



# ENHANCING THE COMMON EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE CULTURE EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE JOINT MASTER PROGRAMME. A PROPOSAL

## Alin BODESCU

“Nicolae Bălcescu” Land Forces Academy, Sibiu, Romania  
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### Introduction

The EU faces complex security challenges that require coordinated responses and interoperable capabilities.

A common security and defence culture is critical, fostered through advanced education and training.

The European Security and Defence College (ESDC) has 20 years of experience in CSDP training but lacks a comprehensive joint master's programme.

#### Objectives

- Assess the current landscape of education and training for Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).
- Evaluate the ESDC's role in enhancing the EU's security and defence culture.
- Propose a joint master programme aligned with EU higher education initiatives.

#### Methods

- Policy analysis of key EU documents (Strategic Compass, CSDP policies, Council Decisions on ESDC).
- Comparative assessment of existing security and defence education programmes.
- Structured proposal development focusing on micro-credentials, quality assurance, and joint degree frameworks.

### The European Joint Degree Initiative

The EU is advancing toward a more integrated higher education system with the proposed Joint European Degree initiative, aiming to enhance the global competitiveness and appeal of European education. Rooted in the Bologna Process and European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the initiative envisions transnational degrees that provide a truly European academic experience.

#### Key features include:

- A two-phase implementation: a **joint degree label** followed by a full joint degree framework by **2029**.
- Requirements for **transnational cooperation, integrated curricula, and student mobility**.
- Emphasis on a strong **European identity**, adherence to **quality assurance standards**, and **automatic cross-border recognition** of qualifications.

This framework seeks to overcome fragmentation and support seamless educational collaboration across EU Member States.

### ESDM Consortium

The ESDC - as the coordinator of a consortium of academies and universities to implement the European Security and Defence Joint Master Programme (ESDM) in line with the EU's 2029 roadmap.

The consortium will focus solely on managing the ESDM and include institutions that meet accreditation criteria and recognize the joint programme.

Participation will require the ability to contribute to course delivery, internship coordination, and thesis supervision.

The ERASMUS+ programme may support student mobility and consortium operations.

### European Security and Defence College (ESDC)

The ESDC, founded in 2005, plays a central role in CSDP education and training.

Over 20 years, it has expanded its focus to include hybrid threats, cybersecurity, and resilience-building, while collaborating with NATO and global partners.

It operates through a network of over 100 entities across various sectors, ensuring diverse expertise for its programs. Its recent updates emphasize strengthening EU strategic goals and external action capabilities.



### EU Security and Defence Joint Master Programme

**Type of degree:** Joint Master's Degree Programme (EQF level 7). The Consortium may decide to organise a shorter (60 ECTS) or longer (120 ECTS) programme. This proposal identifies the minimum and maximum number of ECTS for each component in each option.

**Aim:** to provide highly specialised education in the field of security and defence, with a focus on CSDP, exploiting ESDC's current course portfolio.



**Audience:** This programme is designed for civilian and military personnel seeking to deepen their understanding and skills in CSDP, offering a blend of theoretical knowledge and practical application through a flexible, modular structure. The candidates are proposed by national competent authorities and selected by the consortium governance body.

**Duration:** 2 to 5 years (part-time/flexible learning).

**Prerequisite requirements:** 240 – 180 ECTS, the completion of the CSDP Orientation Course, minimum 2-3 years' experience in the field of security and defence, English language C1 level.

### ESDM - The Value Added

The European Security and Defence Joint Master Programme (ESDM) aims to enhance the EU's common security and defence culture by integrating ESDC's training into a flexible, modular joint master's degree structure.

#### Key benefits include:

- Advancing ESDC's reform by streamlining and standardizing its course offerings.
- Supporting EU policies on joint degrees and micro-credentials.
- Promoting stackability of courses (e.g. Orientation Course → High-Level Course).
- Allowing ESDC courses to serve both regular participants and ESDM students, with the latter receiving enrolment priority.

### EU Security and Defence Culture

• **Common understanding** of security threats, challenges, and appropriate responses among EU Member States and institutions.

• **Shared Principles:** The EU security and defence culture is built on common values such as human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights.

• **Unified Responses:** It promotes cohesion and interoperability among EU Member States, enabling effective joint action against security threats.

• **Strategic Policies:** It is guided by key policies including the Strategic Compass for Security and Defence, the Civilian CSDP Compact, and the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises.

• **Adaptability:** The culture evolves to address emerging threats such as hybrid warfare, cyber threats, and climate security challenges.

• **Training Integration:** CSDP training integrates EU principles and policies to foster a cohesive understanding and operational capability among professionals.

### Conclusions

The proposed ESDM programme is a strategically innovative initiative aimed at advancing EU security and defence education by offering a modular, EU-labelled degree aligned with CSDP policies.

It leverages the ESDC's credibility, promotes harmonisation through quality assurance mechanisms, and addresses emerging threats.

However, its success hinges on overcoming governance, coordination, and legal challenges while ensuring member states' commitment.

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### Contact Information

Assist. Prof. Alin BODESCU, Ph.D

“Nicolae Bălcescu” Land Forces Academy, Sibiu, Romania

Tel: +40-269-432990  
Fax: +40-269-215554  
Email: [bodescu.alin@armyacademy.ro](mailto:bodescu.alin@armyacademy.ro)  
Web: <https://www.armyacademy.ro/>