



RÉPUBLIQUE
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ACTIVITY REPORT

INSTITUTE OF HIGHER STUDIES IN NATIONAL DEFENCE

STRATEGIC
CULTURE

NATIONAL
COHESION

2025

RESILIENCE

DEFENCE
AWARENESS

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HERVÉ de Courrèges

Director

of IHEDN



Lieutenant General Hervé de COURRÈGES,
Director of the Institute of Higher Studies in National Defence

“ Thinking about war to preserve peace: the urgent need for a shared strategic culture ”

2025

will go down in our Institute’s history as one marked by a threefold commitment: to development, high standards and innovation. At a time when the world is facing a resurgence of violence and challenges to sovereignty – from Ukraine to the Middle East – IHEDN has stepped up to the plate to help people prepare for the unexpected.

Our growing influence reached a peak with the incredible success of the Paris Defence and Strategy Forum (PDSF) last March. A true international showcase for French strategic thinking, it exceeded even our highest expectations. At the same time, the 3rd edition of "L'Année de la défense nationale" [The Year of National Defence] has established itself as an essential reference, providing vital insights to an ever-growing audience.

High standards, then, have been our guiding principle. This was reflected in the success of the national session, with the 23 committee reports bearing witness to the depth of our auditors’ thinking. This commitment to excellence has been recognised through the renewal of our quality certifications (Qualiopi), ensuring the value of the "IHEDN label" for all the nation’s executives, both civilian and military.

Innovation, at last, has taken hold in our "engine room". 2025 marked a historic digital milestone: the launch of a new collaborative platform, our WhatsApp channel and our first podcasts. By modernising our tools and communication formats, we are now bringing defence culture closer to the public and young people, notably through the dynamic "Youth Competition".

As our Institute celebrates its 90th anniversary, its core ethos remains, more than ever, "building together". This ability to bring together different cultures – civilian and military, public and private – is our greatest strength. At a time when self-interest is on the rise once more, IHEDN remains this "small nation" united by a noble cause: the defence and security of France.

This activity report is a testament to the intelligence and passion that drive our teams. It reflects an institution which, drawing on its history, is constantly innovating to prepare for the future.

I hope you enjoy reading it.

NICOLAS **BASSELIER**

Deputy Director of IHEDN

Adapting the organisation to strive for excellence

As Deputy Director, my specific responsibility is to ensure that the human and financial resources made available to the Institution are deployed and organised in the most effective way possible to fulfil its mission: fostering defence awareness through training, research and outreach activities.

2025 was thus marked by further progress in the modernisation of the Institute.

Digital transformation is a powerful driver

One of the major projects this year was the roll-out of our digital roadmap. More than just a technical update, this represents a genuine cultural shift. By making collaborative working the norm and by modernising our management tools (electronic signature system, SharePoint, Payfip), we will improve our responsiveness, efficiency and quality of service.

Quality as a guiding principle

Excellence at IHEDN cannot be decreed; it must be demonstrated. In 2025, we continued our policy of certification and continuous improvement. Whether it be national sessions, regional sessions, youth programmes, economic intelligence programmes, or European and international sessions, each course is designed to offer auditors a unique experience, combining a rich and comprehensive curriculum with academic rigour and practical immersion. This commitment to quality is our hallmark, recognised by both

public administrations and private sector stakeholders.

Fully committed teams

None of this would be possible without the commitment of the men and women who make up the Institute. That is why we pay close attention to the development of our employees' career paths as well as the quality of their working conditions.

As they form one of the cornerstones of the École Militaire, our teams are also heavily involved in the development of the French Defence University (ACADEM) and the organisation of the Paris Defence and Strategy Forum.

IHEDN is also a strong community comprising 39 associations and nearly 10,000 auditors, which serves as a powerful lever for promoting our work across the country and abroad, reaching a very wide audience.

Fostering and mobilising this network is another of our priorities, as exemplified by the first Youth programmes, the implementation of which was delegated last year to regional associations.

“ 2025 was thus marked by further progress in the modernisation of the Institute. ”



Prefect Nicolas BASSELIER,
Deputy Director of the Institute of Higher Studies in National Defence

SYLVIE BERMANN

Chair of the IHEDN Board of Directors



Ambassador Sylvie BERMANN,
Chair of the Board of Directors

From 24 January 2020 to 23 January 2026, French Ambassador Sylvie Bermann served as Chair of the IHEDN Board of Directors for two terms.

French Ambassador Pierre Lévy succeeded her on 24 January 2026. In this interview, the diplomat reflects on the changes in the geostrategic landscape during her chairmanship, and on how the Institute adapted to them.

Since 2020, the world has experienced Covid-19 and then various conflicts with global implications, such as those in Ukraine and the Middle East. Does this decade mark the dawn of a new era?

Yes, I think we really are in a time of upheaval, which began precisely when I took up my post as Chair of the IHEDN Board of Directors, with the health crisis. It came as a shock to the whole world; a global crisis whose consequences we have not yet fully grasped, in my view. Once it was over, we wanted to put it behind us, but I think it led to a number of countries becoming isolated.

Then there was the erratic management of Donald Trump's first term. Europe, on the other hand, sought to establish a health policy that was not provided for in the treaties. It did so fairly quickly, but the longer-term consequences are relations of mistrust between states.

Then there was the withdrawal of each country into itself. And I think the effects on Vladimir Putin are largely to blame

for the aggression in Ukraine, because he had previously admitted to being afraid of contagious diseases. He shut himself off both geographically (he no longer saw anyone) and psychologically.

Businessmen couldn't see him anymore, nor could the liberals, because he was too afraid of the virus, and he demanded that an oligarch self-isolate for 15 days before being allowed to meet him, practically shouting from the back of a room. That's not conducive to discussion and reflection. He saw only a very small circle of people, and was more receptive to what certain individuals proposed to him – in this case, it would appear to be the brothers Yuri and Mikhail Kovalchuk.

Putin was 70 years old; he was thinking of preparing his legacy, and the "recovery" of Ukraine seemed possible, given that Zelensky was very unpopular at the time and the Americans had made a pitiful withdrawal from Afghanistan. The idea was that, with the West weakened, there would be no intervention. And then he began writing articles about Ukraine and Russia forming a single country. At that point, Putin had no more contradictions, no more dialogue, and on top of that, all his domestic and international activities had come to a standstill.

In China, we saw the lockdown during the Covid pandemic. The world's mistrust of China also began at that time. So really, I think we need to look at this crisis beyond its immediate effects.

Covid has had other consequences, within each country, regarding the isolation of people in general, who no longer wish to return to the office and prefer to work from home. The individual freedom so dear to Western societies has drifted towards individualism. This individualism has, moreover, been criticised by Asians, not just the Chinese: the refusal to wear masks, to get vaccinated, etc.

So much for the Covid crisis. And the other key element of this rupture is the invasion of Ukraine by a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council: a high-intensity war in Europe that came as a major shock. This shock also revealed a division between what was later called the Global South and the West...

The current period brings to mind Antonio Gramsci's famous phrase: "The

old world is dying, and the new world struggles to be born; now is the time of monsters."

[...]

During your two terms as Chair of the IHEDN Board of Directors, how did the Institute adapt to this strategic context?

The Institute has undergone significant change under the leadership of the three directors I have known. I could mention the single national session and its five main streams, which have been in place since 2021. Emphasis has also been placed on the regional sessions. This is very important, as IHEDN's activities cannot be confined to the 7th arrondissement of Paris.

The presence of overseas auditors has been strengthened, both in the national session and through regional sessions organised overseas. I would also highlight the expansion of the economic intelligence programmes and the Youth programmes. We have re-established a scientific council, which had been discontinued for several years, and the research sector has been developed. In this regard, the work of the IHEDN Endowment Fund and its two chairs is significant.

These developments have effectively established IHEDN as a key player in strategic thinking and training in France. With the clear threats facing France and the EU, it is important to prepare to respond to them, both in the strictly military sphere and in the realm of hybrid operations.

It was essential to develop these various dimensions, and IHEDN has done so very effectively. Now, the influx of applications is unprecedented, because it is an excellent training programme; everyone who has taken it is absolutely delighted with it and recommends it to others. This record number of applications shows that IHEDN's contribution to defence awareness and strategic thinking has become indispensable in France.

The important thing is that the Director and Chair of the Board of Directors work well together. That has been the case throughout my two terms of office.

“ IHEDN is firmly established in the field of strategic thinking and training in France ”

→ [Read the full interview with Ambassador Sylvie Bermann on the IHEDN website](#)

IHEDN and the *Revue nationale stratégique* 2025

In a fragmented geopolitical landscape, marked by the resurgence of force and a proliferation of crises (Ukraine, the Middle East, the Arctic), the “*Revue nationale stratégique (RNS)*” [National Strategic Review] forms the basis of our doctrine.

For IHEDN, 2025 was the year in which this strategic roadmap was fully embraced. The Institute has set itself the task of translating these guidelines into practical skills for the nation’s executives, thereby preparing France for the challenges of the next three years.



The RNS at the heart of IHEDN

100% of training programmes now include a module on analysing the “*Revue nationale stratégique (RNS)*” [National Strategic Review].

A roadmap for the next **three years**: the framework for our thinking in upcoming sessions.

ANALYSIS Understanding new forms of conflict

The “*Revue nationale stratégique 2025*” [National Strategic Review 2025] is not just a reference document; it serves as the guiding principle for our teaching. The Institute has therefore focused on putting its key principles into practice:

- **From high intensity to hybridity:** applying National Strategic Review concepts to real-world scenarios (war games, simulations), enabling auditors to grasp the reality of various cyber, space and information-related threats.
- **By focusing primarily on areas of friction:** in light of the year’s current events, particular attention has been paid to all regions (the Indo-Pacific, the Arctic, etc.) and disputed areas (the seabed, outer space, high altitudes, etc.).

CONTRIBUTION A discussion to inform decision-making

IHEDN does not just pass on knowledge; it actively contributes to enriching it:

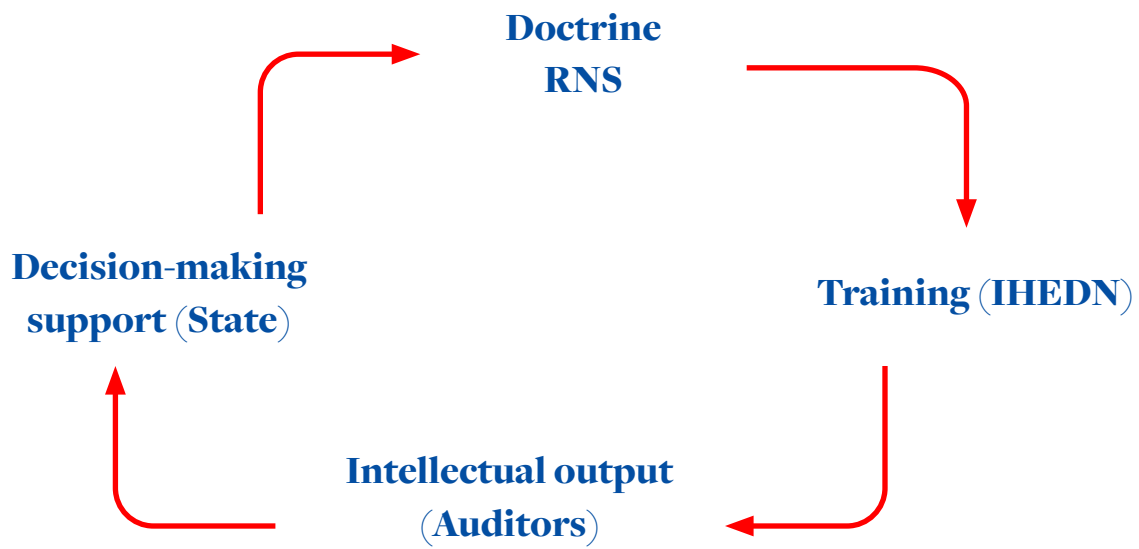
- **The contribution of committee work:** the 23 reports produced by the national session provide valuable input that is eagerly awaited by national decision-makers and think tanks. Reports from the Youth programmes and regional sessions, which are tailored to local contexts, are in high demand among decision-makers and practitioners on the ground, as they aim to put resilience into practice.
- **National cohesion:** by facilitating dialogue between civil servants, military personnel, security professionals and private-sector leaders, the Institute fosters the “culture of defence” promoted by the National Strategic Review to strengthen national cohesion.

PERSPECTIVE IHEDN as a driving force for sovereignty

The Institute’s vision is aligned with the long-term realisation of national ambitions:

- **Modernisation and agility:** IHEDN’s digital transformation (2026 Roadmap) is an essential part of our strategic vision. To provide education and insights to as many people as possible, the Institute must set an example in its digital presence.
- **European and global influence:** through ACADEM and the Paris Defence and Strategy Forum (PDSF), IHEDN promotes French strategic culture far beyond our borders, consolidating France’s position as a driving force behind European strategic autonomy.

“ The time has come for Europeans to take control of their destiny ”



KEY events in 2025

23

reports distributed to institutional decision-makers.

National Session Department

Excellence as a Standard

Committee work at the national session: high-calibre intellectual output

As part of the training provided during the national session, auditors engage in extensive collective reflection, which encourages them to consider defence and security issues at a strategic level. The work carried out by the 2024–2025 session, centred on the theme "France facing strategic disruptions", resulted in the publication of 23 reports, each focusing on a specific topic directly linked to the themes specific to the various specialisations. As true indicators of the quality of the training provided at IHEDN, these documents now constitute a strategic resource. They influence national discourse and fuel public debate on issues of sovereignty.

Department of Studies and Research

Mobilising Talent, Knowledge and Expertise

"Mobilisation(s)" conference, 30 April 2025

A key event that brought together civilian and military experts to rethink the nation's resilience. This conference provided an opportunity to explore new forms of engagement in the face of hybrid threats, confirming IHEDN's role as a hub for strategic thinking.



Department of Europe and International Affairs

Paris-Brussels, a strengthened focus

Back to the roots of European influence

2025 saw the reappointment of an IHEDN representative to the Permanent Representation (PR) of France to the European Union, in Brussels. This is a key means of bringing the Institute's voice to the heart of European decision-making bodies.



Department of Regional and Specialised Activities

Our guiding principle

The "Revue nationale stratégique" at the heart of our sessions

Serving as a guiding principle for our discussions, the "Revue nationale stratégique (RNS)" is now systematically incorporated into every session. It is our roadmap for the next three years, ensuring that our auditors remain aligned with the priorities of French defence.



General Secretariat

Agility and transformation

Digital roadmap: the future of IHEDN

The modernisation of our tools is under way. The new digital roadmap optimises our internal processes and secures our communications, enabling the Institute to be as agile as the challenges it teaches about.

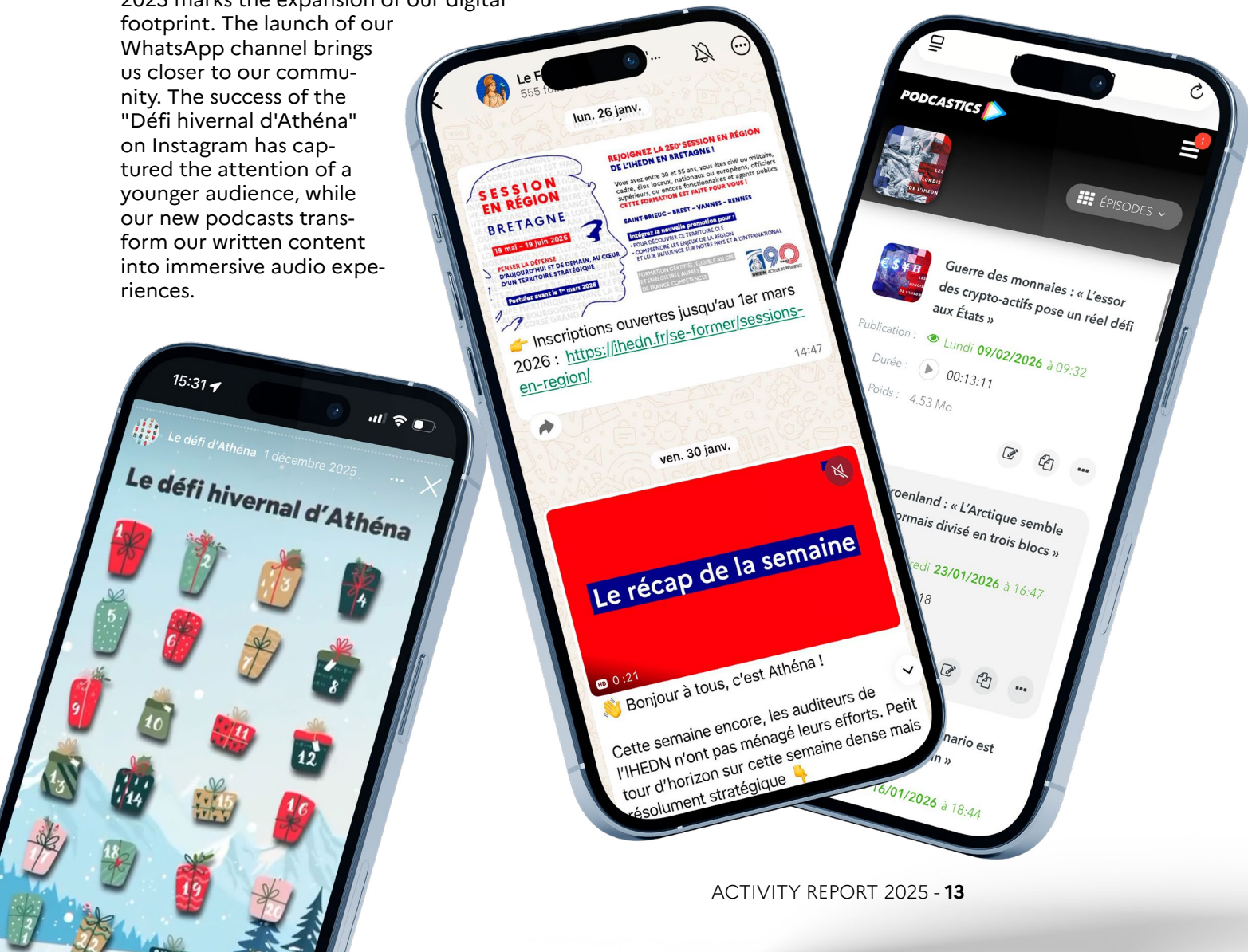


Department of Institutional Relations and Communication

Digital transformation

A multi-channel approach

2025 marks the expansion of our digital footprint. The launch of our WhatsApp channel brings us closer to our community. The success of the "Défi hivernal d'Athéna" on Instagram has captured the attention of a younger audience, while our new podcasts transform our written content into immersive audio experiences.



THE NATIONAL session

Recruitment of the highest standard, reflecting the nation

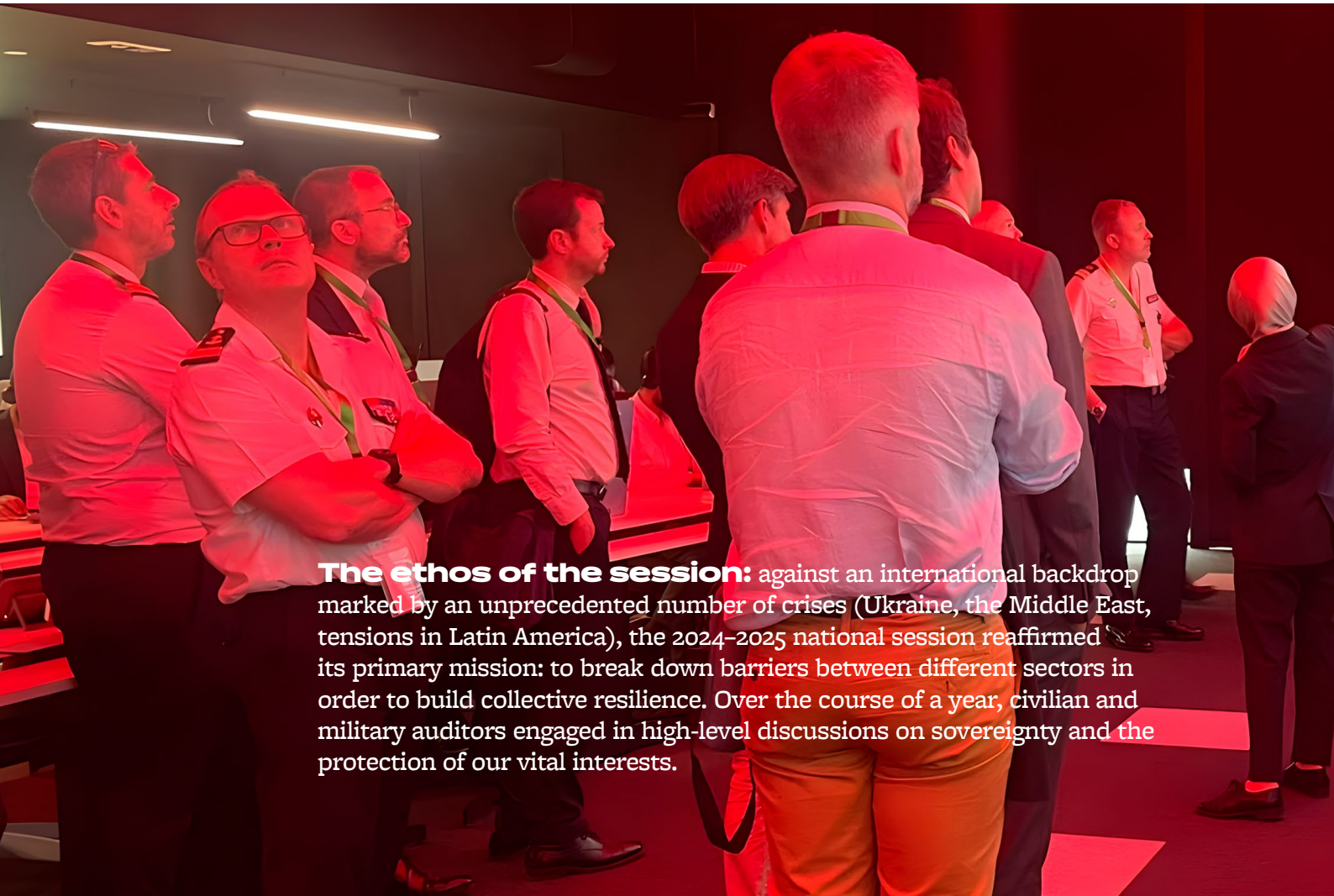
IHEDN has maintained its commitment to diversity:

- Senior civil servants and public sector executives.
- Senior officers (from the three armed forces, the Gendarmerie, Directorates and departments).
- Senior private sector executives (large companies and strategic SMEs).
- Representatives of civil society (elected officials, journalists, Religious communities)

An educational programme tailored to today's challenges

The training programme for the 2025 national session placed particular emphasis on the following key current issues:

- **Understanding conflicts:** an overview of hybrid, cyber and high-intensity threats.
- **Acting in coalition:** an examination of alliances (NATO, EU) and global strategic partnerships.
- **Supporting resilience:** focus on the war economy, technological innovation and national cohesion.



The ethos of the session: against an international backdrop marked by an unprecedented number of crises (Ukraine, the Middle East, tensions in Latin America), the 2024-2025 national session reaffirmed its primary mission: to break down barriers between different sectors in order to build collective resilience. Over the course of a year, civilian and military auditors engaged in high-level discussions on sovereignty and the protection of our vital interests.

Intellectual output: the committees of the national session at the heart of the discussion

The highlight of the session was the committee work (strategic discussions led by groups of auditors on a specific topic), which resulted in 23 reports.

- **Recognised expertise:** this work is not merely an academic exercise but provides valuable insights for civil and military authorities.
- **A mark of quality:** it demonstrates the auditors' ability to grasp complex issues (defence AI, supply chain security, influence) and put forward practical recommendations.

Immersion: from the field to strategic decision-making

While the specifics of fieldwork may take a back seat to analysis, immersion remains the key to understanding:

- **Visits to units:** to gain a practical understanding of the challenges involved in ensuring the forces' operational readiness.
- **Study missions (France, Europe, International):** aimed at comparing the theories learnt at the École Militaire with the geopolitical and industrial realities of the regions.

284

participant

who qualified as auditors upon completion of the training programme

23

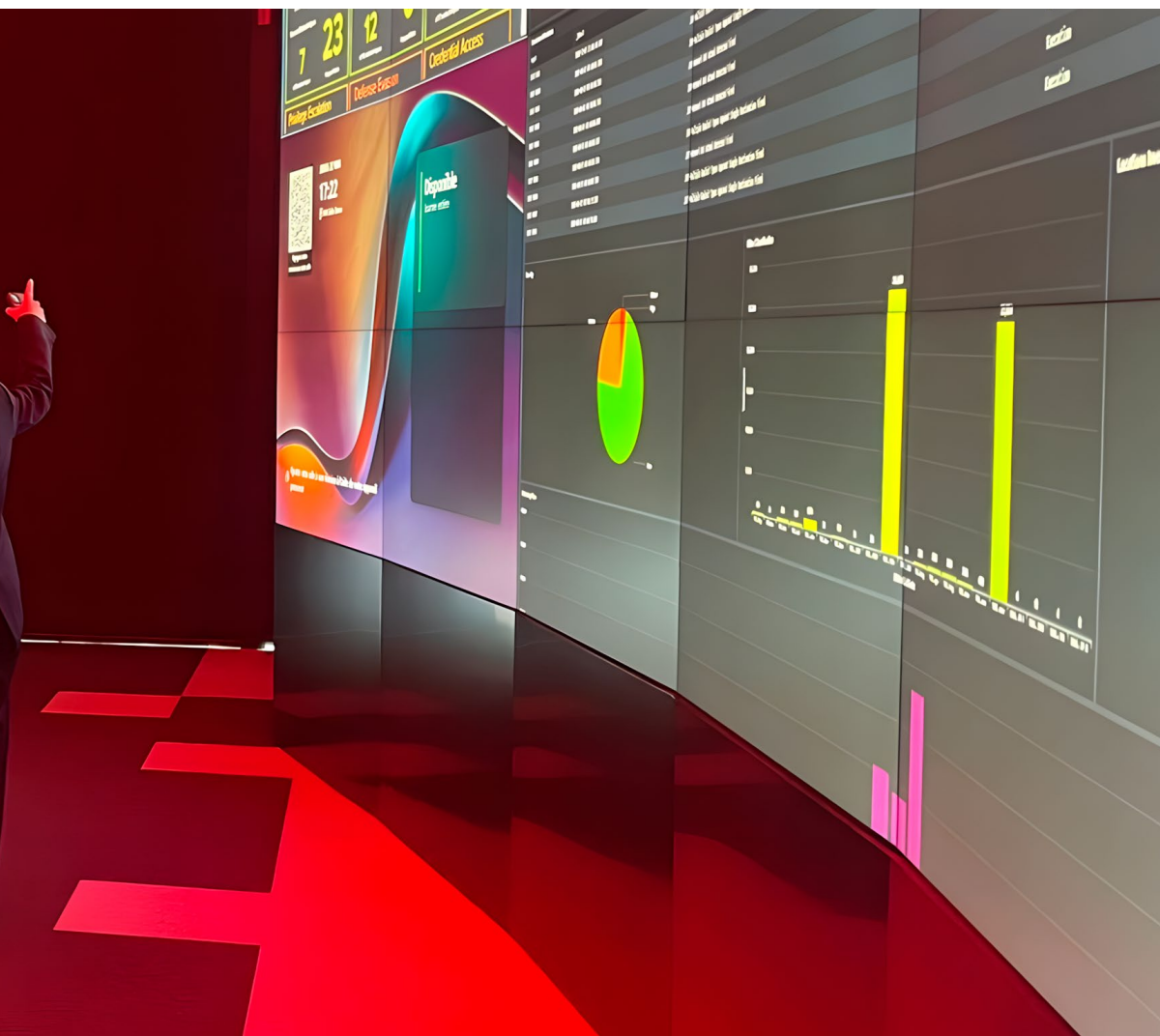
committee reports

distributed to decision-makers.

90%

satisfaction rate

compared with initial expectations.



Mission to Morocco, May 2025

Auditors on the Economic Defence and Security (DSE) programme.

THE **regional** SESSIONS

Defence awareness at the heart of the regions

As a true regional extension of IHEDN's mission, the regional sessions reach every corner of the country. In 2025, they once again demonstrated their vital role: raising awareness among executives of the culture of defence and strengthening the nation's resilience in a way that is closely attuned to local realities.

25

programmes and sessions organised in mainland France and overseas territories

1,286

auditors trained and informed.

25

regional associations of auditors are working together to keep the network alive.

50/50

gender parity steadily increasing in cohorts.

A stronger regional presence

In 2025, the Institute ran **25 programmes and sessions** covering the whole of mainland France and the overseas territories. Each session brought together between 50 and 80 auditors from a variety of sectors, with the aim of providing intellectual and personal enrichment:

- **Public sector:** local elected officials, senior officials in local government, magistrates, teachers.
- **Private sector:** business leaders, senior executives of regional SMEs and mid-cap companies.
- **Security forces:** active and reserve officers of the Gendarmerie and the Armed Forces.

Topics relevant to local issues

While the core curriculum remains the national strategy, the 2025 edition placed an emphasis on specific topics relevant to each region:

- **Resilience and crisis management:** simulation exercises addressing hybrid or climate-related threats.

- **Regional industrial sovereignty:** visits to strategic local sites to understand the importance of the decentralised Defence Technological and Industrial Base (DTIB).
- **Understanding the military environment:** deepening knowledge of the military units based in each region.

Committee work: fostering a collaborative approach

Each regional session is structured around committee work. In 2025, auditors focused on topics such as:

- "The resilience of critical infrastructure to cyber threats within the country".
- "Engaging young people in the region in defence awareness".

This work helps to foster a close-knit community of local experts and decision-makers who are ready to take action in the event of a crisis.

Le Mans, 19 January 2025

241st session in the "Pays de la Loire" region





THE Youth PROGRAMMES

Training the next generation of strategic leaders

Versailles, 23 February 2025
Auditors of the 139th cycle Youth visiting Section technique de l'armée de Terre (STAT)

In response to a “youth concerned about their future”, the IHEDN stepped up its educational efforts in 2025. Like other programmes and sessions, the Youth programmes are not limited to intellectual training; they are designed to act as catalysts for engagement, aiming to equip the citizens of tomorrow with the tools to understand a fragmented world so that they can then take action on the ground.

Record popularity and innovative formats

2025 was marked by unprecedented demand, confirming the interest of 18–30-year-olds in issues of sovereignty. To meet this demand, the Institute diversified its programme offering:

- **The joint IHEDN-IHEMI programme (July 2025)**
For the first time, a programme was co-organised with the Institute of Higher Studies of the Ministry of the Interior. 80 young people benefited from a dual focus on "Defence and Internal Security", illustrating the necessary interconnection between these two pillars of national resilience; given its success, the initiative will be repeated in 2026.
- **Regional pilot schemes**
In order to train more young people across all regions and to give greater scope to regional organisations that

wish to do so, collaborative programmes have been launched (in Marseille, Chambéry and Bordeaux), allowing organisations greater freedom of initiative without compromising the quality of the training.

Certified excellence and overseas outreach

The IHEDN label remains a mark of academic and operational excellence:

- **Certification:** the Youth programmes confer the status of IHEDN fellow and are accredited by France Compétences⁽¹⁾, thereby enhancing the value of this course within participants' professional development.
- **Overseas Priority:** through its partnership with the Ministry for Overseas Territories, the Institute maintains a sustained focus on the overseas territories, ensuring inclusive national cohesion.

Beyond training: engagement through action

2025 saw the emergence of further initiatives to invigorate the community:

- **The "Youth Competition"**
A flagship initiative enabling young talents to put forward innovative ideas on the strategy of the future, with winners eligible to attend the IHEDN course of their choice free of charge.
- **Digital influence**
The success of the "Défi hivernal d'Athéna" on Instagram has helped reach a wider audience, turning defence culture into a topic of everyday conversation for Generation Z.

8 Youth programmes organised each year across the country.

80

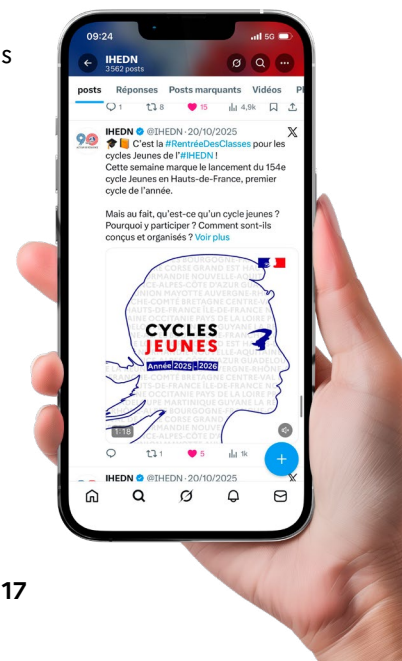
auditors trained during the 1st historical IHEDN-IHEMI programme.

100%

of programmes are accredited by France Compétences.

↑30%

Increase in applications compared to 2024.



⁽¹⁾ Official certification body

Economic Intelligence PROGRAMMES

Protecting and promoting our sovereignty

In a world marked by the resurgence of force and aggressive influence strategies, economic intelligence (EI) is no longer an option but a weapon of national defence. In 2025, IHEDN strengthened its mission to train decision-makers to anticipate threats, protect our strategic assets and increase our influence on the international stage.

9

sessions focused on economic intelligence

1

first-cycle common Youth-EI organized in October 2025

535

auditors trained in strategies for influence and economic security

28%

increase in the participation of executives from critical technology sectors (Cloud, AI, Semiconductors)

18

committee reports specifically addressing economic resilience.

A high-level training programme for decision-makers

The 2025 programmes brought together a diverse range of participants (senior executives, senior civil servants, military officers and cybersecurity experts) with a shared objective: to master information in order to make decisions with full autonomy.

- The national "Economic Sovereignty and Security" programme: an intensive training programme focused on protecting scientific and industrial assets against foreign interference and data harvesting.
- Action-based approach: auditors worked on real-world economic wargaming scenarios, simulating attacks on key industrial assets or disruptions to critical supply chains.

Influence and the battle over standards

2025 focused on influence, an often-overlooked cornerstone of EI:

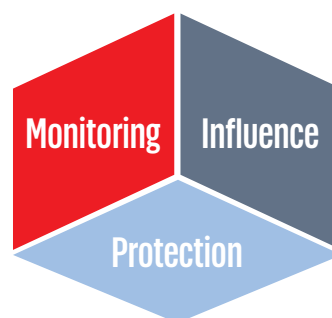
- Cognitive warfare and disinformation: understanding how economic narratives are used to destabilise French markets and companies.

- Corporate diplomacy: learning how to promote French and European standards and norms on the global stage so as not to be subject to rules imposed by other powers.

Innovation and AI: the new tools of EI

The digital transformation of 2025 has led to the systematic integration of new technological tools into the EI doctrine:

- Generative artificial intelligence: a session focusing on the use of AI for strategic intelligence and the detection of weak signals.
- Economic cybersecurity: strengthening the synergy between IT defence and the protection of trade secrets.



THE 3 CORNERSTONES OF EI

RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE
IHEDN
Formation
et té/
des
s à
ional
www...n.fr

La guerre
Alexandre Leraître
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
par le Droit
IHEDN



THE European and International SESSIONS

Speaking up for France and Europe

Against a backdrop of shifting global balances, the Department of Europe and International Affairs (DEAI) plays an active role in promoting French strategic thinking.

In 2025, IHEDN stepped up its efforts to foster convergence of European visions and strengthen defence partnerships with key regions.

European defence: from ideas to action

2025 was marked by deeper cooperation within the European Union:

- 36th SERA (European Session for Armaments Executives): this major event brought together **80 auditors** from **19 countries**. By visiting Warsaw and Sofia, the session provided an opportunity to compare the industrial challenges facing Eastern Europe with the EU's ambitions for sovereignty.

Paris, 17 March 2025
Auditors in the 4th international session for the Balkans and Eastern Europe (SIBEO)

Global partnerships: a presence on all fronts

The Institute acts as a bridge between regional powers through targeted international sessions:

- The Indo-Pacific: **53 auditors** discussed sovereignty and security issues in this region, where France is a key strategic player.
- The Balkans and Eastern Europe: in keeping with its mission of cooperation, IHEDN hosted **47 executives** to



discuss crisis management, the strengthening of security structures and issues relating to enlargement policy.

- The African continent: **58 high-calibre auditors** took part in a wide-ranging discussion on issues relating to regional stability.



Establishing a Presence in Brussels

The reappointment of an **IHEDN permanent representative** to the Permanent Representation (PR) of France to the European Union, in Brussels, strengthens our ability to exert influence at the heart of decision-making bodies (European External Action Service, European Commission). Strengthened cooperation with the European Security and Defence College (ESDC) where six to eight high-level sessions are organised each year.

Strategic roadmap: Organisation of dedicated round-table discussions in Brussels to put the shared vision for European security into practice.

Influence diplomacy: IHEDN, promoting France's Defence Technological and Industrial Base (DTIB)

In partnership with the Directorate General of Armaments (DGA – Ministry of the Armed Forces), the DEAI is strengthening its role in supporting the DTIB:

- International sessions: organisation of specific sessions (Africa-Middle East, Latin America, Asia-Pacific) for senior military and civilian officials in the armaments sector;
- European Session for Armaments Executives: a major annual event, SERA has been bringing together high-level European government and industry experts for four weeks every year for the past 36 years.



80 auditors from **19** countries for the European session (SERA36).

over **850** foreign auditors trained in French and European strategic visions

71 nationalities represented across all international ACADEM events.



STRATEGIC THINKING

to inform decision-making

In an international environment saturated with contradictory signals, IHEDN's "Understanding" mission acts as a radar. In 2025, the Institute continued its monitoring and analysis work by providing its auditors and wider society with reliable, context-specific insights into geopolitical, technological and societal shifts.

8 Strategic debates held at the École Militaire and online

14 Monthly Issue Briefs drafted and distributed to the IHEDN community

1 International conference on "Mobilisation(s)"

12 strategic monitoring reports produced

4 scientific prizes awarded for outstanding work

Cutting-edge expertise on emerging areas of conflict

2025 demanded greater analytical agility to address multiple areas of tension simultaneously:

- **News analysis:** production of fact-based, well-sourced news briefings on the war in Ukraine, the shifting landscape of the Middle East, security dynamics in the Arctic and the Baltic region, and developments in global defence policy (India, Germany).
- **Technological foresight:** a major focus was placed on the impact of generative AI on influence strategies, on issues relating to European digital sovereignty, and on the challenges posed by international rivalries in the space sector.
- **Intangible domains:** further research into cognitive warfare and public resilience in the face of disinformation.

For the third consecutive year, IHEDN has published, in partnership with La Documentation française, "L'Année de la défense nationale (ADN)" [The Year of National Defence]:

- Available in bookshops and online, "L'Année de la défense nationale (ADN)" [The Year of National Defence] brings together leading experts to analyse the key events of the past year, drawing consistently on first-hand

sources (official speeches, strategic documents and institutional reports).

- The 2025 edition focused on examining the concept of strategic uncertainties and brought together twenty-two contributions. With a foreword by the General Secretariat for Defence and National Security (SGDSN), the book addressed major issues such as defence innovation, foreign interference, the defence strategies of allied countries, drug trafficking and European defence.

The strategic debate: a crossroads of ideas and influence

IHEDN has consolidated its role as a "permanent forum" for strategic thinking through a variety of formats:

- **IHEDN Mondays:** these sessions have provided a platform for academics and officers to exchange views on critical topics (war economy, access to scarce resources).
- **Strategic debates:** a monthly discussion forum featuring authors of recent academic works, exploring key issues in defence, security and international relations (naval strategy, AI, the ecology of war, Ukraine, etc.)
- **Monitoring and analysis:** regular distribution of summary publications (articles, news briefs and monitoring reports) aimed at stimulating discussion

among auditors, institutional partners and the general public.

- **ACADEM Synergy:** enhanced collaboration with member organisations of the French Defence University to develop a joint approach, particularly in the run-up to the Paris Defence and Strategy Forum.

Support for research: nurturing the next generation of experts in strategic studies

Because strategic thinking is a long-term endeavour, IHEDN has maintained its commitment to the scientific community:

- **IHEDN Scientific Awards:** IHEDN supports and promotes young researchers working on topics of interest to national defence by recognising the best research work each year. The 2025 campaign received 71 applications, demonstrating the dynamism of the new generation in strategic thinking. Four works were recognised, highlighting excellence and intellectual innovation:
 - ✓ **Thesis prize:** Dr Sophia Mahroug, *The Sacred Defence of the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution according to digital sources: from the Iran-Iraq War to the "soft war" (1981-2024)*, Sorbonne University and University of Luxembourg.

- ✓ **Master's Thesis Prize, joint winners:**

- Nathan Hourcade, *Diplomatic Relations between France and Ukraine as a new international actor following the collapse of the USSR (1985-2005)*, Paris Cité University.

- Pierre-Nicolas Nabet, *The impact of strategic cyberwarfare: a reassessment of US cyber doctrine in the light of the Russia-Ukraine war*, Sciences Po Paris and King's College London.

- ✓ **Special prize (chapter in a scientific book):** Camille Escudé, *A geopolitics of the Arctic Council: when politics (un) makes geographical space*, chapter published in 2024 in *L'Arctique dans le système international*, edited by Frédérique Lasserre, Mathieu Landrinault and Pauline Pic, Presses Universitaires du Québec.

- **Academic influence:** the Institute's experts participate in international conferences, thereby enhancing the credibility of French strategic research.

Paris, 20 September 2025

General Hervé de Courrèges, Director of IHEDN, presents the thesis award to Sophia Mahroug.



A STRATEGY FOR INFLUENCE in the digital age

560

subscribers on the
WhatsApp channel

21

podcast episodes pro-
duced and

over **2,500**
plays

2,573,110

cumulative impressions
across all our social me-
dia channels

50

strategic newsletters
distributed to a network
of **12,500 contacts**.

8 to 10

publications per week

6

platforms (LinkedIn,
X, Instagram, WhatsApp,
podcasts and YouTube)

5

main formats (IHEDN
Mondays, Friday readings,
our sessions, our in-depth
threads, debates and
news briefings).

In 2025, IHEDN's communications reached a decisive milestone, shifting from a focus on information provision to a strategy of global influence. The aim: to bring the culture of defence closer to the public and decision-makers through a diverse, agile and immersive digital presence.

Expanding the digital footprint: IHEDN on the move

To respond to new ways of consuming information, the Institute has launched three major initiatives:

- The IHEDN WhatsApp channel "Le fil stratégique de l'IHEDN": a direct and instant link with our community. This channel allows us to share our news, strategic updates and behind-the-scenes insights from the École Militaire in real time, ensuring an unprecedented level of engagement with our subscribers.
- The roll-out of the podcast format: the creation of a dedicated channel now enables us to transform our written publications into audio experiences. "Strategic thinking is meant to be heard": our auditors can now immerse themselves in the challenges of sovereignty on the move.
- Audio production: beyond podcasts, all our major reports (including those of the National Session committee) feature audio summaries to help busy decision-makers grasp the content more easily.

Social media: engagement, young people and expertise

IHEDN has strengthened its presence on its key platforms by tailoring its editorial approach to each audience:

- LinkedIn: the hub of our institutional influence, with a growing community of professionals and experts.
- Instagram and the "Défi hivernal d'Athéna": a major success in engaging young people. This interactive format helped demystify defence issues for 18-30-year-olds, combining educational content with visual dynamism.
- X (Twitter): our go-to source for the latest news and live tweets from major events, particularly as the Paris Defence and Strategy Forum (PDSF) gains momentum.

Strategic support ACADEM's outreach

The Department of Institutional Relations and Communication (DRIC) acts as the driving force behind the outreach French Defence University:

- PDSF 2026: design and implementation of the forum's editorial strategy, with a focus on "the image of reality" and short video formats showcasing the speakers.
- Visual and event identity: production of high-quality materials for end-of-session ceremonies and national conferences, reinforcing the IHEDN label of excellence.



Paris, 26 June 2025

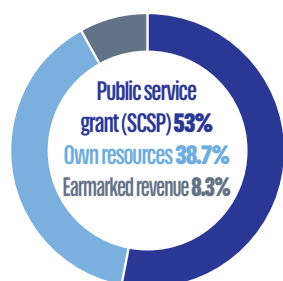
Recording of episode 16 of the Think Strategically podcast, "What will the battlefield look like in 2040?" with General Bruno Baratz, Commander of the Future Combat Command; General Vincent Breton, Director of the Joint Centre for Concepts, Doctrines and Experimentation (CICDE) and now Director of the École de Guerre; and Captain Rémi Thomas, Army Coherence Officer at the French Navy General Staff, hosted by Daniel Desesquelle.



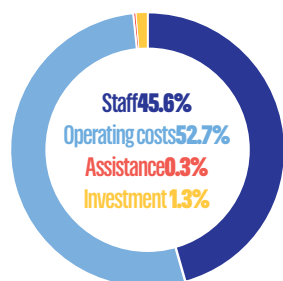
FINANCE

BUDGET

REVENUE
€12.98m



EXPENDITURE
€12.18m



DIGITAL INVESTMENTS
€0.1m

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION RATE

EXPENDITURE
99.9%

REVENUE
104.5%

A diverse and consolidated range of resources

IHEDN’s business model is based on a balance between state support and the dynamism of its own resources:

- Despite a steady decline over the past two years due to the economic climate, the public service grant (SCSP) forms the cornerstone of the IHEDN’s operations and reflects the confidence placed in the Institute’s work by the Prime Minister’s Office;
- Development of own resources: the 2025 financial year was marked by an increase in revenue from enrolment fees and the strengthening of partnerships;
- IHEDN has sought to optimise and control financial flows with a view to improving its business model.

Expenditure focused on the core mission

The allocation of funds reflects the strategic priorities for 2025:

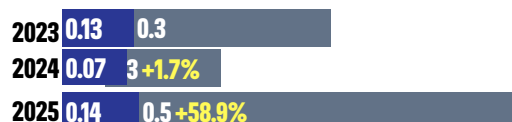
- Priority given to teaching and outreach: a significant proportion of expenditure is allocated to maintaining the high standard of national and international sessions (speakers, study trips, etc.);
- Operating costs: continuation of the policy to streamline training costs to create the necessary financial flexibility for the smooth running of the Institution.

Investment: the turning point in the digital roadmap

In line with IHEDN’s overall strategy, 2025 saw an acceleration in investment:

- System modernisation: funding for the new digital infrastructure to secure data exchanges and streamline collaborative working;
- Digital transformation: investment in new distribution platforms needed to attract new auditors and ensure the quality of the training provided to them (podcast studios, video equipment for hybrid formats, etc.).

Digital investments in €m/
Digital expenditure in €m
2023-2025



IHEDN has continued its commitment to improving the reliability and optimising its budgetary and accounting data through initiatives such as the clearance of invoices that have not been received or are yet to be issued; the complete digitisation of its financial transaction documents; and the documentation of its processes (including the publication of a guide to procurement and business travel for IHEDN, etc.).

The implementation of these initiatives, notably through dialogue between stakeholders in the financial chain and operational departments, enables IHEDN to equip itself with robust financial tools for managing and improving its business model.

Human RESOURCES

Proportion of female staff as at 31/12/2025, by status

INDIVIDUALS	WOMEN	MEN	TOTAL	%
Civil servants	17	9	26	65%
Military personnel	5	9	14	36%
Public sector employees	1		1	100%
Contract staff	22	24	46	48%
Apprentices	6	2	8	75%
TOTAL	51	44	95	54%

The implementation rate for staff expenditure is 98.34% (including reimbursed secondments) and 99.94% for IHEDN payroll alone

In the Gender Equality Index, IHEDN achieved a score of 84.9 points for 2024, broken down as follows:



	MAXIMUM SCORE	IHEDN SCORE
Overall pay gap between female and male civil servants	26	17.6
Overall pay gap between female and male contract staff	54	51.3
Top ten highest salaries	20	16
Total	100	84.9

Since 15 October 2025, IHEDN's departments have been able to draw on the services of a shared secretariat, which reports to the General Secretariat.

This new organisational structure will transform working practices and presents an opportunity to improve efficiency by providing support that is even better tailored to the departments' needs.

Initial feedback has been very encouraging and demonstrates the Institute's ability to transform and adapt its organisation.

Digital SYSTEMS

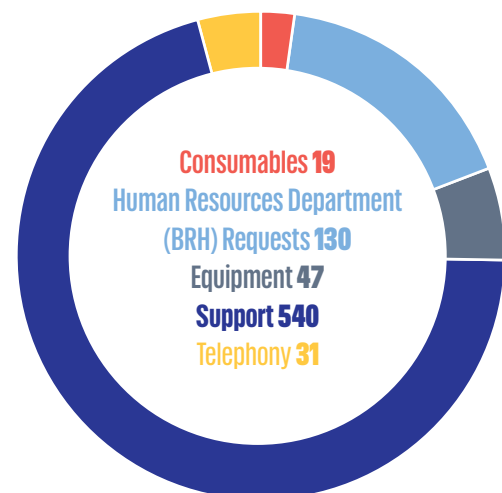
For the second consecutive year, the Digital Systems Office (BSN) has been particularly focused on implementing an ambitious digital transformation plan designed to simplify and modernise employees' day-to-day work and meet the expectations of auditors. To this end, it has relied on an appropriate committee structure and the network of digital representatives.

Several priority projects were carried out simultaneously, with some of them being finalised right up until the very end of the year:

- Organisation and migration of data to the Microsoft SharePoint collaborative platform (preceded by an overhaul of the directory and instant messaging systems);
- Implementation of an electronic signature system;
- Configuration of an electronic payment solution for auditors in conjunction with the accounting agency;
- Implementation of an anti-plagiarism solution;
- Completion of the audiovisual and Wi-Fi installation in Building 10.

Throughout the year, the Digital Systems Office (BSN) also supported the ongoing activities of IHEDN's various units:

- Maintaining IT equipment, hardware and software in operational condition;
- Providing technical and functional support to the Institution's users and auditors;
- Technical discussions with the French Ministry of Armed Forces (MINARM) Defence Digital Commission (CND);
- Maintaining the management (processing and storage) of the Institution's data in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation.



General

RESOURCES

As a cross-functional support service, the General Resources Office (BMG) supports all departments and offices by ensuring the availability, security and optimisation of material and logistical resources.

2025 was marked by an increase in activity: completion of refurbishment work on buildings in conjunction with the French Ministry of Armed Forces (MINARM), design and management of the fit-out of the new premises in Building 10, and an increase in the number of internal requests requiring a high degree of adaptability, coordination and foresight.

The measures taken had a twofold objective: to maintain a high standard of service while streamlining resources and procedures.

In addition to ensuring service continuity throughout the year, several long-standing strategic projects – some undertaken in partnership with the French Ministry of Armed Forces (MINARM) and others initiated by the Office itself – came to fruition in 2025. The most significant achievements include:

- The opening of Building 10 in spring 2025, now equipped with state-of-the-art solutions and fully adapted to operational needs, notably through the use of its meeting spaces, ensuring a level of service in line with the standards and requirements of the Institute's activities;
- The installation of the Department of Institutional Relations and Communication (DRIC) within this Building as part of the refurbishment works on Building 1, as well as the temporary installation of ACADEM, as part of the preparations for the PDSF 2026;

- The roll-out of a new contract for water coolers, contributing to the improved well-being of employees;
- The installation of recycling bins and the roll-out of a waste sorting scheme, as part of an initiative to improve environmental practices.

Throughout 2025, the General Resources Office (BMG) contributed fully to the continuity and quality of the public service provided. Through its cross-functional approach, its ability to adapt and its daily commitment, it remains a key player in the smooth running of the Institution.

Occupational risk prevention and support for people with disabilities: initiatives and results

In the area of occupational risk prevention and as part of the role of disability liaison officer, the year saw concrete progress. A regulatory update was initiated, accompanied by the distribution of documents (guides, procedures, leaflets, etc.), field observations to objectively assess actual working conditions, and the identification of directly actionable areas for improvement.

These measures have also ensured that auditors and employees with disabilities are effectively supported, with practical adjustments implemented where necessary. The initial assessments carried out and the feedback gathered now form a solid foundation for structuring and prioritising the actions that will be continued and strengthened in 2026.



Paris, 15 April 2025

Opening of Building 10 by Lieutenant General Hervé de Courrèges, Director of IHEDN.

168

requests for assistance were submitted to the Groupement de soutien commissariat (GSC) via the EUREKA software (repairs, maintenance, upkeep, etc.).

3,020

bookings for dedicated spaces

276

bookings for Groupement de soutien commissariat (GSC) spaces for departments.

LOGISTICAL SUPPORT

for auditors

23

"Group" tickets
for **1,207**
passengers

2025 was marked by the consolidation and continuation of the missions entrusted to the Logistics Support Office (BSL), against a backdrop characterised by **increased demands for operational reliability, constant adaptation to the needs of the departments and the control of expenditure.**

The early approval, before summer 2025, of the destinations for the 2026 international missions during the national session made it possible to finalise financial and administrative commitments at an earlier stage, thereby contributing to a smoother end-of-year process. Ongoing dialogue with service providers ensured the continuity of activities while striking a balance between cost control and service quality.

222

individual
bookings for
546 passengers

The Office therefore supported the departments in preparing and delivering services in a variety of formats. These activities included travel, on-site initiatives and missions requiring close coordination with the Institute's institutional partners and external service providers. This wide range of activities required constant commitment, both in the run-up to them and in their follow-up.

Furthermore, the Office continued its efforts to structure and professionalise internal practices. The induction of new employees and the support provided to business unit representatives have helped to make processes clearer and to ensure the security of the file processing procedures. This approach has helped to streamline communication between departments and consolidate the Office's role as the key point of contact for logistical and financial matters.

245

bookings
for **1,753** passengers

From a financial perspective, 2025 confirmed the Office's pivotal role in monitoring commitments and ensuring the proper implementation of the budget. The Logistics Support Office (BSL) was particularly called upon to anticipate constraints associated with management schedules, support operational departments in setting up commitments, and ensure that procedures are followed correctly.

Finally, 2025 was marked by the integration of environmental considerations into logistical planning and travel wherever possible, without compromising operational requirements.

51

accommodation
requests

for a total amount of
€252,864,87

IHEDN AT THE HEART

of a unique strategic ecosystem

Operating under the authority of the Prime Minister, who has placed it under the supervision of the General Secretariat for Defence and National Security (SGDSN), IHEDN is much more than a training Institute for the nation's key personnel from the armed forces, the civil service or the private sector: it also raises awareness of defence issues amongst elected representatives in Parliament and local authorities, associations, trade unions, representatives of religious communities, etc.

This diversity of participants and the originality of the training programme – which has, from the outset, been based on a tried-and-tested pedagogical approach comprising high-level lectures, field visits and group work – make IHEDN a source of inspiration for many organisations beyond the fields of national defence and strategic thinking.

Since its foundation in 1936, the Institute has thus been at the heart of a genuine ecosystem that has historically contributed to national cohesion and the promotion of defence awareness. Throughout its 90-year history, this ecosystem has continually evolved and expanded to adapt to the vicissitudes of the times. In response to current geostrategic upheavals, this evolution has accelerated significantly since the 2020s.

Institutional presence: a legitimate position within the Prime Minister's Office

As a public administrative body, IHEDN carries out its public service mission in direct liaison with the highest authorities, operating on an interministerial basis.

The primary link is the organic one with its supervisory authority. For the Institute, this affiliation is strategic: its connection with the Prime Minister's Office and the General Secretariat for Defence and National Security (SGDSN) ensures that its teaching is aligned with national defence and security priorities, as set out in the "Revue nationale stratégique" [National Strategic Review] published in 2025.

Furthermore, its mission cannot be separated from an interministerial approach: IHEDN works in close collaboration with various ministries (Armed Forces, the Interior, Europe and Foreign Affairs, Economy and Finance, National Education, Overseas Territories), thereby helping to make the École Militaire, or the various regional venues for youth sessions and programmes, unique hubs for strategic thinking and national cohesion.

- The **Ministry of the Armed Forces, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs** contribute on a daily basis to IHEDN's activities by providing experienced employees and management. The Directorate General of Armaments (DGA) and the Armed Forces General Staff, more specifically, are also indispensable partners in the organisation of several sessions each year.

2,500

people trained each year and several hundred made aware through events

over 100,000

followers on our social media channels who comment on and share our scientific updates and articles, as well as the dozens of articles aimed at the general public published each year on the website

1 leading annual scientific journal, "L'Année de la Défense Nationale" (ADN) [The Year of National Defence]

39

International, national, regional and thematic associations of auditors.

1 global network with a stronger presence in Brussels.

30

member organisations and partners within French Defence University.

- Each year, the **Ministry of Overseas Territories** supports the participation of auditors from these territories in IHEDN's national session, as well as the organisation of a regional session and a programme for young people from overseas territories.
- The Directorate for International Cooperation in Security and Defence (DCSD) of the **Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs** contributes, several times a year, to the organisation of IHEDN international sessions bringing together auditors from all over the world.
- **The Ministry of the Economy and Finance** is involved, through several of its directorates, in running programmes in economic and strategic intelligence.

ACADEM: a true catalyst for efficiency

In 2026, the **French Defence University (ACADEM)**, established in 2023, continues to expand its range of events and awareness-raising initiatives. IHEDN, a founding member, plays a key role in this.

In practical terms, this translates into regional synergy: by bringing together some twenty organisations, all based at the École Militaire, ACADEM amplifies the reach of the training and research carried out on the site.

This local synergy gives French strategic thinking a global reach: the success of the Paris Defence and Strategy Forum (PDSF) demonstrates the power of this collective, which is capable of bringing together in Paris strategic thinkers and analysts from all over the world. In 2025, the Forum attracted over 4,000 visitors of 71 nationalities to hear some 400 speakers addressing 121 different events. The 2026 edition will take place from 24 to 26 March.

A network of auditors: establishing a regional presence

IHEDN's work in support of national resilience also relies on a community of over 10,000 members, committed both in time (several years after the end of their session) and in space (across all French territories and abroad).

Associations of auditors are present in mainland France, the overseas territories and abroad. They foster defence awareness on a daily basis through talks, site visits and a range of initiatives tailored to the local areas and the various audiences they engage with. Since 2025, regional associations have been able to organise Youth programmes, under the educational supervision of the Institute.

The connection with young people is naturally expressed through the Youth programmes and the numerous activities of the IHEDN Youth, but also through **School-Defence-IHEDN partnerships**. Organised since 1988 by teams from the regional education authorities of the Ministry of National Education, senior officers from the Ministry of the Armed Forces' defence and security zones, and regional associations of IHEDN auditors, these programmes provide secondary school pupils and students across the country with training on national defence issues. The IHEDN ecosystem is thus investing in the future to pass the baton to younger generations.

Academic and inter-institutional synergies

The Institute breaks down barriers between disciplines by engaging in strategic partnerships.

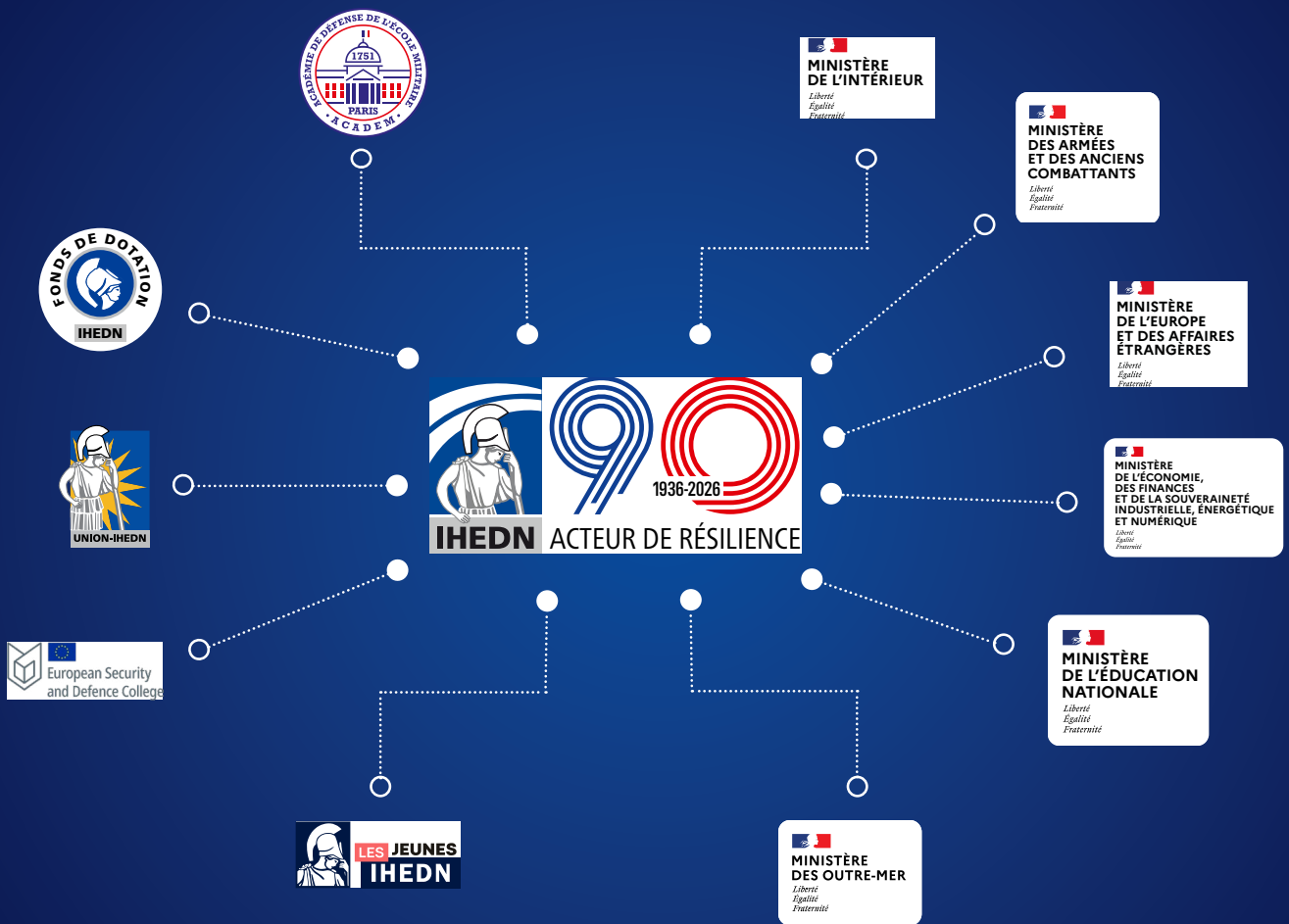
Since 2025, a **partnership** with the other Institution of the École Militaire, **the Institute of Higher Studies of the Ministry of the Interior (IHEMI)**, has enabled the organisation of joint programmes that demonstrate the need to address defence and internal security issues holistically, by bringing cultures closer together. IHEDN is also a driving force and, by virtue of its long-standing history, a source of inspiration for the Inter-IHE network, which brings together some twenty public institutes and higher education programmes.

At European level, IHEDN works in close partnership with **the European Security and Defence College (ESDC)**, which funds several programmes for auditors from France and other EU countries.

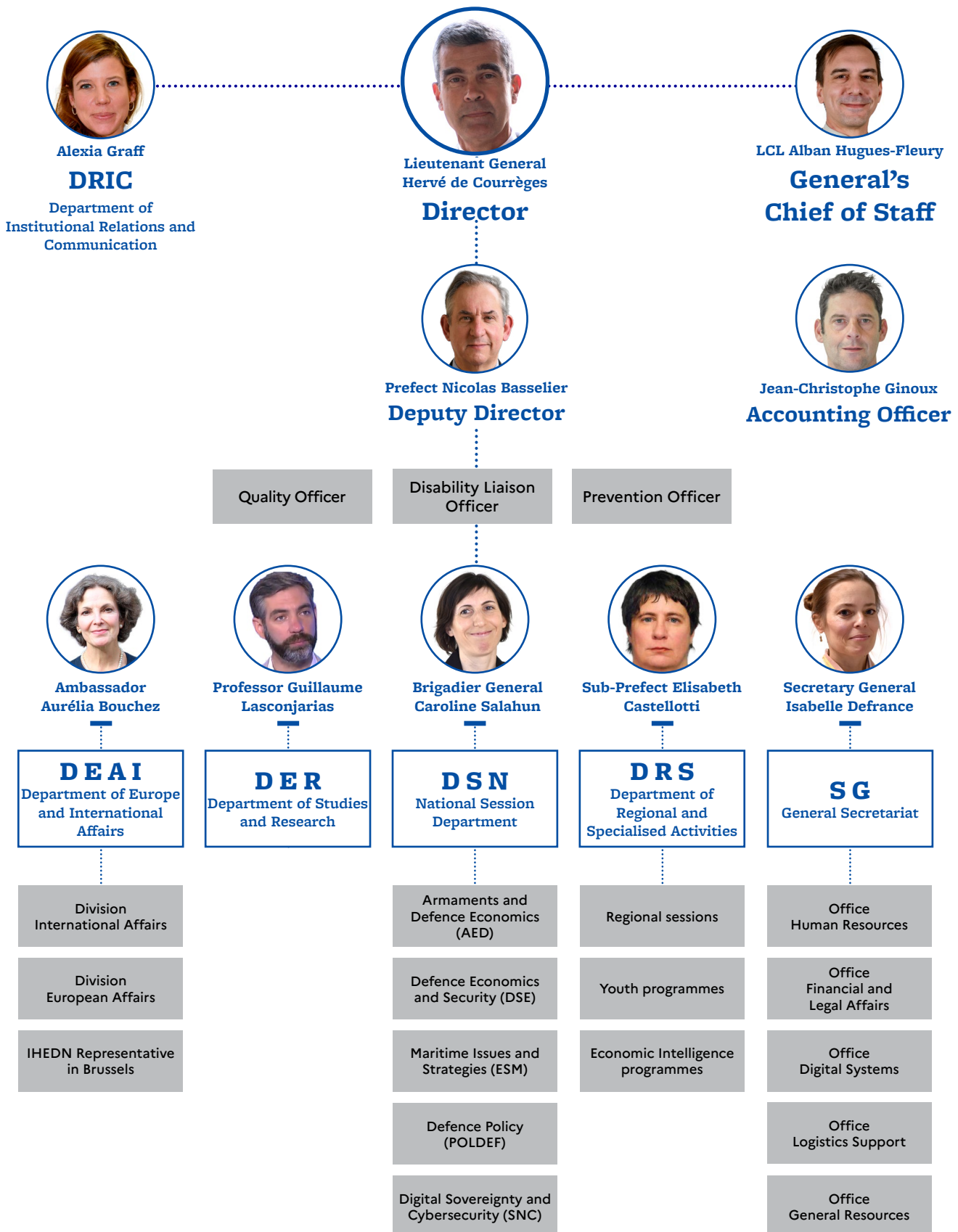
At the same time, collaboration with the academic and research communities is constantly growing, supporting an ever-increasing number of researchers and informing strategic thinking

through scientific awards since 1998, as well as through the work of the IHEDN Endowment Fund, which in turn hosts two research chairs: the IHEDN Chair in Defence Economics and the IHEDN Chair in Digital Sovereignty and Cybersecurity.

In terms of education, this close collaboration is also reflected in the participation of representatives from the academic world in the Institute's activities throughout the year, whether through their contribution to defining the general direction of training and research policy (within the **Scientific Council**) or their **involvement in programmes and sessions.**



IHEDN ORGANISATIONAL CHART as at 31 December 2025



IHEDN BOARD of Directors

Members of the IHEDN Board of Directors

Decree of 24 January 2020 appointing the Chair of the Board of Directors of the Institute of Higher Studies in National Defence.

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS

Ms Sylvie Bermann, French Ambassador, Chair of the IHEDN Board of Directors

Mr Nicolas Roche, General Secretary for Defence and National Security at for Defence and National Security (SGDSN), or his representative

Air Force General Fabien Mandon, Chief of the Defence Staff, or his representative

Lieutenant General Éric Peltier, Director-General for International Relations and Strategy (DGRIS), or his representative

Ms Anne-Marie Descôtes, French Ambassador, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, or her representative

Mr Jean-Luc Moullet, Director-General for Research and Innovation, or his representative

Mr Hugues Moutouh, Secretary-General of the Ministry of the Interior, or his representative

Brigadier General Thomas Courbe, Director-General for Enterprise, or his representative

Mr Boris Melmoux-Eude, Director-General for Administration and the Civil Service, or his representative

Ms Hanane Mansouri, Member of Parliament for Isère

Mr Pascal Allizard, Senator for Calvados

MEMBERS APPOINTED BY ORDER OF THE PRIME MINISTER

Air Force General (2S) André Lanata, a qualified individual in the fields of national security, defence, foreign policy, the economy or research

Mr Yves Boyer, a qualified individual in the fields of national security, defence, foreign policy, economics or research

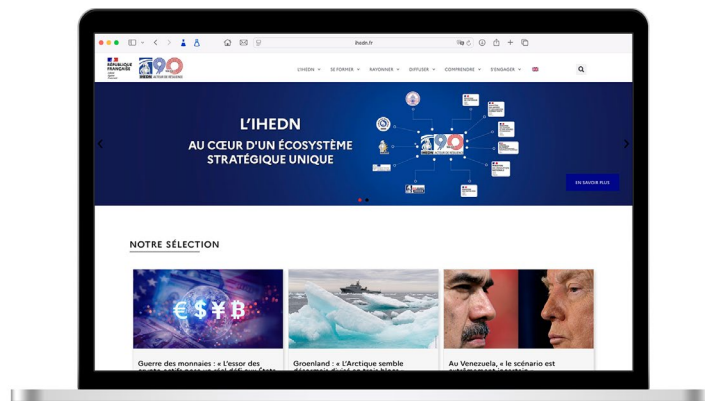
Ms Daphné Benoit, a qualified individual in the fields of national security, defence, foreign policy, economics or research

Ms Nathalie Biebuyck, a civilian fellow who has fulfilled the session requirements, hospital practitioner, on the recommendation of the SGDSN

Mr Rémi de Fritsch, a civilian fellow who has fulfilled the session requirements, systems engineer, on the recommendation of the SGDSN

Ms Solenne Lepage, a civilian fellow who has fulfilled the session requirements, general delegate for the voluntary sector, on the recommendation of the SGDSN

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www.ihedn.fr



JUNE 2026