

EUCTER: From a Jean Monnet Network to the European Counter-Terrorism and Security Institute

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Christian Kaunert, Professor of Policing and Security at the University of South Wales, describes the scope of EUCTER, from a Jean Monnet Network to the European Counter-Terrorism and Security Institute

Terrorism remains one of the leading security threats facing the European Union (EU) and its Member States, with a considerable impact on European societies. Therefore, there is a strong need for knowledge and expertise that will enable the EU and its Member States to address the contemporary terrorist threat effectively.

The EUCTER Jean Monnet Network has produced the expertise that the EU and its Member States require to address this threat effectively. The research programme is highly innovative in its emphasis on analysing EU counter- terrorism at different levels, ranging from the local through the EU to the global level.

EU Counter-terrorism and Security Policy Themes

Based at the University of South Wales, under the coordination of Prof Dr. Christian Kaunert, the EUCTER Jean Monnet Research Network, which started in September 2020 and ran until March 2024, has provided research-led excellence in teaching and learning at the intersection of two fundamental areas of EU policy – the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (formerly known as Justice and Home Affairs) and EU counter-terrorism policy and law (also within the CFSP, notably in relation to counter-terrorist financing) – through an international cross-section of doctoral, post-graduate and graduate students.

The network has advanced cutting-edge blended learning formats, distance learning, strong inter-disciplinarity, and policy relevance. The project brought together three inter-related teaching and research areas: EU justice and home affairs, EU counter-terrorism and EU external relations. While the EU has progressively become an actor in international security in its own right thanks to its increased powers in the field of external relations (i.e. trade policies), the Lisbon Treaty has also underlined the need for more increased cooperation in the field of EU counter-terrorism.

EU counter-terrorism cooperation and diplomacy

The objectives of EUCTER included the exploration and analysis of the development and practice of counter-terrorism cooperation and diplomacy in EU internal and external actions. It aimed to contribute to a new understanding of the role of European institutions (EP, Commission, Council) in EU internal and external action by organising workshops

and by providing subsidies for young international scholars (advanced PhD candidates and post-docs), by generating a website-generated virtual map of counter-terrorism cooperation, by organising teaching modules and events (such as roundtables, training courses and lecture series, always foreseeing the interaction of young and senior academics and practitioners), and by contributing to international publications (books, working paper series, and special issues).

Due to the COVID pandemic, most events were organised online, including the Conferences on EU Counter-Terrorism, the Annual Lectures, Annual Research workshops and seminars, and the Summer School; in addition, organised panels at key international conventions, which were also held online. However, this was, in any case, within the spirit of the project, which placed heavy emphasis on online teaching, and thus, this could be integrated more easily into the teaching. We were well-positioned to take advantage of the tools of online learning and online research conferences.

EUCTER's substantial impact

We also held some conferences in person, notably in Augsburg, Germany, and Barcelona, Spain. We built significant transnational and interdisciplinary collaborations through the network of partners, most notably Dublin City University and all international partners. The network included the University of the West of England in Bristol and Cardiff University in the UK, Dublin City University in Ireland, the University of Augsburg in Germany, the Egmont Institute in Belgium, the Maastricht University in the Netherlands, the University of Pisa in Italy, CIDOB Barcelona and the University of Deusto in Bilbao Spain, the University of Iași in Romania (now known as the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University), Metropolitan University Prague in the Czech Republic, the IDC Herzliya in Israel (now known as Reichman University), and the University of Jendouba in Tunisia.

EUCTER's impact has been substantial: it has increased public awareness of EU counter-terrorism cooperation and diplomacy via its website and publications in both journals and international book series. The biggest impact has been the development of the EU-GLOCTER Marie Curie Doctoral Network (funding €3,000,000), led by Dublin City University and partnered with the University of South Wales. It is funded by Horizon Europe's MSCA Actions and UKRI (2024-2027). It aims to provide world-class training to doctoral researchers in EU 'glocal' counter-terrorism – thinking globally, responding locally – and to generate scientific excellence and technological innovation in the area of counter-terrorism.

Future counter-terrorism and security policy research

We currently seek applications for 11 Doctoral Candidate positions under the MSCA EU-GLOCTER Doctoral Network (EU Glocal Counter-Terrorism). 10 Doctoral Candidates are funded by the EU (Horizon Europe MSCA Doctoral Networks), whilst one Doctoral Candidate is funded by the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Horizon Europe guarantee scheme. The two main objectives of EU-GLOCTER are, firstly, to provide

world-class training to doctoral candidates (DCs) in EU ‘glocal’ counter-terrorism – thinking globally, responding locally; and secondly, to generate scientific excellence and technological innovation in the area of counter-terrorism.

Finally, EUCTER has now become a fully-fledged European Counter-Terrorism and Security Institute, a think tank and research institute. EUCTER brings together policy-makers, scholars and practitioners from the world’s leading institutions to devise, strengthen and improve forward-looking approaches to European counter-terrorism and security cooperation. It focuses on European cooperation on counter-terrorism and security, including partnerships with third countries worldwide.

Our mission is to promote comprehensive and balanced research, cutting-edge analysis and innovative policy advice on core policy issues, informed by a truly global as well as European perspective. This also includes raising awareness of significant challenges and security issues among the general public. Our vision is a more secure, peaceful and sustainable global security architecture based on effective and accountable European institutions, friendly and cooperative international relations and mutual respect across all cultures.

Strengthening security cooperation

EUCTER places particular emphasis on strengthening security cooperation through the EU and regional organisations across all parts of the world. Our activities include, among other things:

1. Research, reports, papers, articles, books and other publication activities.
2. Education, courses, and training activities.
3. Policy advice, briefings, reports and consulting.
4. Connecting policy-makers, academics, practitioners, media, and the general public.
5. International cooperation and partnerships.
6. Outreach to the general public.
7. Conferences, seminars, lectures, and events.



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