodies');
 - d. academic institutions and entities from non-EU countries that actively contribute to achieving the objectives of the European Doctoral School on CSDP, if they have an active cooperation agreement with one of the existing members of the Working Group (hereinafter 'associate members').

Only accredited institutions can be designated as 'lead institutions' for supervising candidates' PhD research and awarding doctoral degrees.

2. The network institutions voluntarily commit to the principles and coordination mechanisms contained in the provisions of the Charter after expressing approval of the Charter, following their respective internal procedures, and declaration to the ESDC Secretariat.
3. Any institution described in paragraph 1 may apply to become a member of the Doctoral School network by sending an application to the ESDC Secretariat, together with information about its expertise on CSDP in the wider context of CFSP. The Working Group of the European Doctoral School on CSDP examines the applications presented by the ESDC Secretariat and approves membership by consensus. The membership is only valid for the Doctoral Working Group.
4. Associate members may participate in Working Group meetings, contribute to training and research activities, and access the platform of CSDP expertise, but will not have voting rights.
5. Any network institution can withdraw its participation in the Doctoral School network by providing written notice to the ESDC Secretariat at least six months before the start of the next academic year. The withdrawing institution must declare its intent to withdraw, and arrangements should then be taken with any other network institutions which are engaged in courses involving that institution for the continuation of the activities.

6. If any network member does not organise, co-organise or participate in any Doctoral School activity, including the Working Group meetings, over the course of two years, or does not have any PhD Fellows, it will be considered dormant, following a formal written warning by the Chair. If this continues for more than one year, they will be excluded from the network without further notice.

Article 3

Generic principles and focus

1. The Working Group of the European Doctoral School on CSDP (hereinafter the 'Working Group') is a task-orientated configuration of the Executive Academic Board (EAB) of the ESDC. It will report back to the EAB at least once a year on the occasion of the Annual Report on ESDC Activities.
2. The Working Group oversees:
 - a. the European Doctoral School on CSDP;
 - b. postdoctoral research;
 - c. the annual PhD prize;
 - d. other research-related projects performed under the auspices of the ESDC and assigned to the Working Group.
3. The Working Group is composed of representatives from the network institutions. It makes recommendations to the EAB by consensus. One representative per institution has the right to vote when consensus cannot be met. In such cases and with the exception of the amendments presented hereinafter, a simple majority is needed to adopt a decision.
The voting right can be delegated to another representative present at the meeting.
Associate members do not have voting rights.
4. Two elected PhD Fellow representatives participate in the WG with one vote. The PhD Fellow representatives will be elected by the body of active PhD Fellows for a term of one academic year, renewable once. The election procedure will be defined in the Rules of Procedure.
5. The Working Group meets at least twice per academic year. At least one of these meetings should be organised in Brussels. Meetings may be held in person, by videoconference, or in hybrid format.
6. The Working Group designates a Chair by consensus or by simple majority if consensus is not met, through a country-based vote for a renewable term of two years. The Chair of the Working Group will be invited to attend EAB meetings and is requested to be present for the presentation of the Annual Report. The Working Group decides upon the same procedure and appoints a Vice-Chair and defines their role in the Rules of Procedure.

7. The Chair of the Working Group is also the Chair of the European Doctoral School on CSDP.
8. The strategic guidelines of the Working Group are proposed by the Chair in cooperation with the Vice-Chair and the ESDC Coordinator and are then adopted by the Working Group.

Article 4

Tasks of the Working Group

1. The tasks of the Working Group include:
 - a. identifying scientific themes for the definition of Doctoral School's activities, together with the EAB and EEAS;
 - b. establishing the procedures of the European Doctoral School on CSDP and the overall research framework.
 - c. keeping the platform of CSDP expertise of the Doctoral School up to date.
 - d. determining the number of candidates to be accepted into the European Doctoral School on CSDP programme and publishing the calls for applications;
 - e. examining and deciding on candidates' applications for PhD/other programmes for the European Doctoral School on CSDP's training programmes;
 - f. keeping track of annual progress reports of CSDP PhD Fellows and asking members of the PhD committee questions;
 - g. holding discussions on and promoting best practices of innovative, inclusive and international doctoral education and training, such as recognition and quality assurance;
 - h. identifying lessons learnt for the European Doctoral School on CSDP after a PhD curriculum is completed;
 - i. approving new network institutions and associate members;
 - j. designing, developing and implementing initiatives for contributing to the CSDP curriculum for PhD Fellows of the European Doctoral School on CSDP;
 - k. developing the thematic areas and framework for postdoctoral research, following consultations with the High Representative/Vice President of the European Commission and the relevant EEAS counterparts;
 - l. contributing to the annual PhD prize competition;
 - m. drafting and maintaining a document taking stock of the funding possibilities for activities in the domain of the European Doctoral School on CSDP and supporting its network institutions in applications to funding programmes for activities related to the scope of the School;
 - n. amending this Charter by a qualified majority of two thirds of votes;
 - o. the Working Group may decide to create task forces to which it assigns a specifically defined mandate under the responsibility of a member of the Working Group, with the support of the Secretariat and the supervision of the Chair. The responsibilities of such task forces will be defined in the Rules of Procedure;
 - p. conducting periodic strategic reviews of the Doctoral School's activities, relevance, and alignment with evolving EU security and defence priorities;

- q. applying and overseeing quality assurance mechanisms for the Doctoral School activities in accordance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG);
 - r. adopting and reviewing the Rules of Procedure, and other implementing documents.
2. The ESDC Doctoral School Coordinator performs the duties of the Secretariat of the European Doctoral School on CSDP on behalf of the ESDC. These duties include:
 - a. supporting communication with network institutions and PhD Fellows;
 - b. receiving and sending applications and progress reports from the leading institutions to the Working Group;
 - c. managing and overseeing the Working Group platform;
 - d. organising the meetings of the Working Group;
 - e. supporting the work of the Chair;
 - f. maintaining records and archives of the Doctoral School's activities.
 3. The daily/executive management of the Working Group's tasks is ensured by the Chair, supported by the Doctoral School Coordinator. All executive decisions will be communicated to the Working Group in due time.
 4. The Working Group may create subsidiary structures as deemed necessary for the implementation of its missions.

SECTION I – EUROPEAN DOCTORAL SCHOOL ON CSDP

Article 5

Candidates, supervisors and mentors

1. Every year, the Working Group determines the number of PhD candidates to be accepted into the CSDP Doctoral School and publishes this number in the call for applications. The Working Group can decide to have one or more calls for applications per year.
2. Candidates for the European Doctoral School on CSDP programme are eligible if they:
 - a. are enrolled as PhD students at an accredited member institution of the European Doctoral School on CSDP;
 - b. can prove that they have level CEFR C1 in English;
 - c. fulfil the conditions for 'EU Confidential' security clearance. This may be requested for certain activities as specified in the call for applications. Candidates who cannot obtain such clearance will not be excluded from the programme but may be excluded from specific classified activities.
3. The Working Group selects new PhD Fellows taking into consideration the EEAS Gender Equality and Diversity guidelines and the European Doctoral School on CSDP Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Plan and geographical balance.

4. Each PhD Fellow will have one or more supervisor(s) from the lead institution who bears primary responsibility for their doctoral research.
5. In addition to the supervisor, each PhD Fellow will be assigned a mentor from the Doctoral School network. The mentor will:
 - a. provide guidance on CSDP-specific aspects of the research;
 - b. facilitate access to relevant networks, institutions, and practitioners;
 - c. offer professional development advice and career guidance;
 - d. be available for consultation at least quarterly.

Specifications will be provided in the Rules of Procedures

Article 6

Platform of CSDP expertise

1. The ESDC Secretariat manages an online platform that is made available to network institutions, the Working Group and associated members and PhD Fellows intending to carry out research on CSDP in the wider context of CFSP. The platform:
 - a. identifies relevant expertise available from the network institutions in specific areas of CSDP;
 - b. allows available mentors to exchange contact details with candidates of the CSDP Doctoral School;
 - c. presents the scientific work of relevant experts;
 - d. keeps a record of the PhD on CSDP, progress reports and abstracts or theses, when they are publicly available;
 - e. provides training material which supports the Doctoral School's activities and events and access to learning resources, research tools, and relevant databases;
 - f. facilitates collaboration and exchange among PhD Fellows, supervisors, mentors, and network institutions.
2. The platform is kept up to date by the members of the Working Group, supported by the Secretariat.
3. The platform will contain restricted areas to protect personal information as defined by the Working Group.

Article 7

Selection procedure

1. The PhD Fellows must be registered/enrolled in an accredited institution.
2. The selection, admission into the European Doctoral School on CSDP and subsequent rights and obligations are established by separate documents implementing the principles contained in this Charter and in the 'Rules of Procedure'.
3. In the selection process, the Working Group gives priority to research proposals involving joint PhD degrees, in accordance with the practices of the European Higher Education Area.
4. Negative decisions of the Working Group must be adequately reasoned.

Article 8

Rights and obligations of CSDP PhD Fellows

1. Fellows admitted into the European Doctoral School on CSDP have access to the training and internship possibilities offered by the Doctoral School in accordance with the rules and regulations of their lead institution(s) and as a supplement to the obligations they contain.
2. The admitted PhD Fellows receive the status of the 'ESDC PhD Fellow' after the completion of the first training activity provided by the ESDC Doctoral School.
3. In order to obtain the certificate of the European Doctoral School on CSDP and before the defence of their PhD thesis, ESDC PhD Fellows must have successfully completed a minimum of 15 ECTS at the Doctoral School (calculated from the date of the admission), as validated by their PhD committees or supervisors, or doctoral schools or other competent institutional body, in at least two of following pillars:
 - a. Learning and training: the ESDC PhD Fellow must complete at least two residential Doctoral School activities per year, unless the Working Group decides otherwise. They may take residential and/or internet-distance learning courses or training provided by the Doctoral School's network institutions and/or courses or training from the ESDC annual course catalogue.
 - b. Dissemination: the ESDC PhD Fellow must indicate their status as an ESDC PhD Fellow in their thesis. Moreover, they must share the products of their research over the course of the PhD curriculum either through:
 - i. at least one contribution in a relevant publication indexed in a scientific database over the course of the PhD;
 - ii. and/or the presentation of their work at one scientific conference at least, of which the proceedings are published in a publication indexed in a scientific database;
 - iii. and/or demonstrate that they are giving regular teaching or training in connection with the research topic.
 - c. Mobility: the ESDC PhD Fellow must perform scientific or academic tasks, to be defined with the appropriate institutions including in the form of a visiting fellowship, in one or more of the non-leading institutions represented on the PhD committee or in any European Union institution, body or agency. The European mobility requirement can also be fulfilled by participating in and completing ESDC courses, the CSDP Summer School or any other learning or training initiative the Doctoral School would decide to create. In its effort to enhance European mobility among CSDP PhD candidates, the European Doctoral School on CSDP uses contributions from its network institutions to implement the proposed activities and will make use, to the greatest possible extent, of the mobility programmes and subsequent financial support proposed by the European Commission.

- d. PhD Fellows who face documented hardship preventing physical mobility may request alternative arrangements from the Working Group, including virtual mobility or extended timelines. Such applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
4. The ESDC will encourage/enhance the research of ESDC PhD Fellows, and possibly supervisors and mentors, by allowing an adequate number of seats on its courses, including the CSDP High-Level Course.
5. The ESDC PhD Fellows must submit and present an annual progress report - signed by their supervisors, based on the template published by the Working Group. The report must be submitted by 31 August of each year and will be presented at the first Working Group meeting of the academic year or during a dedicated Doctoral School activity. The Working Group takes note of the progress and decides on their status.

Article 9

Status of the Doctoral Fellows

1. ESDC PhD Fellows can have the status of 'active', 'dormant' or 'suspended'.
2. *Active* fellows are those who have attended at least two Doctoral School activities in the course of an academic year and have presented their progress report as prescribed by the Charter. The Working Group progress report meeting described in Article 8 counts as an activity.
3. At the end of each academic year, the Working Group will take note of the progress and determine which fellows have not attended the activities/submitted their reports and, on a case-by-case basis, decide on the *dormant* status, informing their leading institution in this aspect. Before deciding on dormant status, the Secretariat must notify the Fellow in writing, providing 30 days for them to respond with any justification. Following consideration of any response, the Working Group may decide on the dormant status, informing their leading institution in this regard. ESDC PhD Fellows that are 'dormant' for two consecutive years will automatically lose their status of Fellow of the European Doctoral School on CSDP at the beginning of the next academic year. The ESDC Secretariat will inform the leading institution of this decision.
4. *Suspended* ESDC PhD Fellows are those who are suspended based on a decision by the parent institution, which is reported to the Working Group by the leading institution. Grounds for suspension may include medical reasons or personal decisions of the CSDP PhD Fellow. The maximum suspension period is 2 years and is cumulative.
5. ESDC PhD Doctoral Fellows that conclude the defence of their thesis without following the procedures described in Article 10 will have their status as Doctoral Fellows, as well as all benefits resulting from it, automatically terminated.

Article 10

Defence of the doctoral thesis

1. When the ESDC PhD Fellow has completed their obligations in the framework of the European Doctoral School on CSDP and the leading institution has authorised the Fellow to defend their thesis, the institutional representative (legal representative or PhD coordinator/supervisor) notifies the ESDC Working Group of the decision and the details of the organisation of the defence. The official notification must occur at least one month before the scheduled defence. The ESDC Working Group Coordinator will inform the members of the Working Group, who will take note of the defence.
2. The thesis defence will take place either at the leading institution, at one of the non-leading institutions or in Brussels in person or in a hybrid format. Special arrangements will then be made for hosting the audience as needed and allow for PhD supervisors and ESDC/Working Group representatives to attend. The defence is public and is fully conducted in one of the official languages of the ESDC (currently English or French), online or in person, in accordance with the internal regulations of the leading institutions.
3. The composition and meetings of the PhD committee are defined by the rules and regulations of the leading institution(s). It is responsible for overseeing the doctoral research and curriculum. The thesis' jury is composed in accordance with the rules and regulations of the leading institution(s) for evaluating the doctoral thesis during its defence.
4. For the completion of the CSDP Doctoral School-related obligations, the PhD thesis' jury of a candidate must be composed of any of the following:
 - a. at least one professor/expert registered on the CSDP Doctoral School's platform;
 - b. at least one of the professors/experts involved must be from a different EU nationality/jurisdiction than the organising institution from the EU Member States.

In the composition of the PhD jury, particular attention is paid to ensuring balanced representation of higher education institutions from different European Union Member States, and the possible representation of European Union agencies and bodies.

The Working Group will decide on a case-by-case basis if the national/institutional rules have different requirements.

5. After the defence, the candidate may submit their thesis in English or French to the ESDC PhD prize competition.
6. The thesis, written in one of the official working languages of the ESDC (English or French) may be made available on the ESDC Doctoral School website/platform.

Article 11

Certificate

1. The European Doctoral School on CSDP encourages the use of interinstitutional configurations, such as the joint diplomas, for CSDP PhD curricula. The use of interinstitutional agreements based on the European Commission's programmes for the integration of higher education is recommended.

2. Once the PhD diploma has been awarded by the leading institution(s), PhD graduates who successfully complete the obligations of the European Doctoral School on CSDP will receive:
 - a. the European Doctoral School on CSDP certificate, confirming the completion of the ESDC Doctoral Programme, issued by the ESDC, on behalf of all the Doctoral School's network institutions, after the official communication from the leading institution (and attached copy of the doctoral diploma/degree/other official document).
 - b. The diplomas and the certificate will be recognised by all network institutions as conferring the status of PhD on the graduate. The network institutions individually, the Working Group, the ESDC, the European CSDP agencies and bodies, in collaboration with the relevant national authorities, will promote the qualification and diploma's value and their recognition in all European Union Member States as reflecting the highest scientific standards in the field of CSDP.

SECTION II – POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH

Article 12

Postdoctoral candidates

1. Candidates for the postdoctoral programme must:
 - a. be a citizen of an EU Member State;
 - b. have successfully defended a PhD thesis on a topic related to CSDP/CFSP and can produce proof of having received their PhD title in accordance with their national regulations;
 - c. have successfully defended their PhD thesis in an institution from ESDC network.

Article 13

Organisation of the postdoctoral programme

1. The Working Group will hold a yearly consultation with the European External Action Service in order to identify thematic areas of interest/research. The thematic areas will provide the grounds for each postdoctoral call for applications.
2. Based on the topics identified, the Working Group will launch, subject to budget availability and ESDC strategic priorities, calls for applications. The shortlisted candidates will be interviewed by a mixed committee.
3. The approved candidates will receive the status of postdoctoral researchers of the European Doctoral School on CSDP.
4. The tasks of postdoctoral researchers will include:
 - a. writing postdoctoral research on the topic for which the researcher has been selected;
 - b. supporting, when possible, the training, research and mentoring activities of the European Doctoral School on CSDP and the College.
 - c.

5. The procedures, templates and rules regarding the research will be decided by the Working Group on an annual basis.
6. Postdoctoral researchers can be appointed by the Working Group for up to one year.
7. Postdoctoral research may be published on the website of the ESDC Doctoral School.
8. Intellectual property rights in postdoctoral research outputs will be governed by agreement between the researcher, the ESDC, and any host institution, to be concluded before commencement of the research.

Article 14

Postdoctoral Committee

1. The Postdoctoral Committee is responsible for overseeing the research progress of Postdoctoral Fellows. It is composed of at three academics from the ESDC network, with the possibility of an additional member, representative from an EU body, including the ESDC/EEAS, with a PhD, following a decision by the Working Group.
2. The composition of the committees will vary depending on each research topic.

SECTION III – ANNUAL PhD PRIZE

Article 15

Organisation

1. Every year, the Working Group publishes a call for selecting the annual PhD prize. The prize will consist of a monetary award, the amount of which will be determined annually by the Working Group subject to budget availability.
2. The Selection Committee is composed of one PhD supervisor, one ESDC staff member and other representatives of the academic community/EU institutions.
3. The winner will be awarded a certificate and offered the opportunity to present their research at an ESDC/Doctoral School event.
4. All procedural aspects and decisions must be approved by the Working Group.

SECTION IV - ALUMNI

Article 16

Doctoral School Alumni

The European Doctoral School on CSDP supports the integration of the PhD graduates - they may be invited as observers or contributors in ESDC and the Doctoral School activities.

Article 17**Costs**

1. The network institutions and the Working Group are encouraged to identify and make use of existing possibilities of external funding to support work in the area of the PhD studies in order to cover costs borne by institutions or CSDP PhD candidates in relation to the completion of the curriculum and the defence of the thesis.

Article 18**Final provisions**

1. After a maximum two years after its amendment according to the rules and procedures of the ESDC, the Working Group will review this Charter and propose the amendments that are deemed necessary.
