

Hostile Environment Psychological Intervention Course (HEPsyl)

30.11.2026 – 04.12.2026

Lisbon, PORTUGAL

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

Introduction

The HEPsyl course has been developed by the GNR Department of Psychology based on lessons learned from the GNR's direct experience in high-risk operational scenarios overseas. Drawing from multiple international missions in demanding and unstable environments, the course has been created to prepare personnel deployed to civilian and military operations to cope with crisis, extreme stress, and potentially traumatic events.

The relevance of this course is directly rooted in the urgent need to empower personnel deployed to CSDP contexts, who currently face a highly volatile and multidimensional security environment. Consolidated data from the European External Action Service (EEAS) indicates that thousands of civilian experts, police officers, and military personnel operate simultaneously, dealing daily with hybrid threats, disinformation crises, and degraded local infrastructures. Recent mission evaluation reports underscore that operational readiness and team resilience on the ground crucially depend on standardized Pre-Deployment Training (PDT). By focusing specifically on this target audience, this course addresses a critical gap identified by the EU Strategic Compass, delivering the practical skills and doctrinal alignment necessary to safeguard personnel security and ensure the effective fulfilment of each mission's mandate.

The 5-day intensive training focuses on the prevention and management of psychological emergencies. The goal is to strengthen individual and team resilience, enable early intervention in psychological crises, and ensure ethical and safe communication in hostile environments. The curriculum follows guidelines from the Portuguese Psychologists' Association (PPA), European Federation of Psychologists' Associations (EFPA), and World Health Organization (WHO), and is delivered by instructors with experience in high-threat environments.

Overall aim: to strengthen psychological resilience and emotional preparedness in critical situations, while sustaining front-of-mind security and situational awareness. It emphasizes developing confidence through practical skills in Peer-to-Peer support, psychological first aid, effective communication, and stress management during and after high-pressure events. In

addition, it provides guidance on individual and team strategies to deter, detect, and respond to threats, thereby enhancing overall personal safety, mental well-being, and security of staff members while serving in missions.

Course place and time

Place: Lisbon – Portugal, at the GNR Welfare Social Services premises.

Date: from 30 November to 4 December 2026.

Time: Monday to Thursday from 08:30 to 18:00, and Friday from 08:30 to approximately 16:00, local time (WET - Western European Time: GMT+0), including coffee and lunch breaks.

Workload: 5 days (36 hours in total).

The Target Group

The course is open to civilian, police and military staff from EU Member States, EU institutions and agencies, EU CSDP missions & operations, international organisations involved in a CSDP context, and third countries. Priority is given to personnel already deployed or selected to take part in high-risk EU CSDP missions & operations. We aim to strike a gender balance, so applications from female participants are encouraged.

The working language is English and no prior experience in psychological first aid or stress management is required.

To ensure effective interaction and practical exercises, the maximum number of participants is 12 to 14, in accordance with the methodological activities and dynamics of the course.

Course Modules and Course Agenda

The HEPsyt Course will be delivered in a residential format and comprises the following seven different thematic modules, alongside a theoretical and practical assessment. These are distributed across the below course agenda, in accordance with the curriculum and course programme attached to this call:

- Module 1 – Distinguish psychological crisis from critical incident.
- Module 2 – Characterise Psychological Trauma.
- Module 3 – Peer-to-Peer Support.
- Module 4 – Apply Stress management Techniques.
- Module 5 – Provide Psychological First Aid.
- Module 6 – Self-Injurious Behaviours.
- Module 7 – Apply Methods of Communicating Critical news.
- Theoretical and Practical Assessment.

Course Agenda: Overview of Thematic Modules and Assessment

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
08H30 09H20	Reception Presentation EUTI Project	Peer-to-peer concept	Provide psychological first aid	Self-injurious behaviours	Theoretical assessment
09H30 10H20	Distinguish psychological crisis from critical incident	Peer-to-peer concept	Provide psychological first aid	Self-injurious behaviours	Practical Assessment
COFFEE BREAK					
10H40 11H30	Distinguish psychological crisis from critical incident	Peer-to-peer concept	Provide psychological first aid	Apply methods of communicating critical news	Practical Assessment
11H40 12H30	Characterise psychological trauma	Apply stress management techniques	Provide psychological first aid	Apply methods of communicating critical news	Practical Assessment
LUNCH TIME					
14H00 14H50	Peer-to-peer concept	Apply stress management techniques	Provide psychological first aid	Apply methods of communicating critical news	Closing
15H00 15H50	Peer-to-peer concept	Apply stress management techniques	Provide psychological first aid	Apply methods of communicating critical news	Closing
COFFEE BREAK					
16H10 17H00	Peer-to-peer concept	Apply stress management techniques	Provide psychological first aid	Apply methods of communicating critical news	Closing
17H10 18H00	Peer-to-peer concept	Apply stress management techniques	Provide psychological first aid	Apply methods of communicating critical news	Closing

Course Learning Outcomes

After the completion of the EUTI HEPsyl Course, participants should be able to:

- LO1. Promote awareness of the importance of individual and collective emotional well-being, encouraging self-care practices that support psychological stability throughout the mission.
- LO2. Develop the ability to recognize signs of stress and emotional overload in oneself and in colleagues, strengthening empathy and readiness to offer support.
- LO3. Enhance skills in positive and respectful communication, fostering healthy relationships, cooperation and a climate of trust within the team;
- LO4. Encourage mutual support behaviours within the Peer-to-Peer framework, stimulating caring attitudes, active listening and emotional support among mission members.
- LO5. Strengthen the ability to manage difficult emotions by using simple emotional regulation strategies that promote personal balance and a positive team atmosphere.
- LO6. Promote the creation of informal support networks, encouraging routines, spaces and moments that reinforce cohesion, mutual assistance and a sense of belonging.

- L07. Develop sensitivity to recognize when a colleague may need additional help and know how to guide or refer them in a safe, appropriate and human-centred manner.
- L08. Build individual and collective resilience by encouraging practical strategies that help the team maintain motivation, emotional balance and a sense of psychological safety.
- L09. Cultivate a culture of open, non-judgmental communication that encourages all mission members to express concerns, request support and share emotions without fear.

Implementing EUTI Partner

Portuguese National Republican Guard (GNR), Lisbon - Portugal, at: <https://www.gnr.pt/>.

Course Director: Lieutenant-Colonel José Cardoso, Head of GNR Psychology Department (contact details below under “More Information”).

Critical Friend: Meeri-Maria Jaarva, Training Specialist from CMC Finland.

Logistical Information

Selected participants will receive a **Welcome Letter** from the GNR Training Centre for International Missions and Crisis Management (CTAFMI), with all the necessary **administrative instructions** and **logistical information** for the course.

Please consider the following information:

Equipment: Participants are not required to bring any kind of personal equipment or material to the course. All necessary materials and equipment will be provided by the course organization during the training.

Teaching material: A pre-course booklet will be provided to all selected participants to familiarize themselves with the topics that will be covered during the course sessions and activities.

Dress code / Personal clothing: We recommend that all participants bring comfortable clothing appropriate for the season and course activities. Members of the armed forces and police are not obliged to wear their uniforms.

Participation: Active participation is encouraged during all sessions.

Completion: Attendance is required on all course activities. At the end of the course, participants will undergo a summative assessment consisting of two main components: a theoretical test and a practical exercise. A certificate will be awarded on the last day to those participants who have completed the entire course. In addition to the official certification issued by the EUTI, participants will also receive certification from the Portuguese Psychologists' Association (OPP), as the course is fully accredited at the European Federation of Psychologists' Associations (EFPA).

Application

Please apply [here](#) by Friday, 6 November 2026.

Participants are selected jointly by EUTI Secretariat and GNR Department of Psychology. All applicants will be informed of the outcome shortly after applications close.

More Information

For further information or queries, please contact:

- EUTI Secretariat (info@euti.net)
- GNR PDT Centre: (ui.ctafmi@gnr.pt)
- GNR PDT Centre Support Officer, Hugo CARVALHO (carvalho.hmm@gnr.pt)
- Head of GNR PDT Centre, Pedro RAMOS (ramos.pmd@gnr.pt)
- Course Director, José CARDOSO (cardoso.jeq@gnr.pt)
- Resident Trainer, Sílvia VASSAL (vassal.spj@gnr.pt)
- Critical Friend, Meeri-Maria JAARVA (meeri-maria.jaarva@cmcf Finland.fi)

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COURSE PROGRAMME

Day one					
Time	Subject	Module	Session	Learning outcomes	Facilitator
2 hours	<i>Distinguish psychological crisis from critical incident</i>	<i>Distinguish psychological crisis from critical incident</i>	<i>Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of mental health and psychological crises, including the ability to recognise risk factors and symptoms of mental disorders, identify and respond appropriately to psychological and critical incident situations, and apply effective strategies to support individuals in distress while reducing stigma and promoting resilience.</i>	• Understand mental health vs mental disorder • Recognise risk factors of mental illnesses • Characterise situations of mental disturbance • Understand Mental Health Stigma • Strategies for dealing with mental disorders • Recognise psychological crisis (Evolutionary crisis vs. circumstantial crisis) • Phases of a psychological crisis • Identify reactions in psychological crisis situations • Characterise critical incident situations • Types of behavioural responses to critical incidents	1 psychologist from the Portuguese Red Cross (Guest Trainer) + GNR Trainer

1 hour	Characterise psychological trauma	Characterise psychological trauma	Realise that Psychological Trauma refers to the critical and extreme impact of a stressful situation on an individual's psychological or biological functioning.	- Recognise types of behavioural responses to critical incidents - Define the concept of stress - Identify types of stress, causes and symptoms of stress, responses to stress and burnout - Understand mechanisms of psychological trauma - Recognise PTSD criteria and post-traumatic growth	GNR Trainer
4 hours	Peer-to-peer concept	Peer-to-peer concept	Realise that peer support mitigates the critical impact of extreme stress on individual and unit functioning, while promoting resilience and self-care.	- Identify key strategies for peer support - Explain communication skills - Identify support resilience at individual and unit level - Describe adaptive coping strategies and problem-solving mechanisms. - Recognise self-care - Identify safety behaviours in peer support - Recognise gender balance - Evaluate the impact of mental health stigma - Recognise cultural awareness	1 psychologist from the National Portuguese Psychologists' Association (Guest Trainer) + GNR Trainer

Day two					
3 hours	Peer-to-peer concept	Peer-to-peer concept	Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of mental health and psychological crises, including the ability to recognise risk factors and symptoms of mental disorders, identify and respond appropriately to psychological and critical incident situations, and apply effective strategies to support individuals in distress while reducing stigma and promoting resilience.	- Identify key strategies for peer support - Explain communication skills - Identify support resilience at individual and unit level - Describe adaptive coping strategies and problem-solving mechanisms. - Recognise self-care - Identify safety behaviours in peer support - Recognise gender balance - Evaluate the impact of mental health stigma - Recognise cultural awareness	1 psychologist from the National Portuguese Psychologists' Association (Guest Trainer) + GNR Trainer
5 hours	Apply stress management techniques	Apply stress management techniques	Understand that stress is a normal physiological and behavioural response to something that has happened or is about to happen and that makes us feel threatened or in some way affects our balance.	- Apply stress management techniques - Demonstrate the application stress management techniques - Manage conflict situations	
Day three					
8 hours	Provide psychological first aid	Provide psychological first aid	Recognise that it is in scenarios of 'individual or family catastrophe' that crisis intervention takes place using the Psychological First Aid Model. It is important to know how to apply procedures, based on the Hobfoll Principles (2007), which aim to promote recovery and reorganisation of the person's functioning.	- Define Psychological First Aid - Apply strategies, procedures and techniques of PFA teams, communication in PFA, intervention in PFA with special groups	1 psychologist from the National Institute of Medical Emergency (Guest Trainer) + GNR Trainer

Day four					
2 hours	Self-injurious behaviours	Self-injurious behaviours	Understand the concepts of suicidal behaviour. Identify factors that can enhance or mitigate suicide.	- Acquire basic knowledge about suicide - Understanding suicide - Identify factors related to suicide - Learning what to do in the face of symptoms that can lead to suicide	1 psychologist from the Portuguese Society of Suicidology (Guest Trainer) + GNR Trainer
6 hours	Apply methods of communicating critical news	Apply methods of communicating critical news	Applying effective methods for communicating critical news helps ensure that the message is received and acted upon in the right way, while also minimizing negative emotional and social impacts.	- Understand Grief - Apply methods of communicating critical news	
Day five					
4 hours	Assessment		Theoretical assessment Practical assessment	- Theoretical assessment - Practical assessment	All the trainers