

# Assessment report: European Joint Master's in Strategic Border Management



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# 1. Introduction

This report is the result of the assessment of the European Joint Master's in Strategic Border Management and was coordinated by the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO). The applicant is the Netherlands Defence Academy (NLDA) which, in cooperation with Frontex and five academic partners<sup>1</sup>, applied for both NVAO initial accreditation (extensive assessment) and the ECA single accreditation procedure for joint programmes. As a consequence the ECA Assessment Framework for Joint Programmes in Single Accreditation Procedures<sup>2</sup> was used. The overall purpose of using this framework is that the consortium providing the joint programme does not need to go through full accreditation and assessment procedures in each of the countries where the programme is provided. Instead, one assessment procedure in one country should be sufficient and can function as a basis for accreditation decisions in the other countries. NVAO has already accredited in 2013 a joint programme<sup>3</sup> on the basis of this framework that was developed in the context of the JOQAR project<sup>4</sup>.

A panel of experts was convened by NVAO. The assessment panel consisted of the following members:

- Dr Nick Harris (panel chair), international adviser ANECA (Spain) and former Director of QAA (UK)
- Prof Dr Willy Bruggeman (subject-specific expert), Professor at Benelux University Centre, former Deputy Director of Europol, chairman of council and board of the Belgian federal police (Belgium)
- Dr Mark Foley (subject-specific expert), Inspector at An Garda Síochána (Irish Police), lecturer at Police College (Ireland)

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<sup>1</sup> After it emerged that the Estonian partner could not participate in awarding the joint degree the status of this partner was changed to a non-awarding associate partner and the consortium agreement was subsequently amended.

<sup>2</sup>

[http://ecahe.eu/w/index.php/Assessment\\_Framework\\_for\\_Joint\\_Programmes\\_in\\_Single\\_Accreditation\\_Procedures](http://ecahe.eu/w/index.php/Assessment_Framework_for_Joint_Programmes_in_Single_Accreditation_Procedures)

<sup>3</sup> European Master in Law and Economics: <https://search.nvao.net/search-detail/54202#>

<sup>4</sup> [http://ecahe.eu/w/index.php/JOQAR\\_2010-2013](http://ecahe.eu/w/index.php/JOQAR_2010-2013)

- Rok Primožič (student expert), Master in Education Sciences student at VUB (Belgium), member of QA Students Experts Pool of European Students' Union (ESU), former chair of ESU (Slovenia).

The composition of the panel reflects the expertise deemed necessary by both the ECA Assessment Framework and the NVAO requirements for the panel composition. The individual panel members' expertise and experience can be found in [Annex 1: Composition of the assessment panel](#). All panel members signed a statement of independence and confidentiality. These signed statements are in the archives of NVAO. The text of the statement is included in [Annex 2: Statements of Independence](#). The procedure was coordinated by Dr Mark Frederiks, coordinator of international policy at NVAO, who also acted as secretary of the panel. During the site visit the panel was accompanied by Lagle Zobel, who was an observer from the Estonian QA agency EKKA. Ms Zobel did not take part in the panel discussions and interviews but observed the procedure in the interest of a future accreditation procedure for this joint programme in Estonia, and to give information to the panel concerning recognition issues in Estonia.

The assessment panel studied the self-evaluation report and annexed documentation provided by the programme before the site visit. ([Annex 3: Documents reviewed](#)) The panel participated in a preparatory Skype meeting on 21 November 2014 and held a preparatory meeting the day before the site visit. The site visit took place on 3 December 2014 at the facilities of the Royal Marechaussee on Schiphol Amsterdam Airport. ([Annex 4: Site visit programme](#))

The panel formulated its preliminary assessments per standards immediately after the site visit. These were based on the findings of the site visit, and building on the assessment of the self-evaluation report and annexed documentation. In addition, clarification was received concerning the issue of recognition of the joint degree in the Baltic partner countries.

The draft version of this report was finalised taking into account the available information and relevant findings of the assessment. Where necessary the panel corrected and amended the report. The panel finalised the draft report on 13 March 2015. The programme was then asked to comment on any perceived factual errors. This information was received on 17 March 2015. The panel approved the final version of the report on 7 April 2015.



## 2. General overview

### 2.1. Overview of the joint programme

- Name(s) of the qualification: European Joint Master's in Strategic Border Management (joint degree)
- Number of credits: 90 ECTS
- Specialisations (if any): Strategic Border Management
- ISCED field(s) of study: 86 Security Services  
31 Social and behavioural science

Locations:

Latvia: Civil Defence  
Lithuania: Social Sciences  
Netherlands: Interdisciplinary  
Spain: Social and Law Science  
Tallinn, Estonia<sup>5</sup>; Rezekne, Latvia; Vilnius, Lithuania; Breda and Amsterdam, The Netherlands; Madrid, Aranjuez, Salamanca and Avilla, Spain

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<sup>5</sup> The provider in Estonia is an Associate Partner acting under the responsibility of Academic Partners and not taking part in the award of the joint degree.

**Table 1. Official qualifications awarded by partner institutions**

<b>Partner institution</b>	<b>Awarded qualification</b>
Estonian Academy of Security Sciences	Non-awarding associate partner
Rezekne Higher Education Institution, Latvia	European Joint Master's in Strategic Border Management
Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania	European Joint Master's in Strategic Border Management
Netherlands Defence Academy, Faculty of Military Science	European Joint Master's in Strategic Border Management
National University for Distance-Learning Education, Spain	European Joint Master's in Strategic Border Management
University of Salamanca, Spain	European Joint Master's in Strategic Border Management

## 2.2. Overview of the consortium

- Partners in the consortium:

*Developer and Funding Partner*

- European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation in the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (hereinafter referred to as Frontex),

*Academic Partners (awarding the joint degree)*

- Rezekne Higher Education Institution (Latvia),
- Mykolas Romeris University (Lithuania),
- Netherlands Defence Academy, Faculty of Military Science [NLDA] (The Netherlands),
- National University for Distance-Learning Education (Spain),
- University of Salamanca (Spain).

*Associate Partner (non-awarding)*

- Estonian Academy of Security Sciences (Estonia)

**Table 2. Formal overview of the partner institutions**

Full original name (translation in English)	Legal Status	Type	Location	Country
Sisekaitseakadeemia (Estonian Academy of Security Sciences)	Public	HEI	Tallinn	Estonia
Rezeknes Augstkola (Rezekne Higher Education Institution)	Public	HEI	Rezekne	Latvia
Mykolas Romeris University	Public	Univer- sity	Vilnius	Lithuania
Netherlands Defence Academy, Faculty of Military Science (NLDA)	Public	HEI	Breda	The Netherlands
Universidad Nacional de Educacion a Distancia (UNED) (National University for Distance-Learning Education)	Public	Univer- sity	Madrid	Spain
Universidad de Salamanca (University of Salamanca)	Public	Univer- sity	Salamanca	Spain

**Table 3. Activity of the partner institutions in the curriculum**

<i>Partner institution</i>	<i>Stage 1 (30 ECTS)</i>	<i>Stage 2 (30 ECTS)</i>	<i>Stage 3 (dissertation; 30 ECTS)</i>
Estonian Academy of Security Sciences	(M5)	(M7)	X
Rezekne Higher Education Institution	M3	M9	X
Mykolas Romeris University		M7, M8	X
Netherlands Defence Academy, Faculty of Military Science (NLDA)	M2, M6		X
National University for Distance- Learning Education	M1, M5, M6	M9	X
University of Salamanca	M4	M10	X

M..= convenor/main deliverer for a particular module. (M)= deliverer under the responsibility of an Academic Partner. Each module has a back up or alternate deliverer at a partner institution. Stage 1 consists of 6 modules and stage 2 has 4 modules.

In stage 3 a primary and secondary supervisor for the dissertation can be allocated to students from each of the academic partner institutions.

### 2.3. Overview of relevant external quality assurance

In all five partner countries programme accreditation for providing the European Joint Master's in Strategic Border Management is required. The intention is that after accreditation in one country (The Netherlands), accreditation decisions in the other countries can also be taken. With regard to the accreditation or recognition of the partner institutions an overview is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. Overview of the present institutional accreditation or recognition status and the relevant external quality assurance agencies**

Partner institution	Competent QA agency	Status	Period of validity
Estonian Academy of Security Sciences	Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency (EKKA)	Institutional accreditation awarded for seven years. Not taking part in the award of the joint degree	Until 13 June 2019
Rezekne Higher Education Institution	Ministry for Education and Science	Accreditation awarded in 1999	Indefinite
Mykolas Romeris University	The Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC)	Institution is recognised; Institutional accreditation planned for March 2014	Will be part of the accreditation decision
Netherlands Defence Academy, Faculty of Military Science (NLDA)	The Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO)	Legal body providing higher education	Indefinite

National University for Distance-Learning Education	The National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation of Spain (ANECA)	-Recognised (under Spanish law)	Indefinite
University of Salamanca	Quality Assurance Agency for the University System in Castilla y León Spain		

### 3. Assessment criteria

According to the Assessment Framework the panel gives for each of the six standards a well-considered and substantiated assessment according to a two-point scale: “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory”. The assessment is based on the criteria mentioned below and substantiated by the verifiable facts.

The Assessment Framework offers the possibility of adding specific national components in addition to the standards and criteria that are common for all. These national components are derived from national legislation and important for obtaining accreditation in the country concerned. These additional national requirements are in this case all related to recognition issues and therefore dealt with in Criterion 1a.

#### Standard 1. General conditions

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##### **Criterion 1a: Recognition**

*The institutions in the consortium are legally recognised as higher education institutions and their respective national legal frameworks allow them to participate in this joint programme.*

*If the joint programme awards a joint degree then this should be in accordance with the legislation governing the awarding institutions.*

##### **Findings:**

The self-evaluation report includes an overview of the legal status of each institution. Table 4 of this assessment report is derived from that overview. It is clear that the institutions in the consortium are legally recognised as higher education institutions. These institutions form the consortium and they have cooperation agreements in place with national entities (e.g. Border Guard/Police Academies) to ensure the necessary Border Guard expertise in the programme. These “complementary entities” are not part of the consortium as they are usually not legally recognised as degree awarding institutions.

With regard to awarding the joint degree the self-evaluation report mentions that there are legal complications in Estonia and Latvia. These complications are caused by national regulations regarding the duration of the programme. Specifically, the combined duration of the bachelor and master programme should be no less than 5 years (or 300 ECTS). As the duration of this programme is 90 ECTS or 1.5 years and the admission requirement for this joint programme is a EQF level 6 qualification of at least 180 ECTS it does not add up to the 300 ECTS/5 years requirement in Estonia and Latvia. This requirement is not included in the Bologna agreements and in the case of joint programmes it creates a barrier for

participation as many countries do not have such requirements. A further Latvian requirement is that the Latvian partner should at least deliver 10% of the joint programme. As the Latvian institution delivers module 3 (5 ECTS) and, in cooperation with the Spanish UNED, module 9 (10 ECTS), as well as the supervision of some dissertations (30 ECTS), this requirement is fulfilled. In Latvia the law was changed before the finalisation of the panel report thereby allowing the Latvian HEI to participate in the joint programme and awarding the joint degree. The panel received a letter from the Latvian Ministry giving its approval for the participation of Rezekne Higher Education Institution. In Estonia the legal requirement that at least 20% of the curriculum should be provided by a partner institution meant that there could not be more than 5 academic partners awarding the joint degree whilst the consortium had 6 academic partners. In the end this was solved by a decision of the consortium to change the status of EASS to Associate Partner, acting under the responsibility of an Academic Partner, and not taking part in the award of the joint degree. The panel received a letter from the Estonian Ministry giving its approval for the participation of EASS as Associate Partner.

In Spain and Lithuania the award of the joint degree does not seem problematic. If NVAO would accredit the joint programme then this opens up the possibility for accreditation in Spain and Lithuania. In Lithuania the application for accreditation and registration would have to be filed after positive accreditation decisions in the other countries. In Spain there is a legal requirement that not more than 15% of a programme can be exempted because of prior learning. To meet this requirement the programme designers have limited the recognition of prior learning exemption to a maximum of 10 ECTS (11% of the programme). In The Netherlands it is possible to award a joint degree to students who have followed part of their studies in this joint programme in The Netherlands. This is indeed the case; the programme is set up in such a way that at least two modules are followed in The Netherlands (see Table 3). The programme also fulfils the requirements of the applicable NVAO protocol for accreditation of joint degrees. There is a consortium agreement; the institutions offering the joint programme are recognised in their home countries; the joint degree is awarded by institutions that are allowed to take part in the award of the joint degree according to their own national legal framework; the programme is offered at multiple locations of the partner institutions; the Dutch institution has a substantial input in the programme; the joint programme is assessed in its entirety and the joint character is part of the assessment.

**Conclusion and recommendation:**

The panel concludes that all partners in the consortium are legally recognised higher education institutions and that the Dutch, Lithuanian, Latvian and Spanish legal frameworks allow these institutions to participate in this joint programme and the award of the joint degree. The participation of EASS as Associate Partner, not taking part in the award of the joint degree, has been approved in a letter by the Estonian Ministry.

**Criterion 1b: Cooperation agreement**

*It is clear from both the cooperation agreement and the subsequent implementation that the partners in the consortium agree on the following points:*

- *Overall coordination of the programme and/or sharing of responsibilities;*
- *Admission and selection procedures for students;*
- *Mobility of students and teachers;*
- *Examination regulations, student assessment and recognition of credits in the consortium;*
- *Type of degree (joint, multiple) and awarding modalities;*
- *Teaching language(s);*
- *Coordination and responsibilities regarding internal quality assurance;*
- *Administration of student's data and performance records;*
- *Support for student mobility;*
- *Public information on the programme;*
- *Financial organisation (including sharing of costs and incomes, charging registration and/or tuition fees, grants and fellowships);*
- *Change in partnership.*

**Findings:**

All members of the consortium have signed a Consortium Agreement. This is an extensive agreement consisting of the following five parts:

- General Arrangements (scope of agreement, responsibilities of partners, provision of services, change in partnership, teaching language is English, protection of students, data protection, settlement of disputes, etc.)
- Management and Quality Standards (QA principles and structure, student representation, teachers mobility, composition and tasks with regard to Governing Board, Programme Administrator, Programme Board, Board of Examiners, External Examiners, Module Boards, Admissions Panel, QA Committee)
- Financial Arrangements
- Degree Programme and Academic Standards (structure of the programme, standards and learning outcomes)
- Programme Policies (access and admission, recognition of prior learning, attendance, assessment, progression, appeals, extension of studies, professional standards, public information on the programme, etc.).

Furthermore, the partners agree to the provisions outlined in 13 annexes which form an integral part of the Consortium Agreement. These annexes include a list of members of the Governing Board, the QA Handbook, Student Handbook, Dissertation Guidelines, Teaching and Examination Regulations, Teaching Staff Handbook, List of Sending Authorities, Degree Programme Timeline, further financial and other agreements. In the Joint Awarding Agreement it is specified that the joint parchment and diploma supplement shall be issued



by the NLDA and a procedure for obtaining the signatories of the awarding institutions is mentioned. Samples of the diploma and the diploma supplement are included as annexes to this document.

It is noteworthy that there are many different types of agreements: between all consortium partners; between Frontex and academic partners; between Frontex and sending authorities; between sending authorities and students; between academic partners and complementary entities. This multi-layered approach to agreements presents a risk of over-regulation and may hamper a coherent and comprehensible operation of the programme, as interdependency between agreements makes necessary changes more complicated. The panel noted some confusion among interviewees about the question who is ultimately responsible and liable for the programme (who would a student sue?). Some pointed in the direction of the institution delivering a module, others were looking towards Frontex, the Governing Board or the Programme Board. Representatives of the Governing Board did assume responsibility, and rightly so in the view of the panel. It is important that such issues are being discussed and shared in the consortium before the start of the programme.

**Conclusion and recommendation:**

The panel concludes that the extensive cooperation agreement covers all topics included in criterion 1b. These and other issues are covered in great detail in separate agreements and in handbooks for QA, students, teaching staff, etc. which are an integral part of the signed Consortium Agreement. This may make it more difficult to adapt an agreement or handbook if needed. A joint degree implies collective responsibility and this means that there should be no misunderstanding about the responsibility for the programme, including the liability issue. In the view of the panel the Governing Board is ultimately responsible and should therefore be regularly updated and meet as often as is needed to be well-informed about the development of the programme. Within the Governing Board the representatives of the academic partners have a special responsibility as it is their institution that is awarding the joint degree.

**Criterion 1c: Added value**

*The programme can demonstrate the added value of offering this joint programme in international perspective.*

**Findings:**

The reasons for initiating this joint programme are stated in the self-evaluation report and were confirmed in the interviews, with strong support shown by the professional field representatives. The consortium believes that this joint programme covers a current gap in border guard education across the EU. Research in the field of border management is underdeveloped and there are currently no national programmes at master's level focused

on strategic border management from a European perspective. This joint programme offers an opportunity to begin develop a research capacity in the area as well as equipping the border guard managers with knowledge, skills and competences at master's level. Setting up such a programme at national level is considered to be not practicable since there are only few high level border guard officers working at strategic/executive level in each national agency. The joint study approach aims to advance best practice in border guard management and reinforce the European dimension of the border guard job, whilst contributing to the creation of a cross-European border guard culture at higher levels. The academic partners should benefit from mutual exchange processes that will enhance theory and practice in the field of border management. The agencies responsible for border guarding are believed to benefit through enhanced capacity for interoperability at EU borders, which is also one of the key goals for Frontex. From a European perspective it is seen as a cost-effective investment in European border guard executive education.

**Conclusion:**

The panel concludes that the programme can demonstrate the added value of offering this joint programme in international perspective. As border authorities in the EU are coping with similar problems and commonalities it makes sense to set up a European Master programme in this field. A joint European Master programme in this field is innovative, challenging and much desired by the professional field in the EU.

***Overall conclusion regarding Standard 1. General conditions***

The consortium has made a strong case for the added value of this joint programme. The consortium agreement is extensive and (perhaps too) detailed which has the advantage of encompassing coverage and the possible disadvantage of less flexibility in the development of the programme. Nevertheless, the consortium should be commended for all the time and effort invested for setting up the programme. The Dutch, Latvian, Lithuanian and Spanish institutions are all recognised and allowed to participate in the joint programme and to award the joint degree. The Estonian EASS participates as non-degree awarding Associate Partner. The panel therefore assesses *Standard 1. General conditions* as satisfactory.

**Standard 2. Intended learning outcomes**

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***Criterion 2a: Shared***

*The intended learning outcomes are developed and shared by all partners.*

**Findings:**

The joint programme was designed by a working group coordinated by Frontex and consisting of representatives of the academic partners and other experts. Since the beginning of the design process in 2012 over 80 academic and border guard experts were involved in the development of the programme. They came from some 20 countries, including the applicant countries, and some international organisations. The intended learning outcomes were developed from the Sectoral Qualifications Framework for Border Guarding (SQF). The programme learning outcomes are categorised as knowledge, skills, and competences. There are also learning outcomes for the different stages of the programme. In turn, the learning outcomes for each of the ten modules are derived from the programme learning outcomes. The panel noted in the interviews that the module convenors and teaching staff from different academic partners had been responsible or involved in the development of the modules and the learning outcomes. In the interviews with the Governing Board the representatives from the academic partners made it clear that the design of the joint programme was also discussed and approved internally in the institutions.

**Conclusion:**

The panel concludes that the intended learning outcomes are developed and shared by all partners.

**Criterion 2b: Level**

*The intended learning outcomes align with the corresponding level in the Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (the so-called Dublin descriptors) or the European Qualifications Framework.*

**Findings:**

The intended learning outcomes are derived from the Sectoral Qualifications Framework for Border Guarding (SQF). The SQF is a qualifications framework for the border guard professional sector. Frontex has developed the SQF and adopted it in 2012. It has been validated by over 30 organisations with border guard responsibilities and other Frontex partner organisations. The SQF is aligned with levels 4-7 of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF). The SQF consists of 22 learning outcomes for 5 learning areas: 8 learning outcomes for Generic Border Guarding; 8 learning outcomes for Border Control; 2 learning outcomes for Cross-Border Investigation and Intelligence; 3 learning outcomes for Supervision, Management and Leadership; and 1 learning outcome for Specialist Fields in Border Guarding (optional). These learning outcomes show progression of learning from level 4 to level 7. The learning outcomes are then re-written in the terminology of the EQF, making distinctions between knowledge, skills, and competence for each of the 5 learning areas. The resulting “Academic SQF” is said to be used for alignment with National Qualifications Frameworks and other sectoral frameworks. As a last step in the SQF a list of border guard job competences are defined

for each of the levels 4-7 in terms of knowledge, skills and competences. These competence profiles represent the European reference for border guard occupational standards, are more specific than the learning outcomes, and should be used to identify the job competences to be developed as a result of the learning process. The SQF ends with cross-reference tables where the competence profiles are related to the learning outcomes for each of the levels 4-7.

The SQF refers to level 7 as: “Master’s level; the basis for the European Joint Master’s in Strategic Border Management” dedicated to mid- and high-level border guard officers”. In other words, the learning outcomes for level 7 of the SQF have been developed with the European Joint Master’s in Strategic Border Management (EJMSBM) in mind. It is therefore not surprising that the programme learning outcomes for the EJMSBM are derived from the SQF. A closer look at the comparison made in the Programme Curriculum

Documentation between the 9 programme learning outcomes and the referenced SQF learning outcomes shows that there is not a “1 to 1” match between the programme learning outcomes and the level 7 learning outcomes in the SQF. This is confirmed in the Programme Curriculum Documentation where it is stated that the programme learning outcomes are derived “mostly from level 7”. The SQF has been developed very recently and providing level 7 education is new in the Frontex environment. Therefore, the panel understands that apparently the academic partners took some liberty to ensure that the programme learning outcomes are on level 7, even if these are not completely matching with the level 7 descriptors in the SQF.

The panel agrees that the 9 programme learning outcomes are indeed on level 7 as is stated in the Programme Curriculum Documentation. The consortium has provided a table cross-referencing the programme learning outcomes with the Dublin descriptors. The panel confirms that these learning outcomes align with the Dublin descriptors for the Master’s level. The programme learning outcomes are further elaborated in learning outcomes for the different stages and modules. The panel notes that in these stages and module learning outcomes the knowledge component is enhanced and research skills play an important part in two modules and in the dissertation (together comprising half of the programme). The Panel note that the delivering partners in the consortium have taken particular care to emphasise and ensure that, whilst the students will draw heavily on their practice and experiential learning, there is a very sound ‘academic’ focus to the programme. It is therefore justified that the programme is profiled as an academically-oriented Master’s.

**Conclusion:**

The panel concludes that EJMSBM’s intended learning outcomes align with the Master’s level in the Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (the so-called Dublin descriptors). The intended learning outcomes are mostly aligned with level 7 in the SQF for Border Guarding. The programme and in particular the stages, module and

dissertation learning outcomes fall within the breadth of what can be expected from an academically-oriented Master's programme that caters for senior professionals.

**Criterion 2c: Subject/discipline**

*The intended learning outcomes comply with the requirements in the subject/discipline and, where applicable, the professional field.*

**Findings:**

The knowledge, skills and competences required to achieve the intended learning outcomes relate to the skills development, leadership, critical thinking, strategic planning and situational judgement required for border guard management at mid and high level. In the interviews the professional field voiced agreement with the content of the programme. The programme, which has a focus on security aspects related to 'external' borders, is considered to be important for sharing academic experiences and integrating the academic work in the professional practice of border surveillance. With the acquired skills future leaders will be able to address new solutions for the rapidly changing contexts. Although the general feeling was that no immediate changes in the detailed curriculum arrangements are practicable it was noted that subsequent changes should be based on thorough evaluations of the first iterations. The economics of policing the border was mentioned as a possible consideration for the future. It was also expressed that the consortium must make sure that the curriculum stays relevant for the stakeholders.

In the view of the panel, being relevant for stakeholders in an academically-oriented Master's programme means that the consortium should not only focus on the existing professional border guarding practice but also incorporate an approach that will enable the programme to fulfil its ambition of educating strategic thinkers as future leaders. The emerging challenges of modern border management necessitate a new approach to border activities. The focus of the proposed programme appears too limited in focussing essentially on external physical EU borders. Therefore the panel recommends that the proposed strategic master programme should focus more on contextual policy and societal issues such as an integral and integrated (including for example public/public and public /private cooperation) approach. The following topics merit special attention: migrations policies, the dynamic and challenging environment, governance frameworks, cultural issues, existing and new strategies, economics of border control, new individual rights and concerns (e.g. ethnic profiling), scenario thinking, identity related problems, physical and virtual borders.

**Conclusion and recommendation:**

The panel concludes that the programme's intended learning outcomes comply with the requirements of the subject and professional field. However, the panel believes that the programme should not be focussing too narrowly on external physical EU borders and

would therefore gain in relevance if it were, progressively, to focus more on contextual policy and societal issues as specified above.

**Overall conclusion regarding Standard 2. Learning outcomes**

The programme and intended learning outcomes have been developed through intensive group work involving many experts. The intended learning outcomes are derived from the SQF, whilst the academic partners have ensured that the learning outcomes for the programme, stages and modules reflect the level of an academically-oriented Master’s. The intended learning outcomes are in line with the requirements from the professional field but the panel believes that the programme would further gain in relevance by focussing more on contextual policy and societal issues. The panel assesses *Standard 2. Learning Outcomes* as satisfactory.

**Standard 3. Programme**

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**Criterion 3a: Admission**

*The admission criteria and selection procedures are in line with the joint programme’s level and discipline.*

**Findings:**

Student enrolment is confined to a minimum of 16 and a maximum of 40 students per intake. From the interview with the Governing Board it emerged that 30 students (28 from EU and 2 from international agencies) would be seen as a likely number. Interest from different organisations has already been shown and Frontex has prepared a prospectus of the EJMSBM for students. Frontex will launch a call for proposals for prospective students. Nominations should be made by national border guarding agencies. The entry requirements are a Bachelor’s or equivalent EQF level 6 qualification of at least 180 ECTS in an area that is related to the subject of the EJMSBM. Furthermore, at least 3 years managerial experience in an operational border guard function and evidence of proficiency in English at B2 level is required. The nominee should also possess security clearance and be a citizen of a EU member state or Schengen associated country. After pre-screening by the Programme Administrator the decision on admission is made by the Admissions Panel. The panel believes that the admission criteria are suitable in view of the level and discipline of the joint programme.

The consortium is committed to recognition of prior learning. Applications for exemptions can be made on a prescribed form to the Programme Administrator and require approval of the Board of Examiners. However, exemptions on the basis of recognition of prior learning are only possible for Module 3 Leadership and Module 7 Global Context, each consisting of 5 ECTS. The consortium believes that more exemptions are not possible considering the advanced level of the programme. It is also acknowledged that there is the

practical limitation of a Spanish legal requirement saying that the prior learning exemption cannot be more than 15% of the programme. Even in the case of an exemption the student is nevertheless invited to participate in the module, without undertaking the relevant assessment.

**Conclusion:**

The panel concludes that the admission criteria and selection procedures are in line with the joint programme’s level and discipline.

**Criterion 3b: Structure**

*The structure and content of the curriculum and its pedagogical approach correspond with the intended learning outcomes.*

**Findings:**

The programme consists of 3 stages. Stage 1 and 2 comprise 10 thematic modules which are delivered in 2 semesters. The themes of the modules, all focused on border guarding/security/management, in the first stage are: strategy, planning and evaluation; fundamental rights and ethics; leadership and organisational management; EU border policies; innovation and technology; and researching management practices. In the second stage the themes of the modules are: the global context; strategic risk and threat management; cooperation; researching integrated practices. Stage 3 takes place in the third semester which is the dissertation phase. The purpose of the dissertation is described in the self-evaluation report as “to develop in students the ability to draw on disciplinary literature to synthesise a research topic and/or to select, interpret and apply a methodology-sound research approach suitable to reflect on their own and their organisation’s practice with reference to international research in the area”. Students are encouraged to submit a practical, empirically based dissertation. Frontex issues a call for topics for dissertations to the border guard organisations. After approval of the Board of Examiners this list is provided to students who should choose one of the topics on the list. Although it is possible for a student to submit a substantiated proposal for a different topic for approval by the Board of Examiners, the underlying assumption seems to be that the topic of the dissertation should be useful for the border guard organisation in which they are working. Explanations and requirements for the dissertation are outlined in the Dissertation Guidelines.

The consortium has made cross-referencing tables available in which the 9 programme learning outcomes are related to the 23 learning outcomes in the different stages (10 learning outcomes in stage 1, 7 in stage 2, and 6 in stage 3). Module learning outcomes (5 to 8 in each module) have been designed and these have been related to the learning outcomes for stages 1 and 2. The Programme Curriculum Documentation includes for each module a Module Descriptor and a Module Handbook. The contents of the Module Descriptors are: module aim and learning strategy; module learning outcomes; assessment

strategy; readings; and indicative content. In the Module Handbook learning outcomes for specific sessions are presented and these are related to the module learning outcomes. The handbook further contains information on the module structure and content, module convenors, time tables, assessment schemes, recognition of prior learning, sample assessments, etc. It is clear to the panel that the structure and content of the curriculum are in line with the intended learning outcomes. However, the information given is quite comprehensive and detailed. Although this has the advantage of high transparency and makes a necessary replacement of e.g. a module convenor easier, it also means that the content and structure are fixed, leaving little opportunity for flexibility along the way. The interviewees were of the opinion that changes can be made, but it seemed that this would have to be after evaluation of the first iteration and not e.g. if in the first modules it would become clear that a somewhat different approach in later modules would be more suitable for the students.

The programme incorporates 3 phases of learning for each module: an independent learning phase which typically encompasses self-learning of provided texts before the start of the residential week; an intensive residential/contact week at the location of the module deliverer; and an experiential learning phase which is applied in the operational context. The Module Descriptors and Module Handbooks inform on the learning strategy for each module. Overviews of the application of the independent learning and experiential learning phases in each module have been made available in the Independent Learning Plans and the Experiential Learning Plans. The panel considers this pedagogical approach to be in line with the intended learning outcomes which are elaborated in the module documents. The panel noted in the Experiential Learning Plans that in some modules the experiential learning follows a clear approach, timing and is assessed, in others not. The panel believes that the special position of experiential learning in the programme merits further attention. It would be beneficial to study good practices elsewhere with regard to timing and recording of experiential learning, feedback mechanisms, and assessment methods to see if these could be integrated in the programme.

**Conclusion and recommendations:**

The panel concludes that the structure and content of the EJMSBM programme's curriculum and its pedagogical approach correspond with the intended learning outcomes. The panel recommends, however, that the consortium to allow for some greater flexibility, if needed in the same iteration, and not postponing identified beneficial changes until after the evaluation after the first iteration. The panel also advises that the Consortium study good practices on experiential learning and further apply these as appropriate in the modules.



**Criterion 3c: Credits**

*The distribution of credits is clear.*

**Findings:**

The programme duration is 90 ECTS (3 semesters) comprising 3 stages of each 30 ECTS. In stage 1 there are 6 modules of 5 ECTS each. In stage 2 there are 2 modules of 5 ECTS and 2 modules of 10 ECTS. The third dissertation stage has a duration of 30 ECTS. The consortium has agreed that 1 ECTS reflects 28 hours of learning, following Dutch practice and at the higher end within the agreed European range of 25-30 hours.

Each module has one convenor from one of the partners. In addition, back up convenors (for replacement in the same iteration if necessary) and alternate convenors (convening the module in the next iteration) from other partners have been identified. As a consequence, all academic partners are involved in the convening of at least one module. In an iteration 4 partners will deliver 2 modules and 2 other partners will deliver 1 module each. The consortium has made timelines available showing the sequence and timing of the different parts, as well as the learning phase. More information can also be found in the Student Handbook.

**Conclusion:**

The panel concludes that the distribution of credits is clear.

**Overall conclusion regarding Standard 3. Programme**

The structure and content of the curriculum are well developed and detailed, although the approach to and use of experiential learning would merit more attention. The admission, selection and distribution of credits are transparent. The work load and responsibilities have been distributed reasonably equally among the partners. The panel therefore assesses *Standard 3. Programme* as satisfactory.

**Standard 4. Internal quality assurance system****Criterion 4a: Common understanding**

*There is a common understanding of the internal quality assurance system for this joint programme in which responsibilities are clearly shared and coordinated.*

**Findings:**

The consortium emphasises the unity and jointness of the programme by agreeing on a “mini-university” which is depicted in an organigram. The Governing Board is seen as the highest decision-making body and it consists of the representatives of the academic partners which are thereby linked to their respective Academic Council/Senate/Rectorate. Frontex plays an important role in the Governing Board as it is chaired by the Head of the

Frontex Training Unit and both the Frontex Project Manager and the Programme Administrator, who is the Frontex representative in charge of all administrative responsibilities, have a seat in this Board. The Programme Administrator is also the secretary of the Governing Board. The composition of the Governing Board includes one representative from each of the complementary entities and two elected student representatives. The Governing Board can set up subcommittees to deal with admissions and appeals. The Chairperson of the Governing Board appoints the Programme Coordinators who are proposed by the academic partners and complementary entities and are in charge of the administrative, logistical and organisational matters in their institution. The Programme Board is also an important structure, and clearly emerged from the interviews as a main actor, more directly involved than the Governing Board. The Module Convenors, 2 elected student representatives, and the Frontex Project Manager make up this Board which is chaired by a person nominated by the Governing Board. The Programme Administrator acts as secretary. There are Module Boards for each module, including the Module Convenor and teaching staff for a particular module. The Board of Examiners has an important role when it comes to standards and assessments. The Module Convenors, 2 External Examiners, the Programme Administrator (acting as secretary), project manager and a Chairperson nominated by the Governing Board make up the Board of Examiners. The Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) is responsible for issues relating to QA and academic standards. The QAC can refer major issues to the Governing Board. The QAC has the following composition: the QA Officer who also chairs the QAC (this is a member of staff of one of the academic partners and is appointed by the Chairperson of the Governing Board), 2 Module Convenors, the Frontex project manager, and 1 student representative. The Programme Administrator acts as secretary.

The tasks and composition of all these boards and committees are explained in the Quality Assurance Handbook. The panel finds that the structure of this “mini-university” is well described and it seemed to be recognised as such in the interviews. Although Frontex has a prominent role in the Governing Board and Programme Board, in the programme administration and as secretary of different boards and committees, an effort has been made to empower the academic partners in the management structure of the programme (e.g. by restricting voting rights in some committees to academic partners). Naturally, the start of the programme will show whether what has been described on paper will also work that way in practice.

The QA Handbook continues with the principles for QA, the assessment and grading system, study load analysis, mentoring, professional development for teaching staff, the plans for a teacher of the year awards, student representation, programme and module QA, and programme review. With regard to the latter, the QAC is responsible for organising a review of the programme after the end of each iteration. The topics of this review are listed and examine the detail of individual modules. The Programme Administrator compiles the input. The QAC reviews and evaluates the material. The QA

Officer reports to the Governing Board and informs the Programme Board. There is also a procedure for periodic review conducted after the second iteration. This is more focussed on general overarching themes. The periodic review will be conducted by 2 external assessors proposed by the Programme Board and appointed by the Chairperson of the Governing Board. It seemed in the interviews that teaching staff were aware of these arrangements for reviews. The consortium has also taken appropriate measures to quality assure the delivery of the modules by the Estonian Associate Partner EASS which is delivering but not awarding the degree. Therefore, EASS is not included in the Joint Awarding Agreement and the parchment. EASS will deliver two modules under the responsibility and quality assurance of two Academic Partners who nominate Module Convenors that are ultimately responsible for the quality assurance of the modules delivered in Estonia. EASS nominates an Associate Module Convenor that reports to the Academic Module Convenor and support him/her in fulfilling his/her tasks. The Estonian Associate Convenor is a non-voting member of the Programme Board.

**Conclusion:**

The panel concludes that the consortium has a common understanding of its internal quality assurance system and that responsibilities are clearly shared and coordinated.

**Criterion 4b: Stakeholder involvement**

*The stakeholders (students, staff, employers, graduates, etc.) are involved in the internal quality assurance activities (including graduate surveys and employability issues).*

**Findings:**

Feedback from students and teaching staff is collected after each module, after the taught component and after the end of the iteration. An online feedback form is available in the digital platform Moodle. The feedback sought from staff and students relates to the development of the programme, the curriculum and its delivery, as well as operational and non-academic support issues. Students are represented in the Governing Board, Programme Board and QAC. Many issues that are directly relevant for students are examined in the regular review, e.g. (comparison of ) student learning experience, admissions, study load analysis, student support arrangements, material provided to students. Teaching staff are represented in the Module Boards. Staff feedback is also part of the regular and periodic reviews. To increase teaching excellence the consortium intends to give each year a Teacher of the Year Award through a committee set up by the Governing Board for this purpose. Feedback from alumni will be collected through an agreed questionnaire one year after the end of every iteration. Employers are involved in the Governing Board (complementary entities) and it is also possible to include a stakeholder in the QAC. Feedback from sending authorities will be collected after 3 months following the completion of the iteration and then again after one year of completion of the same iteration.

**Conclusion:**

The panel concludes that students, staff, employers and alumni will be involved in internal quality assurance activities.

**Criterion 4c: Continuous improvement**

*The effectiveness of the system with regard to the continuous improvement of the programme can be demonstrated.*

**Findings:**

The sequence of regular and periodic reviews seems to be a strong and mutually reinforcing feature, with the regular review focussing on the details of the programme and the periodic review on overarching themes linked to strategies for teaching and learning. The data from the regular review can also be used to inform the periodic review. Two external assessors will conduct the periodic review after every second iteration of the programme. Effectiveness of the system with a keen eye on continuous improvement is also sought by introducing certain elements of stability. The QAC has a stable composition and the QA Officer is nominated for the entire duration of the Consortium Agreement (6-7 years, iterations and review period).

**Conclusion:**

The panel concludes that the consortium has demonstrated that the developed system with regard to continuous improvement is likely to be effective.

**Overall conclusion regarding Standard 4. Internal quality assurance**

The panel has found a well-developed internal quality assurance system, with written procedures and structures. Stakeholders' involvement and a continuous improvement system seem to be ensured. With the "mini-university" in place the system now has to prove itself in practice. The panel therefore assesses *Standard 4. Internal quality assurance* as satisfactory.

**Standard 5. Facilities and student support**

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**Criterion 5a: Facilities**

*The facilities provided are sufficient and adequate in view of the intended learning outcomes.*

**Findings:**

The academic partners have committed themselves in the Consortium Agreement to provide all reasonable human and physical resources to support learning and achieve the

learning outcomes. There should be no difference in this regard compared with the regular students in the academic partner institutions. Whilst the week-long contact sessions are expected to contribute to the formation of a class identity, the virtual learning environment provided by Frontex allows students and staff to continue communication, thereby making it possible to retain the group dynamics. The indicated readings in the modules will be available in this digital platform or in the virtual libraries of the academic partners. The panel checked the virtual learning environment and found that it is suitable for its purpose. Frontex offers support to students and teaching staff in using Moodle. The consortium also announces refresher classes on academic writing as an optional offer for students, which is welcomed by the panel.

**Conclusion:**

The panel concludes that the facilities provided by the consortium are sufficient and adequate in view of the intended learning outcomes.

**Criterion 5b: Support**

*Student support provided by the joint programme contributes to the achievement of the learning outcomes and, where applicable, to designing individual study pathways.*

**Findings:**

The mentoring system is outlined in the QA Handbook and the Teaching Staff Handbook. Members of teaching staff act as academic counsellors, and play a role in study counselling and in supporting students who are experiencing problems with their study progress. Teachers are assigned a number of students who remain under their supervision during the programme. Mentors, module convenors, the programme administrator and project manager share a responsibility with regard to student support. Workload and support are continuously monitored. In the view of the panel this is crucial as the programme may be challenging and the work load heavy for executive professionals who have probably been away from academic work for some time. Student records are kept both by the academic partners and Frontex. The consortium also puts trust in its rigorous selection procedure in preventing major problems with student progress. In addition, teachers' knowledge of different learning styles of adult learners is advocated.

The consortium is ready to help students who, in the course of their professional career, have "forgotten" how to study or are not familiar with new teaching and learning methods. Each module starts with an independent learning phase where students will engage in guided self-study. The module descriptors and handbooks help students to determine what is required from them.

The sending authorities are obliged in the consortium agreement but also through contracts with individual students to support students. To enable their study the sending authorities are obliged to make arrangements significantly decreasing the normal workload of the students. This is also important in the experiential learning phase.

The curriculum is quite fixed; the opportunity to follow individual pathways is mostly restricted to the dissertation phase. Students are however prepared in the previous stages for this dissertation task, particularly in the two research skills modules.

**Conclusion:**

The panel concludes that the joint programme provides student support which contributes to the achievement of the learning outcomes. Attention has been paid to ensure that students are well supported throughout their studies. This is particularly noticeable in the development of their individual study pathways during the dissertation phase.

**Criterion 5c: Services**

*The programme provides adequate student services to facilitate mobility (e.g. housing, guidance for incoming and outgoing students, visa issues, etc.).*

**Findings:**

Frontex provides the central coordination and administration as the programme is implemented as a Frontex project. This means that the Project Manager and the Programme Administrator have an important role in providing student services. Frontex has also signed agreements with the sending authorities concerning financial arrangements, conditions for withdrawal, recovery of costs and commitments to facilitate student’s learning. All costs related to the mobility periods are covered by Frontex. A network of Partnership Academies (complementary entities) is in place to facilitate all aspects of mobility. This mechanism is previously tested in other trainings and courses. The local Programme Coordinators appointed by partners act as a contact point for all organisational and administrative issues.

Providing student services can be quite challenging when students move ten times for a week to different locations within 1 ½ year. However, the elaborate infrastructure that Frontex and its partners have put in place convinces the panel that it should run rather smoothly.

**Conclusion:**

The panel concludes that the programme provides adequate student services to facilitate mobility.

**Overall conclusion regarding Standard 5. Facilities and student support**

The panel has found a programme purposefully facilitating and supporting their students, and putting the required infrastructure and student services in place to facilitate the ten-stage mobility requirement. The panel therefore assesses *Standard 5. Facilities and student support as satisfactory.*

## Standard 6. Teaching and learning

### **Criterion 6a: Staff**

*The composition of the staff (quantity, qualifications, professional and international experience, etc.) is adequate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes*

#### **Findings:**

In addition to the academic staff of the academic partners the teaching staff also includes border guard officers and operational experts from border guard agencies and complementary entities, as well as teachers, researchers and experts external to the complementary entities and border guard agencies. Arrangements to substitute staff when necessary will be made. Mobility of teaching staff is a given and also endorsed by the consortium. The teaching staff connected to a module are included in the Module Board. All Module Convenors must hold a PhD, with a few exceptions where the doctorate programme is nearly completed. Proficiency in English at C1 Level is also required and must be declared by the teaching staff. Exceptionally, some practical sessions may be delivered by teaching staff that do not have a formal Master's qualification but post-graduate qualifications/experience would be required, as well as approval by the Programme Board. Primary dissertation supervisors should hold a PhD and be experienced researchers. The panel finds that the teaching staff have the necessary professional experience and academic qualifications, although the 60% of teaching staff with PhD degrees is at the lower end of what can be expected from an academically-oriented Master's programme. As the research component takes half of the programme and, depending on student's choices for dissertation topics, it might become a challenge to find enough well-qualified dissertation supervisors with topic-specific knowledge.

#### **Conclusion and recommendation:**

The panel concludes that the composition of the staff is adequate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. However, as half of the programme is related to acquiring research skills the balance within staff with regard to research qualifications and experience is delicate. The panel therefore recommends that the research base of the staff be strengthened. This can be done by upscaling the research competences of the present teaching staff, by involving more staff with research experience and PhDs from the current partners, and by enlarging the consortium with universities with a prominent research profile.

### **Criterion 6b: Assessment of students**

*The examination regulations and the assessment of the achievements of learning outcomes are applied in a consistent manner among partner institutions and oriented to the intended learning outcomes.*

**Findings:**

The assessment methods are well documented and elaborated in the Module Handbooks, and in concise form also included in the Student Handbook and Teaching and Examination Regulations. Both ongoing assessment strategies, offering students formative feedback during the module and end of module summative assessments, are used. There is a wide range of assessment methods which are described for each module and geared to the intended learning outcomes, as is evident in the module handbooks. This variety also reflects the different learning stages. However, in the case of the assessment of experiential learning the panel finds the methods less refined and these could be improved in some modules. It is also not always clear why experiential learning is not assessed in some modules. The panel advocates an academic approach underpinned by real experience and demonstrated through (recorded) experiential learning as opposed to a reflection on experiential learning that was linked back to some underpinning theory. The grading system is agreed on collectively, with letters from A to F and common consortium learning descriptors connected to it. In a matrix the corresponding grading system for each partner country is given. Students must at least obtain the letter E to pass a module and the dissertation. Students with a fail mark have one opportunity for re-assessment. In principle all modules in one stage have to be passed before progressing to the next stage. When there is more than one assessment component the percentage weighting for each component is given. The module handbooks are available for students in the virtual learning environment and include sample assessments.

**Conclusion and recommendation:**

The panel concludes that the examination regulations and the assessment of the achievements of learning outcomes are applied in a consistent manner among partner institutions and oriented to the intended learning outcomes. However, the assessment methods connected to experiential learning could be improved and gain in consistency.

**Criterion 6c: Graduation guarantee and financial provisions**

*The institutions guarantee students that they can complete the entire curriculum and make sufficient financial provisions available.*

**Findings:**

It is foreseen in the Consortium Agreement (clause 7.16) that, in case of the dissolution of the consortium, the partners ensure that the enrolled students can complete the programme. Similarly, in clause 10 the protection of students is regulated. This clause includes an obligation for the consortium to arrange for a back up deliverer of each module so that in the case of withdrawal, suspension or expulsion of a deliverer the programme continues.



The joint programme was endorsed by the Management Board of Frontex in March 2014. It is seen as a strategic, flagship project for the Agency. The project is included in multiannual work plans and annual budgets. Frontex finances for up to 30 students in each iteration of the programme, including graduation, re-assessments, teachers mobility and payment, QA and (re-)accreditation. Financial agreements between Frontex, academic partners, and complementary entities have been concluded, as well as (where appropriate) bilateral agreements between academic partners and complementary entities. The Head of Frontex Training Unit has ensured the panel that the iteration will continue, even if e.g. the funding from the European Parliament would be cut, as internal budget reallocations would ensure that the on-going iteration is completed, in the interest of the students and sending organisations. The panel has no doubts whatsoever about this firm financial commitment of Frontex.

**Conclusion:**

The panel concludes that the institutions and Frontex guarantee that students can complete the entire curriculum and that there are sufficient financial provisions available.

***Overall conclusion regarding Standard 6. Teaching and learning***

Teaching and learning is assessed as satisfactory. The programme profits from an enthusiastic group of teachers who have become increasingly acquainted with each other in the course of designing the programme. The teaching staff is well-qualified but the programme would benefit from further upscaling of their research competences. There is a good blend of assessment methods which could be further improved with a clearer view on the assessment of experiential learning. Frontex is a strong and credible guarantor of continued delivery and sufficient financial provisions.

## 4. Final conclusion

According to the Assessment Framework the panel gives a substantiated final conclusion following a two-point scale: the quality of the new programme is either “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory”.

The final conclusion concerning a new programme is “satisfactory” if the programme meets each of the six standards.

The final conclusion concerning a new programme is “unsatisfactory” if one or more of the six standards are assessed as being unsatisfactory.

As all six standards are assessed as satisfactory the final conclusion of the panel is that the provision of the new joint programme European Joint Master’s in Strategic Border Management is satisfactory. The name of the programme is appropriate and in line with European regulations in this field. The panel advises NVAO, as well as other quality assurance agencies in the partner countries of the consortium, to accredit this new programme.

The panel considers this new joint programme to be of added value for the academic development of this field. As became clear in the interviews, in particular with the professional field, this programme adheres to the demand for senior professionals who are strategic thinkers and have acquired the skills to address new solutions in the rapidly changing context of border management. All interviewees have emphasised that this master programme, particularly through knowledge development as a consequence of emerging dissertations, is important for establishing a research base in this field. The panel were satisfied by the evidence provided by the academics involved that this was really intended to be a ‘scientific’ masters – centring on academic aspects that would then be addressed through real workplace scenarios and experiential learning. Further, whilst building on established academic disciplines the ‘project’ would seek to provide, particularly through focused and integrated approaches to dissertation topics, the research basis for what is in effect a new (and important) inter-disciplinary area.

However, it should be noted that the research profile of this academically-oriented (so not professionally-oriented) master programme is currently sufficient but vulnerable. Although the two modules and the dissertation are specifically research focused and together account for half of the duration of the programme, a significant number of teaching staff do not hold PhDs and only half of the consortium partners are universities. Moreover, for Frontex the provision of a programme on level 7 is a new addition to its education and

training provision which is currently on lower levels. Whilst there clearly is a need in the field for developing the research base, there is also the desire of sending authorities to stay very close to practice. Part of the consortium may be inclined to heed to such pressures at the cost of a more reflective and theory-inducing approach. Therefore, if there is opportunity in the future for new partners it should be considered to broaden the consortium with more research universities to strengthen the research base. The Consortium will wish to note that programmes accredited by NVAO require re-accreditation after 6 years. Additionally however, under the single accreditation of a joint programme involving one or more Spanish universities there is a requirement for reaccreditation of official degrees after 4 years.

The documentation that was provided for this application was plentiful and meticulously prepared. Many arrangements, e.g. in the design and content of the curriculum, are very detailed and as these are subsequently included in formal agreements between partners the consortium should be mindful that some flexibility and opportunity for future changes is ensured. The panel believes that such changes may be necessary, as the programme is currently focussing on external physical EU borders. A new approach to border activities requires a stronger focus on contextual policy and societal issues. The recommendation of the panel with regard to the content of the programme should therefore be considered. If needed the consortium should reconsider the sequence of topics/modules to better emphasise that the programme has a fundamental 'academic' basis into which professional practice is integrated, and that it is this paradigm that is rigorously assessed. Moreover, the position of experiential learning in the programme should be further elaborated as it is currently required in all modules but treated very differently in each module. The timing and recording of experiential learning, feedback mechanisms, and assessment methods are relevant issues in all modules and the programme would gain from a common approach, whilst allowing for some variety in specific modules.

To conclude, the panel considers this new academically-oriented joint Master programme thoroughly thought through, innovative, promising and welcomed by the professional field. The tremendous effort and commitment that has gone into preparing the programme by over 80 experts since the beginning of 2012 should be commended, even more so in view of the many legal obstacles encountered.

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
1.General conditions	1a. Recognition	Satisfactory
	1b. Cooperation agreement	
	1c. Added value	
2.Intended learning outcomes	2a. Shared	Satisfactory
	2b. Level	
	2c. Subject/discipline	
3.Programme	3a. Admission	Satisfactory
	3b. Structure	
	3c. Credits	
4.Internal quality assurance system	4a. Common understanding	Satisfactory
	4b. Stakeholder involvement	
	4c. Continuous improvement	
5.Facilities and student support	5a. Facilities	Satisfactory
	5b. Support	
	5c. Services	
6.Teaching and learning	6a. Staff	Satisfactory
	6b. Assessment of students	
	6c. Graduation guarantee and financial provisions	

## Annex 1: Composition of the assessment panel

Dr Nick Harris (panel chair), international adviser ANECA (Spain) and former Director of QAA (UK)

Prof Dr Willy Bruggeman (subject-specific expert), Professor at Benelux University Centre, former Deputy Director of Europol, chairman of council and board of the Belgian federal police (Belgium)

Dr Mark Foley (subject-specific expert), Inspector at An Garda Siochana (Irish Police), lecturer at Police College (Ireland)

Rok Primožič (student expert), Master in Education Sciences student at VUB (Belgium), member of QA Students Experts Pool of European Students' Union (ESU), former chair of ESU (Slovenia).

### Overview of the expertise/experience of the panel:

	S	I	P	E	Q	S
Dr Nick Harris		X		X	X	
Prof Dr Willy Bruggeman	X		X	X		
Dr Mark Foley	X		X	X		
Rok Primožič					X	X

- S:** subject-/discipline-specific expertise;
- I:** International expertise & experience;
- P:** professional field expertise & experience;
- E:** educational experience;
- Q:** quality assurance and/or audit experience
- S:** student expert.

## Annex 2: Statements of Independence

### Programme assessment

#### Declaration of independence and confidentiality

The undersigned (name and address)

|

asked to act as an expert in the assessment of the following programme(s):

*European Joint Master's in Strategic Border Management (EJMSBM)-003196*

submitted by the following institution:

*Netherlands Defence Academy, Faculty of Military Sciences*

in cooperation with:

- *European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (Frontex)*
  - *Estonian Academy of Security Sciences, Estonia*
  - *Rezekne Higher Education Institution, Latvia*
  - *Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania*
  - *National University for Distance-Learning Education (UNED), Spain*
  - *University of Salamanca, Spain*
- hereby confirms to not maintain any (family) connections or ties of a personal nature or as a researcher / teacher, professional or consultant with the above programme or institutions, which could affect a fully independent judgement regarding the quality of the programme in either a positive or a negative sense;
  - hereby confirms to not having maintained such connections or ties with the programme during the past five years;
  - agrees to observe strict confidentiality with regard to all that has come and will come to his/her notice in connection with the programme assessed, insofar as such confidentiality can reasonably be claimed by the programme, the institution or NVAO;
  - hereby confirms to having read [NVAO's code of conduct](#).

Place:

Date:

Signature:

## Annex 3: Documents reviewed

Self-evaluation report

### List of documents attached to the Self Evaluation Report:

PART I: Consortium Agreement and Annexes:

- I. Members of the Governing Board
- II. Joint Awarding Agreement
- III. Financial Framework Master Agreements (Academic Partners)
- IV. Financial Framework Master Agreements (Complementary Entities)
- V. Agreements between Academic Partners and Complementary Entities
- VI. Quality Assurance Handbook (and Flow charts)
- VII. Student Handbook
- VIII. Dissertation Guidelines
- IX. Teaching and Examination Regulations
- X. Teaching Staff Handbook
- XI. List of Sending Authorities
- XII. Degree Programme Timeline
- XIII. Agreement voting between the Spanish Awarding Partners

PART II: Programme Curriculum Documentation, comprising:

- Introduction and Programme Descriptors
- Modules Descriptors, Modules Handbooks, Modules Assessment Schemes and Sample Assessments (10 Modules)
- Dissertation Stage Descriptor
- Independent Learning Plans
- Experiential Learning Plans
- Cross-reference Tables of Learning Outcomes

PART III: Sample Parchment and Diploma Supplement

Part IV: Teaching Staff (table and Curriculum Vitae)

Part V: Sectoral Qualifications Framework for Border Guarding Volume II

Additional documents provided to the panel after the site visit included letters from the Estonian and Latvian Ministries; the decision of the consortium to change the status of EASS into Associate Partner; the amended consortium agreement and other supporting documents.



## Annex 4: Site visit programme

### OVERVIEW

**New programme:** European Joint Master's in Strategic Border Management

**Procedure:** NVAO extensive initial accreditation for a master programme with academic orientation ("wo-master") leading to a joint degree

**Applicant:** Netherlands Defense Academy, Faculty of Military Science (NLDA)

**Consortium:** European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (Frontex); Estonian Academy of Security Sciences; Rezekne Higher Education Institution (Latvia); Mykolas Romeris University (Lithuania); Netherlands Defence Academy, Faculty of Military Science (NLDA) ; National University for Distance-Learning Education (UNED, Spain); University of Salamanca (Spain).

**Date of site visit:** 2-3 December 2014

**Location:** Border Security Training Centre, Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, Snipweg 3, Schiphol

**Panel meeting:** BEST WESTERN Amsterdam Airport Hotel, Vuursteen 1, 2132 LZ Hoofddorp

### PANEL

- |                             |                         |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| • Dr. Nick Harris           | Chair                   |
| • Prof. Dr. Willy Bruggeman | Subject-specific expert |
| • Dr. Mark Foley            | Subject-specific expert |
| • Rok Primožič              | Student expert          |

Dr. Mark Frederiks:	NVAO process coordinator and panel secretary
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Observer: Lagle Zobel from the Estonian QA agency EKKA.

**DRAFT PROGRAMME OF THE SITE VISIT**

**Tuesday 2 December 2014**

16.00 - 19.00: Preparatory meeting of the panel (in BEST WESTERN hotel)

19.30 Dinner (in BEST WESTERN hotel)

**Wednesday 3 December 2014**

08.00 From lobby hotel to Border Security Training Centre (transport by Marechaussee)

*Note: the panel may take 5-15 minutes at the end of each session to discuss the interviews and prepare for the next session, so the duration of the interviews will be less than 1 hour.*

08.30 - 09.30: Interviews with management of Netherlands Defence Academy and Frontex staff

Full name	Function, institution
• Prof. dr. Henrik Rudolph	Dean of NL Defence Academy, Faculty of Military Sciences, Governing Board member
• Prof dr. Myriame Bollen	Professor, NL Defence Academy, Faculty of Military Sciences, Governing Board alternate member
• Henrik Warnhjelm	Head of Frontex Training Unit, Chair of the Governing Board
• Anemona Peres	Project Manager, Frontex Training Unit, Governing Board member

09.30 - 10.30: Interviews with Governing Board Representatives of all Consortium Partners

Full name	Function, institution
• Ramon Loik	Vice rector for Research and Development, Estonian Academy of Security Sciences, Governing Board Member
• Dr. sc. ing Edmundus Teirumnieks	Rector of Rezeknes University, Latvia, Governing Board member
• Prof. dr. Giedrius Viliunas	Vice-rector for Education, Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania, Governing Board member
• Prof. dr. Pablo de Diego Angeles	Vice-dean, Law Faculty, University of Distance Learning, Spain, Governing Board alternate representative
• Assoc. Prof. Dr. Juan Santos Vara	Director of Masters in European studies, Public Law International Dept, University of Salamanca, Spain, Governing Board alternate representative

10.30 - 11.00: Coffee break

11.00 - 12.00: Interviews with the Programme Coordinators/Procedures & Regulations experts

Full name	Function, institution
• Perry Bakker	Head of Educational Division, Royal Marechaussee Training and Expertise Center, Programme Coordinator, NL
• Maiko Martsik	Estonian Academy of Security Sciences, Programme Coordinator
• Prof. dr. Vaiva Zuzeviciute	Professor, Mykolas Romeris University, Programme Coordinator, Procedures and Regulations Expert, LT
• Daina Znotina	Rezeknes University, Latvia, Programme Coordinator, LV
Dr. Mario Hernandez Ramos	University of Salamanca, replacement Programme Coordinator
• Malgorzata Radko	Project Support Officer, Frontex Training Unit, Programme Administrator, Procedures & Regulations expert

12.00 – 13.00: Lunch meeting (panel members only)

13.00 - 14.30: Interviews with the Module Convenors, teaching staff and other curriculum experts

Full name	Course/Module, institution
• Prof. dr. Pablo de Diego Angeles	Module 1. Strategy, Planning and Evaluation, Module Convenor, UNED Spain
• Dr. Peter Olsthoorn	Module 2. Fundamental Rights and Ethics, Module Convenor, NL Defence Academy
• Drs. Viktorija Pokule	Module 3. Leadership and Organisational development, and Module 9. Cooperation in Border Security, Module Convenor, Reszekne University Latvia
• Prof. dr. Juan Santos Vara	Module 4. EU Policies and Strategies, Module Convenor, Univ of Salamanca, Spain
• Marek Link	Module 5. Innovation and Technology, Module Convenor, Estonian Academy of Security Sciences
• Dr. Tessa op den Buijs	Module 6 and Module 10. Researching Management / Integrated Practices, Module Convenor, NL Defence Academy
• Eva Maria Asari	Module 7. Global Context of Border Security, Module Convenor, Estonian Academy of Security Sciences
• Dr. Andrejus Novikovas	Module 8. Risk and Threat Management, Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania

14.30 - 15.15: Interviews with the representatives of the Working Field (Border Guard/Police)

Full name	Position, Institution
▪ Dzemal Dzuric	Slovenian National Police
▪ Iulian Valianu	Romanian National Police
▪ Alicia Vicente	Spain Civil Guard Command and Control Center
▪ Carlos Rio Miranda	Spain National Police Force Headquarters

15:15 – 16:30: Panel meeting

16.30 - 16.45: Panel debriefing (the panel chair will give a short feedback on preliminary findings)

16.45 Departure



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