

**Invitation to the
Course on Comprehensive Protection of Civilians
Updated and Redesigned Course**
(Act. No. 25-26/30/2)

Vienna, Austria from 15 to 19 June 2026

The Austrian Federal Ministry of Defence (AUT MoD) and the Austrian Centre for Peace (ACP), under the aegis of the European Security and Defence College (ESDC), have the honour of co-organising the updated and redesigned Course on Comprehensive Protection of Civilians (CPoC), to be held in Vienna, Austria, from 15 June – 19 June 2026.

The course was developed in close cooperation between the Federal Ministry of Defence and the Austrian Centre for Peace and has furthermore been supported by the Federal Chancellery of the Republic of Austria, the Federal Ministry of Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs and the Federal Ministry of Interior. Since 2014, the course has been integrated into the academic programme of the European Security and Defence College and, in addition, has been certified by the Integrated Training Service of the United Nations Department for Peace Operations. In response to evolving conflict dynamics and emerging challenges in the protection of civilians, the course has undergone a substantial revision and update in 2025. While maintaining its strong foundations in EU, UN, NATO and ICRC approaches to Protection of Civilians, the redesigned course places greater emphasis on contemporary and cross-cutting challenges, including:

- Protection of Civilians in urban and complex operational environments
- Climate and security as a risk multiplier
- Hybrid threats and their impact on civilian populations
- Stronger integration of current conflict contexts
- Enhanced scenario-based practical exercises, translating policy into operational decision-making

The redesign further strengthens the course's comprehensive and integrated approach, highlighting the complementary roles and shared responsibilities of civilian, police and military actors across the full spectrum of crisis management and conflict settings as well as missions and operations. It follows the inherent principles of the mentioned and recent policy documents, thus including the integrated approach while highlighting the different roles as well as shared responsibilities of all actors addressing PoC tasks. These elements are also reflected in the scenario exercise.

The scenario exercise is set in a complex environment and portrays various contexts (e.g. urban and rural settings, situations in developing countries, various stages of conflicts etc.), while remaining entirely fictional. However, it is inspired by the dynamics of current conflicts to ensure the widest possible relevance.

The trainer team is led by the AUT MoD and ACP experts and includes international subject matter experts with civilian, police and military background, reflecting the multidimensional approach in the PoC Policy.

The overall course objective is to enable graduates to improve their understanding of the various mandates of operating actors in protection of civilians and to identify options for coordinated and joint actions and measures for a more effective protection of civilians in conflict zones.

We invite you to nominate suitable candidates for this training activity, which offers an excellent opportunity to gain an insight into PoC policies in the international and the CSDP context, thus contributing to achieving the ultimate goal of the course, namely providing Member States and EU institutions with knowledgeable personnel, able to work in CSDP-related fields.

Please find attached details concerning the registration process and a tentative programme.

Mr Bernhard FRANKL
Course Director
Federal Ministry of Defence

Mr Fergal O REGAN
Head of the European
Security and Defence College

Monika PSENNER
Head of Capacity Development
Austrian Centre for Peace

Administrative Remarks

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Administrative Information

- **Target group:** the course is open to national and international experts and mid- to senior level staff from the armed forces (from the rank of Maj/OF-3 and above) and police (equivalent levels of police officers and above) from EU Member States, relevant institutions and agencies, non-governmental/civilian organisations, and political institutions, civilian administrations and international organisations working with relevant experience in the area of peacekeeping, peacebuilding or international crisis management.
- **Places and nominations:** maximum 30 places will be available to international participants. Typically, one or two places are allocated to each EU Member State, but depending on the total number of requests, one additional place may be offered. The course welcomes participants from third countries, candidate countries, international organisations and NGOs based on the availability of seats. Our objective is to put together a group that is balanced in terms of gender and professional background.
- **Application:**

Applications from EU Member States and relevant bodies/agencies are to be submitted via the ESDC secure internet system ENLIST, by designated nominators, at <https://esdc.europa.eu/enlist/login> **no later than 03 May 2026**. A list of ENLIST nominators can be found on the ESDC website at <https://esdc.europa.eu/nominators/> .

Applications from candidate countries and third countries, international organisations and other non-EU bodies should apply **no later than 03 May 2026** over the application form available on the ACP over this link: [ESDC Course on the Comprehensive Protection of Civilians - ACP](#) and are subject to a selection process by the designated course admission board.
- **Registration:** Registration will not be final until confirmed by the ACP.
- **Language:** The working language will be English, without translation.
- **E-Learning:** The course will be preceded by a mandatory e-learning module, which needs to be finalised before the residential phase starts (14 June 2026).
- **Attendance:** The participant's attendance during the course is mandatory on all days. A certificate will be awarded on the last day to those course participants who have completed the full course, including the e-learning module.
- **Course venue:** The venue for the entire course will be the National Defence Academy in Vienna, Austria. Participants are expected to organize their own transportation to and from the course location. The address of the course venue is: Sift Kaserne General Spannocchi, Stiftgasse 2A, 1070 Vienna.
- **Costs:** All costs for international travel and accommodation (including breakfast and lunch) are to be covered by the sending authorities or the participants themselves. There is no fee for participation in the course itself.
- **Travel:** Participants are recommended to arrive on Sunday, 14 June and may depart on 19 June in the evening.
- **Hotel:** Participants are responsible for their own accommodation arrangement.
- **Dress code:** Formal civilian dress code or military uniform for the opening (suit & tie, lady's equivalent); smart casual for the regular course days (i.e. no jacket or tie, working dress).

- **Liability and insurance:** In the event of a medical emergency, the costs must be covered by the participant's medical insurance provided by the sending country/organisation. The organisers will not provide health or accident insurance for participants taking part in the event.
- **Visa:** Participants needing a visa to enter Austria are advised to book an appointment at the appropriate embassy as soon as they apply to participate. The ACP will issue a supporting letter along with the confirmation of participation. Obtaining a visa in good time and all related costs are the responsibility of the sending entity/the participant.
- **Inclusivity:** the ESDC strives to create a gender-sensitive and inclusive environment in all its courses, activities and day-to-day work. Only in an inclusive environment can all people and therefore also the ESDC and its partners, achieve their true potential. We do not and will not discriminate on the basis of race, colour, religion, gender, gender expression, age, national origin, disability, marital status or sexual orientation in any of our activities or operations. The ESDC and the training institutions will not tolerate any conduct that violates these values.
- **Points of contact:**

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Austrian Centre for Peace: Ms Susanne J. GYÖRÖG, Senior Programme Manager

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Tentative Programme Overview
ESDC Comprehensive Protection of Civilians Course
15 to 19 June 2026 in Vienna, Austria

Monday 15 June	Tuesday 16 June	Wednesday 17 June	Thursday 18 June	Friday 19 June
08:30 - 09:30 Official Opening General Introduction to the course (incl. In-Test)	08:30 - 09:30 Civilians & Humanitarian Assistance	08:30 - 10:00 International Legal Frameworks: IHL, IHRL, EWIPA	08:30 - 09:30 Women Peace & Security & Conflict related SGBV	08:30 - 09:30 Early Recovery
09:30 – 09:45 Break	09:30 – 09:45 Break	10:00 – 10:15 Break	09:30 – 09:45 Break	09:30 – 09:45 Break
09:45 - 10:45 General Introduction to POC	09:45 – 10:45 Non-state Armed Actors	10:15 – 11:15 Protection of IDPs and Refugees	09:45 - 10:45 Children and Armed Conflict	09:45 – 11:15 Scenario / Vignettes
10:45 – 11:00 Break	10:45 - 11:00 Break	11:15 – 11:30 Break	10:45 – 11:00 Break	11:15 – 11:30 Break
11:00 - 12:00 EU Approach	11:00 - 12:00 Hybrid Threats and Warfare	11:30 - 12:30 ICRC - POC Specifics in Urban Contexts	11:00 – 12:00 Climate & Security	11:30 - 12:30 Scenario / Vignettes & Debriefing
12:00 - 13:15 Lunch	12:00 - 13:15 Lunch	12:30 - 13:45 Lunch	12:00 - 13:15 Lunch	12:30 - 13:45 Lunch
13:15 - 14:15 UN Approach	13:15 - 14:15 Threat Based Approach / Operational Planning	13:45 - 14:45 Scenario / Vignettes	13:15 – 14:15 Role of the Police	13:45 - 14:00 <i>Out-Test</i> ESDC-Evaluation
14:15 – 14:30 Break	14:15 – 14:30 Break	14:45 – 15:00 Break	14:15 – 14:30 Break	14:00 – 15:00 Official Closing Ceremony
14:30 – 15:30 NATO Approach / CHMR	14:30 – 15:30 Role of the Military	15:00 – 17:00 Scenario / Vignettes	14:30 - 17:00 Scenario / Vignettes	15:00 Individual Departures
15:30-15:45 Break	15:30 – 15:45			
15:45 - 17:15 Introduction to the Scenario	15:45 - 17:15 Scenario / Vignettes			
Daily Recap	Daily Recap	Daily Recap	Daily Recap	