

# Developing Intercultural Competence and Soft Skills through International Activities in Security and Defence Education: International Modules and Schools, BIPs and COILs



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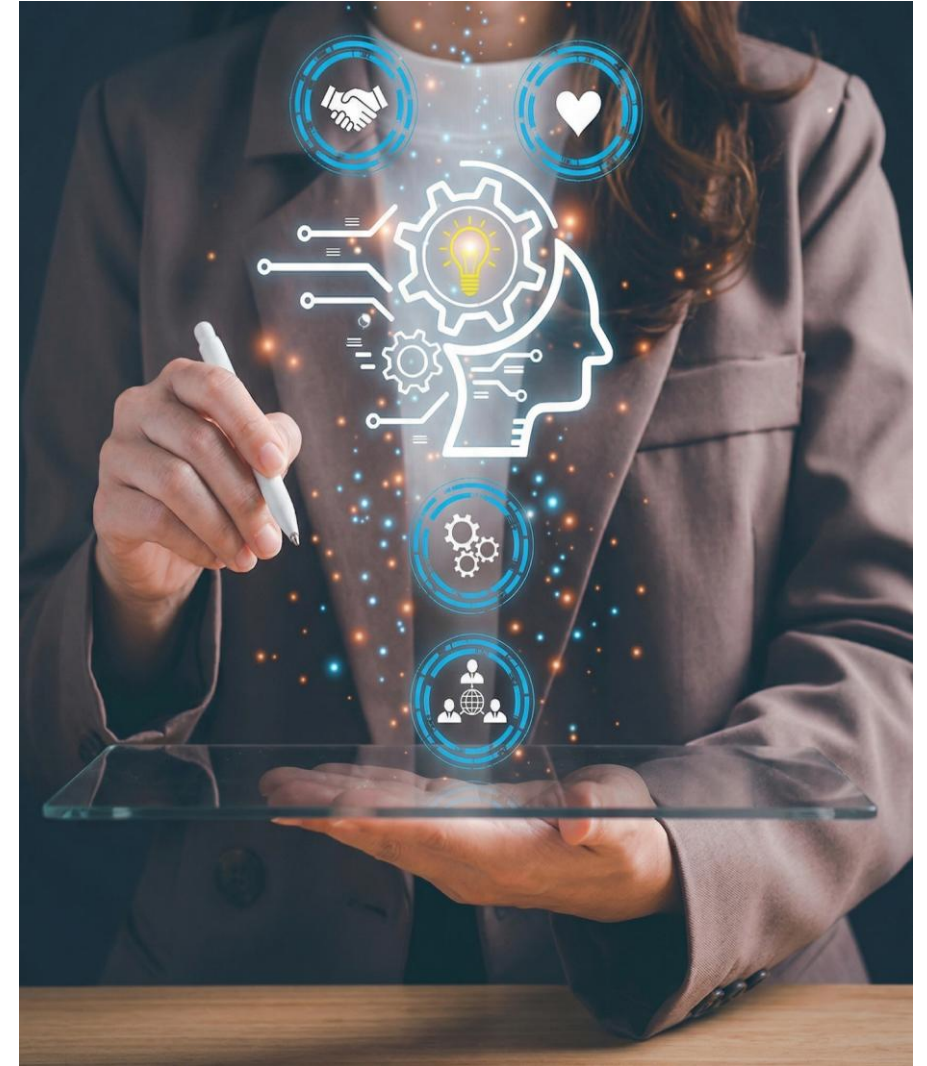
*<sup>2</sup>Italian Army Officers School*

Riga, 25<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> May 2026

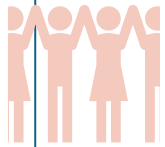


# Soft skills

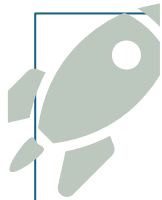
- ❑ The term "soft skills" was **coined by the U.S. Army** in the late 1960s.
- ❑ **Soft skills**, also known as **power skills, common skills, essential skills, or core skills**, are psychosocial skills that are generally applicable to all professions (*Wikipedia*).
- ❑ Soft skills are **distinguished from *hard skills***, otherwise referred to as *technical skills*, which are specific to individual professions or occupations.



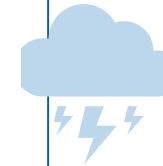
# The seven areas of soft skills



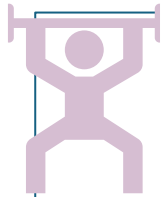
Team collaboration



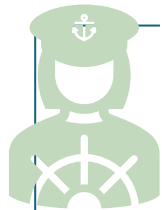
Ability to take initiative



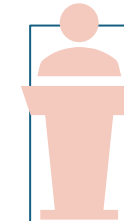
Ability to foresee and prevent an undesired situation



Ability to work under pressure



Leadership



Communication and negotiation skills



Critical and analytical thinking

*(Geraedts et al., 2022)*

# Intercultural Competence

“**Adequate knowledge** about particular cultures, as well as general knowledge about . . . issues arising when members of different cultures interact, **holding receptive attitudes** that encourage establishing and maintaining contact with diverse others, as well as **having the skills required** (in) . . . interacting with others from different cultures”

*(UNESCO 2013)*

“The ability to **communicate effectively** and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural **knowledge, skills, and attitudes**”

*(Deardorff, 2006)*

“**Communication and behavior** that is both effective and appropriate when interacting across difference”

*(Deardorff, 2009)*

# Importance of intercultural competence and soft skills



Learn to **operate in multinational contexts** and collaborate with colleagues from **different cultural and institutional backgrounds**



Develop a **European Security and Defence culture**



Respond effectively to complex challenges that require both **technical skills and intercultural sensitivity**

# Which international activities can be proposed to students to develop intercultural competence and soft skills in the Security and Defence area?

## **BIP**

Blended Intensive Programme

## **COIL**

Collaborative Online  
International Learning

## **International school**

Within KA2 Erasmus+ project

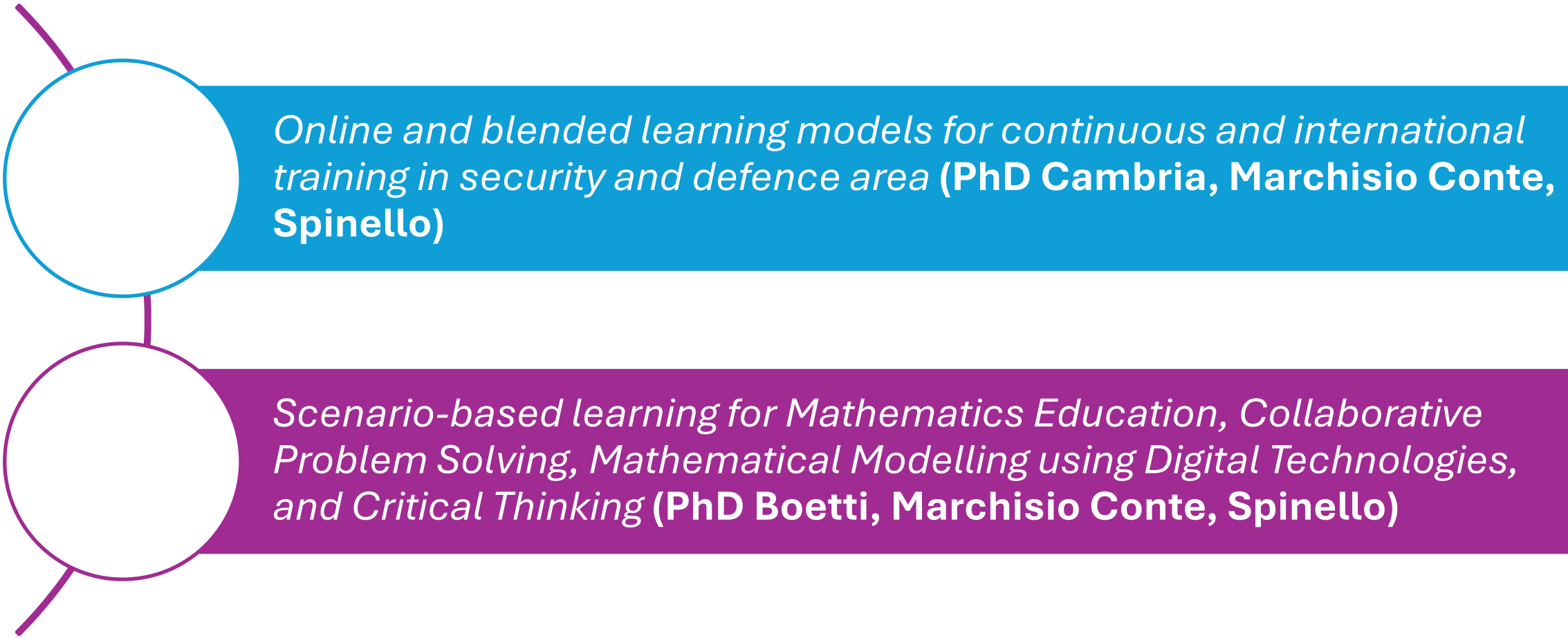
## **International common module**

# International activities in Turin (IT-Army Officers School, UniTo)

| Name   | Type  | N° Editions |
|--|---|-------------|
| <b>Common Security and Defence Policy</b>                                    | Int. Mod. since 2013/14 - BIP since 2022/23 | 13          |
| <b>Law of Armed Conflicts</b>  | Int. Mod. since 2013/14 - BIP since 2022/23 | 13          |
| <b>Biosafety and Bioterrorism</b>  | Int. Mod. since 2020/21 - BIP since 2022/23 | 6           |
| <b>Problem Solving and Critical Thinking</b>                                 | BIP since 2022/2023                         | 4           |
| <b>Gender Perspectives in Security and Defence</b>                           | BIP since 2025/2026                         | 1           |
| <b>Linear Algebra for Economic, Finance, Security and Defence strategies</b> | COIL since 2024/2025                        | 2           |
| <b>DIGICODE</b>  | International school                        | 1           |
| <b>Digital Mathematics Applied in Defence and Security Education - DIMAS</b> | International school                        | 1           |



# Research on the impact of international activities on the development of intercultural competence and soft skills

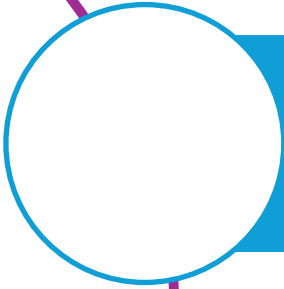


*Online and blended learning models for continuous and international training in security and defence area (PhD Cambria, Marchisio Conte, Spinello)*

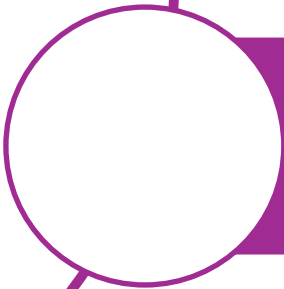
*Scenario-based learning for Mathematics Education, Collaborative Problem Solving, Mathematical Modelling using Digital Technologies, and Critical Thinking (PhD Boetti, Marchisio Conte, Spinello)*

# Preliminary results of the impact of international activities

The first analysis (both qualitative and quantitative) on the editions of the BIP (2022-2025) showed that blended, collaborative and international learning helped students increase:



**Intercultural Competence:** flexibility, social initiative, cultural empathy and emotional stability;



**Soft Skills:** the ability to take initiative, the ability to foresee and prevent an undesired situation, communication, negotiation and presentation skills, critical and analytical skills.

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!



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