



The Intelligence College in Europe: An Effort to Create a European Intelligence Community

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Abstract: The actors within the so-called “intelligence community” play a central role in fulfilling Europe’s security commitments by providing political and military decision-makers with critical analyses and information. The Intelligence College in Europe (ICE) is the first entity to offer both professional intelligence training and postgraduate-level academic education in intelligence and security studies for intelligence officers on a pan-European scale. In developing its postgraduate offerings, ICE has drawn upon the experience of Germany’s Master of Intelligence and Security Studies (MISS), a collaborative effort between the University of the Bundeswehr Munich and the Department of Intelligence at the Federal University of Administrative Sciences in Berlin. As a main contribution of this article, the counterterrorism module (adapted from the MISS) is examined in detail as a case study of how postgraduate modules can be tailored to meet the needs of a pan-European audience of intelligence professionals.

Keywords: intelligence studies, pan-European curriculum, European intelligence community, military education, PME.

Introduction to ICE – The Big Picture

The Intelligence College in Europe (ICE) originated from the vision of a “European Intelligence Academy,” which was first expressed by French President Macron during his speech at the Sorbonne in September 2017. This initiative aimed to bring together European national intelligence communities to collaborate in a

non-operational capacity for the first time. Prior to this, the European intelligence community was either fragmented or virtually non-existent.¹

Inaugurated in 2019, the Intelligence College in Europe (ICE) is an intergovernmental entity, independent of the European Union, with the goal of enhancing European security and building a shared strategic culture in intelligence across Europe. It brings together practitioners and academics, facilitating dialogue between the European intelligence community, decision-makers, intelligence consumers, and civil society.

In 2024, ICE will celebrate its 5th anniversary. As we approach this milestone, significant progress can already be noted in three key areas:

1. Thirty-one countries and their national intelligence communities are now part of ICE,² representing 89 intelligence and security services.
2. ICE's academic network has expanded to include 33 academic institutions, universities, and think tanks across 18 member countries.
3. For the 2023-2024 academic year, ICE offers over 30 events, training sessions, and outreach activities as part of its structured, high-quality, and widely popular academic program.

This level of success was not apparent from the beginning. The ICE, born from the idea of fostering a much-needed common strategic culture, faced a unique challenge. Unlike the US intelligence community, where convergence needs to be achieved only among the intelligence services of a single country, the ICE had to work toward developing a common intelligence “strategic culture” across a diverse array of services from 31 participating countries.

ICE's Academic Points of Efforts

ICE's activities vary in academic intensity but always include a strong academic component. These activities are structured around three key pillars.

Firstly, *thematic seminars*, where intelligence service personnel and public sector experts meet for two to three days, have become an ICE “flagship.” Organizing countries, sometimes collaborating, aim to combine academic research with practitioners' expertise to demonstrate their capacities or highlight topics of particular importance in a strategic “influence” approach. Notably, countries are increasingly pooling their top experts to deliver in-depth, “top-level” seminars on issues of significant European interest.

¹ Bob de Graaff, James M. Nyce, and Chelsea Locke, eds., *The Handbook of European Intelligence Cultures* (Lanham, MD, USA: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016).

² These 31 countries include *all* EU members, divided into 22 full members (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden) and five partners (Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Poland, and Slovakia). The other countries are Norway, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom (full members), and the Republic of Moldova (partner as of December 16, 2023).

Secondly, we conduct *outreach activities to raise awareness* on the subject through three main channels: (i) the academic world, with a focus on Master’s and PhD students as highly qualified participants; (ii) EU institutions; and (iii) publications on our website or in professional journals.

Finally, within our *academic program*, we offer training and academic instruction provided by both academics and practitioners to intelligence professionals from our member countries. This program is divided into two formats: (i) an *executive education program* for a select group of high-potential cadres, consisting of five one-week sessions held in different member countries, and (ii) a *post-graduate program*, where participants attend modules on specific fields of intelligence studies, such as counterterrorism, as explained below. The target audience for this program includes analysts at various stages of their careers and intelligence professionals who interact and collaborate in multilateral institutions like the EU or NATO.

What do we want to achieve through education? The goal of education is, first and foremost, to foster a “reflex” of cooperation, promoting mutual understanding and awareness of differences. This helps facilitate multinational collaboration on topics of shared interest.

The Three Main Challenges ICE Had to Tackle

The challenges encountered in establishing and running the Intelligence College in Europe (ICE) mirror the difficulties faced by any European intelligence education initiative.

The first challenge we faced was reluctance. Bringing together two or more intelligence services was already tricky, but incorporating academia into the equation presented the real difficulty. When discussing European intelligence education, we must acknowledge a major constraint: unlike heavily institutionalized organizations such as NATO, we lack a “big brother” who could step in to mediate or guide us back “on track” in the event of discord or misaligned priorities.

As a result, achieving genuine consensus is crucial, and this requires a consistent, ongoing respect for the diversity of our national priorities. Consider issues like immigration or Africa – these topics do not hold the same level of urgency for all European countries as issues like Ukraine or Russia. Building this consensus is paramount to the development of a European intelligence framework. This “diplomatic aspect” was, and remains, at the core of our mission.

Having doubled the number of courses offered over the last two years, we are now entering a new phase, an “appropriation phase.” This phase is marked by regular course offerings, an ongoing commitment to systematic quality assurance, and the growing interest of new countries joining the original 30 founding members.

The second significant challenge, unrelated to trust, was the tension between will and opportunity. This is perhaps one of the least “blameworthy” challenges, as there will always be more urgent or pressing issues on the agenda. External

factors, such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine, can suddenly shift an organization's priorities. In this case, the focus of every intelligence organization moved sharply towards addressing this new threat, leading to the reallocation of funds and human resources.

On the positive side, this shift has also enhanced our activities. The shared threat to European security has prompted the intelligence community to realize that collaboration is more effective than working in isolation. As a result, ICE now receives more spontaneous proposals and sees a growing willingness to explore areas previously considered sensitive, such as academic cooperation within our network or support within the EU framework.

Of course, we must acknowledge that there will never be full pan-European harmonization in how national intelligence communities are structured and operate. Diversity is, therefore, a "given" in any European intelligence education initiative. One unspoken prerequisite is the ability to fully embrace and leverage this complex and varied landscape.

The third major challenge, and our next significant step, is consolidating the growth of our academic activities. It is important to remember that ICE's primary goal is to strengthen European security. To this end, ICE has organized seminars, academic events, and outreach initiatives addressing key issues critical to European security, such as the evolving security landscape in Europe, strategic communication, innovation in intelligence, European strategic analysis, space security, and European security challenges.

In addition, ICE has held seminars focused on major strategic competitors like Russia and China, as well as on hybrid threats, countering information manipulation, cyber defense, OSINT (open-source intelligence), anticipatory intelligence, disinformation, and military intelligence. Other activities have targeted crucial topics like counterterrorism and the radicalization of European societies, further contributing to the overall security framework.

The ICE is steadily expanding its outreach activities toward the European Union. Over the past two years, it has made significant efforts to deepen cooperation with European partners, including the European Commission, the Collège d'Europe,³ SIAC,⁴ EU SATCEN,⁵ and the four EU security branches.

By doing so, the ICE trains intelligence consumers at the European level, positioning itself as a key actor within the European security architecture. In 2023, the ICE had already participated in four events in Brussels and Bruges (at the Collège d'Europe) and in events with a strong EU presence. Additionally, selected EU officials have been invited to attend outreach and thematic seminars. In the

³ College of Europe, <https://www.coleurope.eu/fr>.

⁴ See also the explanations in John M. Nomikos, "European Union Intelligence Analysis Centre (INTCEN): Next Stop to an Agency?" *Journal of Mediterranean and Balkan Intelligence* 4, no. 2 (2014): 5-13, www.rieas.gr/researchareas/editorial/2514-european-union-intelligence-analysis-centre-intcen-next-stop-to-an-agency.

⁵ The European Union Satellite Centre, <https://www.satcen.europa.eu/>.

near future, the ICE plans to establish, with support from the European Security & Defence College (ESDC),⁶ a dedicated “EU line of effort.”

The following section examines academic intelligence education in Germany, focusing on the Master of Intelligence and Security Studies (MISS). Additionally, we explore how two modules from the MISS program were incorporated into the academic curriculum of the ICE program, with a detailed analysis of the counterterrorism module as a case study.

Germany’s Master of Intelligence and Security Studies

The field of academic intelligence education was relatively neglected until about a decade ago and only offered by a few institutions.⁷ In Germany, after extensive preparation, numerous internal consultations among participating federal departments and agencies, and thorough research,⁸ the German Federal University of Administrative Sciences and the University of the Bundeswehr Munich formalized their collaboration by signing a cooperation agreement. This agreement established the Master’s degree program in “Intelligence and Security Studies” (MISS).⁹ The program is a consecutive two-year attendance course, leading to either a “Master of Arts” (M.A.) or “Master of Science” (M.Sc.) in Intelligence and Security Studies, awarded jointly by both universities.¹⁰

The study program, designed and implemented by Professors Uwe M. Borghoff and Jan-Hendrik Dietrich,¹¹ adopts a transdisciplinary approach. The content of the MISS is tailored to meet the professional needs of intelligence practice. Throughout the course, security-relevant issues, challenges, and developments are examined from various scientific perspectives, including law, psychology, political science, computer science, history, and sociology. Additionally, as shown in Figure 1, the program incorporates subjects from economics, media,

⁶ European Security and Defence College (ESDC), <https://esdc.europa.eu/>.

⁷ Anthony Glees, “Intelligence Studies, Universities and Security,” *British Journal of Educational Studies* 63, no. 3 (2015): 281-310, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00071005.2015.1076567>.

⁸ Alessandro Scheffler Corvaja, Brigita Jeraj, and Uwe M. Borghoff, “The Rise of Intelligence Studies: A Model for Germany?” *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 15, no. 1 (2016): 79-106, <http://dx.doi.org/10.11610/Connections.15.1.06>.

⁹ This MISS should not be confused with the Master of Arts in *International Security Studies* (also abbreviated MISS), another unique postgraduate program for security professionals offered jointly by the University of the Bundeswehr Munich and the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies (GCMC). See also <https://www.marshallcenter.org/en/academics/master-arts-international-security-studies-miss>.

¹⁰ Center for Intelligence and Security Studies (CISS), <https://www.unibw.de/ciss/miss>.

¹¹ Uwe M. Borghoff and Jan-Hendrik Dietrich, “Intelligence and Security Studies,” in *50 Jahre Universitäts-Informatik in München*, ed. Arndt Bode, Manfred Broy, Hans-Joachim Bungartz, and Florian Matthes (Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Vieweg, 2017), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-54712-0_9.

and cultural studies. Alongside intelligence and military practice, students develop both technical and methodological skills, as well as social and personal competencies.

Currently, the MISS program is exclusively available to German nationals and is intended for individuals working in or aspiring to work in federal intelligence services (BND – the Federal Intelligence Service, BfV – the federal level Domestic Intelligence Service, and MAD – the Military Counterintelligence Service), state-level domestic intelligence services (LfV), and soldiers or civilian members of the Bundeswehr, particularly from the German Military Intelligence, MiINW. Additionally, the program is open to members of ministerial administrations with security policy roles, such as those in the Federal Chancellery, the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community, the Federal Ministry of Defense, and the Federal Foreign Office, as well as parliamentary staff involved in intelligence oversight. There are no plans to open the entire MISS program to foreign students or professionals.


					
Jul-Dec	Master's thesis (M.A. or M.Sc. depending on the selected field) – ca. 100 Pages / 25.000 Words (25 Credits)				
Apr-Jun Berlin, Brühl or Munich	Cyber Defence	Intelligence and Public Safety	Counter- terrorism	Regional Security	Intelligence Cooperation
5 Fields of Spezialization (20 Credits for the chosen field)					
Jan-Mar Berlin	Communication and Leadership	Intelligence Accountability	Intelligence Analysis	Extremism Research	
Core Study II (18 Credits)					
Jul-Dec Berlin	Intelligence Governance	Intelligence Collection	Global Threats and Challenges	Intelligence and Cyber Security	
Theoretical Approaches and Methods of Intelligence and Security Studies					
Core Study I (27 Credits)					
Jan-Jun Munich	Introduction to Intelligence and Security Studies	Human Rights and Security from a Normative Perspective		Digitalization	
Propaedeutics (30 Credits)					

Figure 1: The MISS Curriculum in Brief (the Timeline Is from Bottom to Top, i.e., from the Preparatory Course /Propaedeutics/ to the Master's Thesis).

Germany has supported the Intelligence College in Europe (ICE) since its inception, particularly in the academic program. Early on, two modules from the Master of Intelligence and Security Studies (MISS) were identified as relevant and suitable for integration into the ICE academic program, specifically the ICE postgraduate program.

The Postgraduate Program as Part of the ICE Academic Program

The postgraduate program is one of the two central formats offered within ICE's academic program. It complements the executive education program by focusing on exposing European intelligence professionals to postgraduate-level academic instruction informed by cutting-edge research. The postgraduate program offers several key benefits by providing time and space for critical reflection and discussion on topics relevant to Europe's internal and external security. First, the free exchange of ideas deepens the mutual understanding of threat perceptions of individual countries and agencies and facilitates the development of a common European strategic vision among Europe's future intelligence leaders. Second, the open environment of an academic setting allows intelligence professionals to engage in "outside-the-box" thinking, which is essential for robust intelligence analysis. Third, by delivering instruction at academic institutions, the postgraduate program fosters mutually beneficial connections between the academic and intelligence communities, strengthening the emerging field of intelligence studies. The growing network of academics and institutions involved in the postgraduate program also provides institutional memory, helping to establish ICE as the leading center for excellence in intelligence and security research and education at a pan-European level.

The *Counterterrorism* module (adapted from the version taught in MISS) was the first to be offered under ICE's postgraduate program. It was followed by the successful launch of a second German module, "Cyberintelligence and Its Implications for Intelligence, Analysis, and Decision-Making," led by Professors Gerhard Conrad and Stefan Pickl. In this module, participants gain a deeper understanding of the interrelation and interdependence between the cyber dimension and political, military, and security-related decision-making processes. The focus is on how cyber-based applications can contribute to timely and comprehensive situational awareness, a prerequisite for competent decision-making.

Additional emphasis is placed on the critical procedures of anonymizing and disguising communication, which hinder or prevent intelligence gathering. Participants are introduced to the basics of applied cryptography, data mining, system dynamics, and interdiction games, which they can then apply in their respective areas of responsibility. The module aims to develop an innovative, system-level understanding of intelligence and security services, identifying the key framework conditions and influencing factors for decision-makers in the global cyber world. It also promotes the ability to model and simulate how these systems operate. This interdisciplinary approach combines IT, operations research,

and policy-making, transcending conventional intelligence or cyber courses by advancing the concept of “Support to Decision-Making in the Cyber World.”

At the start of the 2023-24 academic year, the postgraduate program further developed with Professor Sebastiaan Rietjens delivering a highly acclaimed module on *Intelligence and the Military* at the Netherlands Defence Academy, which included participants from 15 countries. Using the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and NATO’s withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 as case studies, this module addresses what the conveners identified as a glaring gap in the academic discussion on the role of intelligence in military operations. The course covered topics such as intelligence in counterinsurgency operations, UN or maritime missions, its role in countering hybrid threats, and its relevance in current military conflicts. Interactive classroom discussions also explored how the military adapts to advancements in data analytics and machine learning.

In the near future, the postgraduate program will expand further, with Romania leading a pan-European initiative on a *Societal Resilience to Hybrid Threats* module, which will include contributions from Croatia, Estonia, Finland, and Germany. Figure 2 illustrates these ongoing developments.

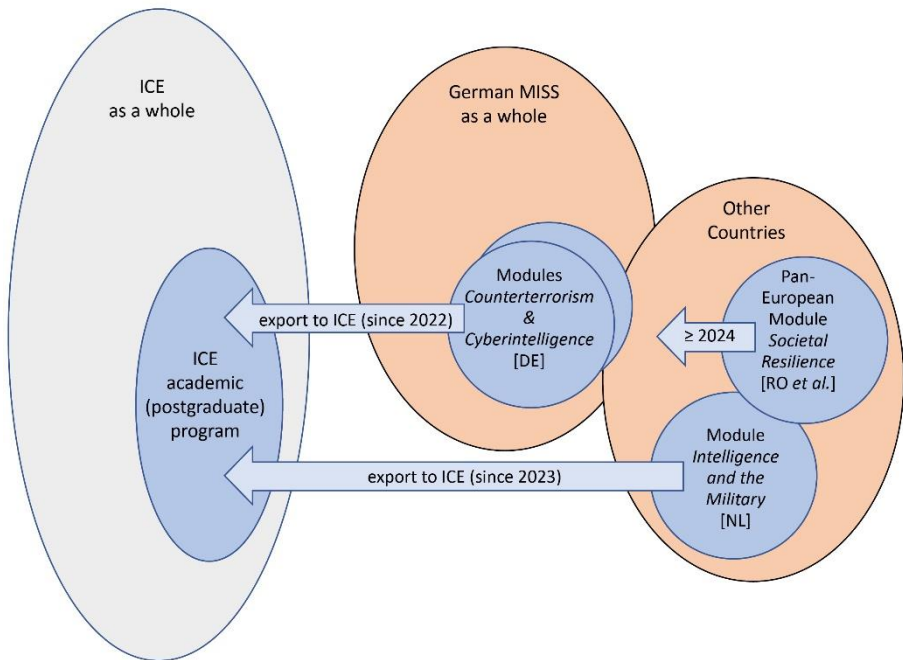


Figure 2: Exports to the Academic (postgraduate) Program of ICE.

Case Study – The Counterterrorism Module

The counterterrorism module integrates insights from cutting-edge research across various academic disciplines to provide an advanced understanding of the continuities and changes in both domestic and transnational terrorism, the factors driving radicalization, and their implications for de-radicalization and counterterrorism efforts. While addressing all types of terrorist activities, the module places particular emphasis on current manifestations of Islamist and right-wing terrorism.

Central themes of the module include the psychology of radicalization, the factors influencing the rise, decline, and persistence of terrorist organizations, and the factors shaping the adoption of specific terrorist tactics and strategies. Participants have the opportunity to elaborate on key psychological theories and models to explain radicalization, tracing individual radical biographies based on this. Moreover, discussions assess attempts to measure the effectiveness of terrorism and counterterrorism efforts at both tactical and strategic levels. Considering the broader context in which terrorism occurs, participants reflect on the evolving relationship between terrorism and the media and examine the roles of active and passive state sponsors, as well as state failure, in countering radicalization and terrorism. Specific manifestations of terrorism are also discussed, including the rise of suicide and lone-actor attacks, strategies like accelerationism, the potential terrorist use of weapons of mass destruction, the transnationalization of right- and left-wing terrorism, and the role of women in terrorist recruitment and tactics. The module's syllabus allows for flexibility and engagement with current developments, such as the October 2023 Hamas attack and Israel's response.

Throughout all sessions, particular attention is given to the implications for the work and collaboration of intelligence agencies both within and across European countries. The theoretically grounded and empirically enriched understanding of the current state of research on radicalization, terrorism, and counterterrorism equips participants to critically assess the contribution of intelligence agencies to national, European, and global counterterrorism efforts.

When preparing the module for delivery as part of ICE's postgraduate program, the teaching team, consisting of Professor Lars Berger, Professor Hendrik Hansen, and Professor Michaela Pfundmair (all from the Federal University of Administrative Sciences, Berlin), had to carefully consider how to ensure the pan-European appeal and relevance of content originally designed for German intelligence and security professionals. They reflected on how a European perspective on terrorism might differ from, or align with, a German perspective on terrorism and counterterrorism. Key aspects considered included differing historical experiences with political extremism and terrorist violence across the political spectrum, variations in political systems and the institutional frameworks of national security agencies, and the extent to which terrorism and counterterrorism are perceived as domestic or transnational concerns. In adapting the module for an international audience, Professor Berger drew on his extensive

experience in designing and delivering postgraduate programs on international security at various UK universities.

Several observations can be made regarding the general atmosphere and setting. First, participants appreciated the postgraduate setting of the module. The decision to limit the number of participants to a typical postgraduate seminar size fostered a lively and interactive environment. This structure creates a refreshing contrast and adds another dimension to other ICE events, which often host much larger groups. The additional interaction, encouraged by joint presentations prepared during the first part of the week, helps participants see themselves less as representatives of specific services and countries and more as colleagues united in addressing a common security threat.

Second, participants were eager to engage with academic research and the substantial reading list typical of postgraduate seminars. This eagerness highlights a real thirst among intelligence practitioners to step outside the demands of their daily work and reflect more deeply on the security and intelligence issues they encounter. It is precisely this type of outside-the-box thinking, stimulated by thought-provoking academic research, that can help intelligence professionals challenge their own assumptions about current patterns and the potential future trajectories of phenomena in the security domains they monitor.

Third, the participants in the module represented a wide range of backgrounds in terms of geography, experience, gender, age, and seniority. This diversity in perspectives greatly enriched the discussions. When addressing issues such as terrorism and how best to combat it, perspectives are inevitably shaped by local manifestations of the phenomenon and historical experiences in dealing with it. Openly reflecting on and critically evaluating these different viewpoints is a crucial step toward fostering mutual understanding and developing a shared European intelligence culture.

Conclusion

The Intelligence College in Europe (ICE) offers, among other initiatives, a pioneering academic postgraduate education in intelligence and security studies at a pan-European level, thereby contributing to the development of a cohesive European intelligence community.

The ICE benefits from Germany's Master of Intelligence and Security Studies (MISS) program in two significant ways. Firstly, the MISS demonstrates how different intelligence services and the military can collaborate effectively in an academic setting. Secondly, the MISS supplies two German modules—Counterterrorism and Cyberintelligence—as export products for the ICE's postgraduate academic program.

Using the Counterterrorism module as a case study, we can vividly illustrate the scientific depth and social relevance that the ICE's academic (postgraduate) program can achieve.

Some countries have already built on this successful example and expanded the ICE offering, or plan to do so soon. We hope that more players in the European intelligence community and beyond will follow this lead.

Disclaimer

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