ECSC CHARTER

2024

EUROPEAN CYBERSECURITY CHALLENGE

EUROPEAN UNION

DOCUMENT HISTORY

Version	Created/Modified by	Comments	Date
1.0	Razvan	Approved version	Jan 2018
1.1	Adrian Belmonte	Draft version for comments	July 2019
1.2	Adrian Belmonte	New comments and modifications	March 2020
1.3	Adrian Belmonte	ECSC 2021 update	March 2021
1.4	Adrian Belmonte	ECSC 2023 Update: ExeCom changes	May 2023
1.5	Adrian Belmonte	Template change	July 2023
1.6	Adrian Belmonte	Changes proposed by CZ	October 2023
1.7	Adrian Belmonte	Changes proposed by SC	May 2024

ABOUT ECSC

The growing need for IT security professionals is widely acknowledged worldwide. To help mitigate this shortage of skills, many countries launched national cybersecurity competitions targeting towards students, university graduates or even non-ICT professionals with a clear aim to find new and young cyber talents and encourage young people to pursue a career in cyber security. The European Cyber Security Challenge (ECSC) leverages on these competitions by adding a pan-European layer.

The European Cyber Security Challenge is an initiative by the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA) and aims at enhancing cybersecurity talent across Europe and connecting high potentials with industry leading organizations.

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1. PREAMBLE

The growing need for IT security professionals is widely acknowledged worldwide. To help solve this shortage of skill, many countries launched national cyber security competitions addressed towards students, university graduates or even non-ICT professionals with a clear aim: find new and young cyber talents and encourage young people to pursue a career in cyber security.

The European Cyber Security Challenge (ECSC) leverages these competitions by adding a Pan-European layer. Top cyber talents from the European Union and EFTA meet to network, collaborate, and finally compete against each other during a unique event: the ECSC final.

This document outlines the conditions under which the ECSC is organised and conducted.

2. PRINCIPLES

- The European Cyber Security Challenge (ECSC) is an annual event, organised by European Union (EU) and EFTA countries, supported by the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA), which aims at discovering young and emerging cyber security talents.

- The ECSC competition is promoted by the European Commission and in a broader sense falls within the overall context of the EU's Cyber Security Strategy, the NIS Directive, and the Cybersecurity Act (CSA), which together with the European Agenda on Security provide the overall strategic framework for the EU initiatives on cyber security and cybercrime.

- The goal of the ECSC is to place cybersecurity at the service of humankind, with a view of promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of democratic values, freedom of thought, dignity, and critical thinking.

- The organisation of the ECSC is led – each year – by a different organising country.

- ECSC promotes friendly relations between attending countries, officials, and players. Every person and organisation involved in ECSC is obliged to observe the Statutes, regulations, and the principles of fair play.

- ECSC provides the necessary institutional means to promote transparency and fairness of the competition between participants and to resolve any dispute that may arise between players.

- Involved countries (participating ones and observers) shall comply with the ECSC Charter and with the decisions taken by the ECSC Steering Committee.

3. ECSC STEERING COMMITTEE

3.1 PURPOSES OF THE ECSC STEERING COMMITTEE

- The main purpose of the ECSC Steering Committee ('the Committee') is to be the overarching governance body for the ECSC activities.
- The ECSC Steering Committee:
  - is the ultimate decision-making body of the ECSC,
  - provides ECSC leadership and direction for the scope and management of the work to be undertaken on matters that relate to ECSC scope, objectives, risks, and issues, as necessary,
  - is in charge of reviewing and approving the different ECSC related documents,
  - acts in the best interests of the ECSC,
  - provides steering and guidance to the ECSC activities, while respecting the overall responsibilities of all involved actors,
  - provides a delegated decision-making authority for the related activities within the scope of the ECSC,
  - keeps relevant stakeholders informed of the ECSC and related developments.
- The ECSC Steering Committee may establish other policies and practices to ensure that it fulfils its functions and ensures that it remains an effective decision-making body.
- The ECSC Steering Committee shall approve the ECSC Charter, ECSC competition rules, accept submissions for future hosting countries, dates, and location of ECSC events, or any other running matters, in case of disputes.

3.2 ECSC STEERING COMMITTEE COMPOSITION AND REPRESENTATION

- The ECSC Steering Committee is composed of one representative from each participating EU or EFTA country in the ECSC and one representative from ENISA (in this context ENISA acts as the Secretariat of the Steering Committee).
- Each country may appoint one alternate representative. The alternate representative can participate in meetings and discussions in the absence of the primary representative.
- The alternate representative should have equivalent authority and decision-making power as the primary representative in their absence.
- The role of the alternate representative is to ensure continuity and consistent representation of the country's interests in the ECSC Steering Committee.
- A country is considered part of the ECSC Steering Committee with full rights when it demonstrates its willingness to participate in the ECSC and is accepted by the current ECSC Steering Committee.
- Each EU or EFTA country representative in the ECSC Steering Committee agrees to be guided by the ECSC Charter and its principles.
- The ECSC Steering Committee meetings shall be moderated by a Chairperson. The sitting Chairperson of the ECSC Steering Committee is the representative of the current year's hosting country. Handover of the Chairperson role between representatives is done after the current edition of the annual competition and after the moment when the decision on the following year hosting country is taken.

- A single designated organisation per country shall be designated by a national public authority of EU or EFTA to organise and manage a county's attendance to the ECSC. The ECSC Steering Committee members and alternates are appointed by the designated organisation.

- Each country is entitled to a vote during Steering Committee meetings. The vote can be delegated by a representative to the ECSC Chairperson or to another delegate (by means of a proxy vote document).

- Members shall attend all meetings of the ECSC Steering Committee. In case they are unable to attend, their alternates should attend instead. Both members and alternates may participate together in meetings, but only one common vote applies as per Articles 3.2 and 3.5.

- The ECSC Steering Committee can delegate specific tasks in subcommittees or specific working groups. For that, a mandate specifying the scope, composition, purpose, and duration must be formally endorsed and approved by the Steering Committee.

3.3 ECSC STEERING COMMITTEE SECRETARIAT AND COMMUNICATION SUPPORT

- The Secretariat of the ECSC Steering Committee is ensured by ENISA:
  - ENISA shall provide Secretariat support to the ECSC Steering Committee by performing activities such as organising physical meetings of various ECSC groups, preparing meeting documents and follow-up on identified action points.
  - ENISA shall act as the ECSC Edition Committee project office and it will provide information about the status of the ECSC edition project.
  - ENISA shall be informed about the content or nature of proposed challenges for a particular ECSC edition prior to it taking place.
  - ENISA may be consulted on matters which relate to the content or potential content of challenges and in specific cases may offer to support the development of such challenges.
  - The ECSC Edition Committee may invite ENISA to join the jury of a particular ECSC edition. Such an invitation requires the approval of the ECSC Steering Committee.
  - ENISA shall support all public affairs related activities of a particular ECSC edition in close cooperation with the hosting country.
  - ECSC Steering Committee communication matters are facilitated by ENISA.
  - ENISA keeps a record of members and alternates.

3.4 ECSC STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

- The Secretariat shall draw up the meeting agenda under the responsibility of the Chairperson and send it to the Committee members.

- Items to be addressed on the provisional agenda shall be submitted to the Chairperson not less than three weeks before the date of the start of the meeting.

- Any request by one or more members for inclusion, deletion, or substitution of an item on the agenda shall state the reasons on which it is based. The Chairperson shall bring any such request to the notice of the other members.

- The agenda shall be adopted by the ECSC Steering Committee at the start of the meeting.

- If the Committee so decides, urgent questions may be added to the agenda at any time prior to the end of the meeting and items on the agenda may be deleted or carried over to a subsequent meeting.

- The notice of convocation of a meeting of the ECSC Steering Committee shall be transmitted by the Secretariat no later than two weeks before the date of the meeting. The draft agenda shall simultaneously be sent to all members together with relevant material for decision-making.

- In duly justified cases, the Chairperson may, on his/her own initiative or at the request of a member of the Committee, shorten the time-limit for submission of documents referred to above.

3.5 ECSC STEERING COMMITTEE DECISIONS

3.5.1 Decisions taken during the ECSC Steering Committee meetings

- As far as possible, the ECSC Steering Committee shall adopt its decisions, opinions, recommendations and reports by consensus.

- If consensus cannot be reached, the Chairperson will endeavour to elaborate solutions which command the widest possible support within the members of the ECSC Steering Committee. The proposed solutions will then be put to a vote of simple majority of the present members (i.e., 50% + one member out of the present ones).

- At least two thirds of all members of the ECSC Steering Committee members with the right to vote shall constitute the necessary quorum for the decisions taken during the meeting to be valid. For purposes of achieving the quorum, alternates or proxy holders are considered as members having the right to vote on behalf of the member they represent.

- A two-thirds majority of all ECSC Steering Committee members shall be required for changes to the charter or to the rules of procedure.

- For voting purposes, the total number of members of the ECSC Steering Committee is that of the members entitled to vote, regardless of their presence.

- Unless a secret vote is requested by at least one-third of the voting members, votes shall be taken by show of hands.

3.5.2 Decisions taken by written procedure

- Between two meetings of the ECSC Steering Committee, urgent business may be submitted to the Secretariat by written procedure when a decision with an imminent deadline cannot be postponed until the next meeting.

- The Chairperson, in consultation with the Secretariat, can initiate the process of adopting decisions via written procedures on matters where the absence of a decision would have harmful consequences to the ECSC.

- For such decisions, the ECSC Steering Committee shall use voting by email. Votes shall be cast by return of email sent to the Chairperson and to the Secretariat 10 working days at the latest after the date the email was sent unless stated otherwise in the voting email request. The Secretariat shall confirm the reception of the cast vote. The vote of any ECSC Steering Committee member with a voting right who does not express his or her position shall be considered to be a positive vote. A statement of the views of the minority may be entered in the minutes along with the decision if the minority so requests.

- The result of a written procedure will be notified without delay to the ECSC Steering Committee members.

3.5.3 ECSC Steering Committee meeting minutes

- Minutes of the ECSC Steering Committee meetings shall include the list of participants, a summary of the decisions taken and main points of discussion. ECSC Steering Committee members have the right to ask for their position to be formally recorded in the minutes if they so wish.

- The meeting minutes of each meeting of the Committee shall be drafted by the Secretariat under the responsibility of the Chairperson.

- The meeting minutes shall be distributed to the ECSC Steering Committee members and to other authorised recipients no later than 15 working days after the meeting. The channel for distribution of the meeting minutes will be decided by the Chairperson, if it is not explicitly requested, the default channel of distribution will be the ECSC mailing list.

- The members of the ECSC Steering Committee shall send any comments they may have on the minutes to the Secretariat, in writing. If there is any disagreement, the matter shall be discussed at the next meeting. If the disagreement persists, the relevant comments shall be annexed to the final minutes.

- If there are not relevant comments or disagreements, the minutes are considered approved.

- Once approved, they shall be kept in the archives. Whenever applicable, records of number of votes and related statements shall also be kept together with the relevant minutes in the archives.

For each and every formal decision adopted by the ECSC Steering Committee, the result, along with the numbers of votes cast, shall be recorded. A statement of the views of the minority may be entered in the minutes along with the decision if the minority so requests.

3.6 ECSC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Executive Committee is established on behalf of the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee is responsible for providing guidance and oversight to the ECSC's Executive Committee. The Steering Committee has different responsibilities with regards to the Executive committee, including setting the overall strategic direction of the organization, establishing policies and procedures, monitoring organizational performance, ensuring financial sustainability, ensuring accountability and transparency, and communicating with stakeholders. Together, the Steering Committee and Executive Committee work to ensure the success of the organization, with the Steering Committee providing guidance and oversight, and the Executive committee implementing policies and managing day-to-day operations.

The Executive Committee (ExeCom) is authorized to act on behalf of the Steering Committee in all aspects that are aligned with the organization's strategic direction

The Executive Committee is expected to handle day-to-day decisions in the best interest of the ECSC. By delegating these responsibilities to the ExeCom, the Steering Committee can focus on providing guidance and oversight to ensure the ECSC's long-term success.

3.6.1 ECSC Executive Committee meeting minutes

- Minutes of the ECSC Executive Committee meetings shall include the list of participants, a summary of the decisions taken and main points of discussion. ECSC Executive Committee members have the right to ask for their position to be formally recorded in the minutes if they so wish.

- The meeting minutes of each meeting of the Committee shall be drafted by the Secretariat under the responsibility of the Chairperson.

- The meeting minutes shall be distributed to the ECSC Executive Committee members and to other authorised recipients no later than 15 working days after the meeting. The channel for distribution of the meeting minutes will be decided by the Chairperson, if it is not explicitly requested, the default channel of distribution will be the ECSC Executive Committee mailing list.

- The members of the ECSC Executive Committee shall send any comments they may have on the minutes to the Secretariat, in writing. If there is any disagreement, the matter shall be discussed at the next meeting. If the disagreement persists, the relevant comments shall be annexed to the final minutes.

- If there are not relevant comments or disagreements, the minutes are considered approved in the following Executive Committee meeting.

- Once approved, the minutes will be made available to the Steering Committee in CIRCABC.and archived there.

4. OBSERVER POLICY

- Members of the ECSC Steering Committee may give temporary observer status to countries or other stakeholders interested in the competition.

- Observer status shall be maintained for a period of one year. If there is no disagreement by the Steering Committee for a country to be kept as observer this will be automatically renewed for another year.

- ENISA shall be a non-voting observer in the jury of all ECSC editions.

- Observers are allowed to attend the ECSC Steering Committee.

- Observers are entitled to receive the agenda of the ECSC Steering Committee.

- Observers are not entitled to vote.

5. HOSTING COUNTRY

- A hosting country is an EU or EFTA country where an ECSC final will take place as per the decision of the ECSC Steering Committee.

- Any country may submit a candidature to host an ECSC final, in a certain year. The candidature submission shall be sent via the ECSC Secretariat.

- The ECSC Steering Committee will vote on accepting or rejecting the candidatures and will formally notify the involved countries that the candidature was accepted (or rejected), following the decision of the ECSC Steering Committee.

- The hosting country shall be responsible for organising and conducting the ECSC final event according to the rules and suggestions approved by the ECSC Steering Committee prior to the event.

- The hosting country may arrange deals with sponsors, venue, catering, social events, media, challenge creators, game environment provider, or other teams responsible for the infrastructure or scoring in order to ensure the success of the ECSC finals.

- ECSC Steering Committee shall oversee the organisation effort by the hosting country and supervise the progress, possible issues, limitations and offer assistance/help when needed.

- The hosting country shall be responsible for deploying the infrastructure required for organising the ECSC final. This infrastructure may include: servers, network equipment, high speed internet connection or facilities.

- Updated guidelines for the organising country will be provided and maintained by the ECSC Steering Committee. This document is not binding and will be used as a guide.

- The hosting country may request from the ECSC Steering Committee the approval of national financial contributions for attending the Final. Such contributions shall be laid out in the Edition rules or in other formal document or notification.

- The hosting country must provide a list of sponsors to the Steering Committee prior the competition, in order to avoid conflicts or problems between participants countries, the list must be approved by the Steering Committee.

The hosting country can invite countries to the final event from other parts of Europe or worldwide, however, this must be presented and approved by the Steering Committee by consensus. A guest country will participate in the competition; however, their results cannot appear on the official scoreboard.

6. THE CHALLENGES

6.1 PRINCIPLES

- In the context of the ECSC, a challenge is a game or problem that tests a team's ingenuity or knowledge of cybersecurity.

- The ECSC Steering Committee approves the curricula for challenges to be used during the ECSC final.

- The curricula should include types of challenges and required skills expected for a particular edition.

- In addition to the curricula, the following may be defined: timing of challenges, expected difficulty and scoring formula(s).

- The hosting country shall be responsible for developing the challenges – based on the curricula approved by the ECSC Steering Committee.

- The hosting country may seek support from private or public entities for developing the challenges.

- The hosting country should always try (if this is possible and based on possible contractual restriction) to release in open source/open standard format, the challenges used during the Final.

- Support may be requested from other attending countries or from ENISA.

6.2 NATIONAL TEAMS

- A national team is a team attending a particular ECSC edition, a team that obtained upfront the written endorsement of the national representative of its country in the ECSC Steering Committee.

- The Secretariat maintains the centralised registry of attending national teams and of the members of each national team.

- The rules for the composition of a national team are as follows:
    - A national team usually represents 13 people (10 players, 1 team leader, 1 coach, 1 pedagogical ~~supersvisor~~supervisor or team P.R. manager)
    - A national team is composed of minimum five (5) and a maximum of ten (10) players (i.e., individuals).
    - A national team must have at least one (1) main coach. Additional coaches may act as alternates/backup.
    - Only nationals of the respective countries are allowed to participate in the competition
    - More specific rules on the composition of national teams must be addressed in the rules document for each specific year, which must be approved by the ECSC Steering Committee. Any exceptions to the rules based on residency or other reasons must be requested and approved by the ECSC Executive Committee (ExeCom).~~More specific rules on the composition of national teams, age, nationalities, etc., must be addressed on the rules document for each specific year, which must be approved by the ESCS Steering Committee, however only nationals of the respective countries are allowed to participate in the competition. Any exceptions to this rule based on residency must be requested and approved by the ECSC Executive Committee.~~
    - Deviations from the rules on the team composition shall be pre-approved by the ECSC Executive Committee.

- The list of players for each national team is approved by the national representative of the country in the ECSC Steering Committee or by the ECSC Steering Committee Chairperson, should the national representative not be available.

- The list of players for each national team should be selected by means of national competition(s).

- Exceptions from this principle may be allowed if they are pre-approved by the ECSC Executive Committee.

- The national representative of the country in the ECSC Steering Committee ensures that the national team complies with the criteria of the competition in terms of number of players, age, nationality, educational and professional background, etc.

- At times other than challenge execution, the coach is responsible for the well-being and behaviour of contestants, making sure that essential information reaches its recipients and is understood and acted upon including the code of conduct.

6.3 THE JURY

- The jury of the ECSC final competition is a Sub-Committee of the ECSC Steering Committee or/and a selection of independent experts – having the following role:
  - The jury shall assess the performance of attending national teams during the ECSC final.
  - In the case of the Sub-Committee, this shall include one representative from each of the attending countries.
  - Jury members cannot act as coaches of attending national teams.
  - The jury shall score, in particular, results that need professional judgment and interpretation.
  - The jury shall observe that rules are applied fairly and everyone abides by them.
  - The jury will supervise the execution of challenges, approve any amendments or deviations from the plan during it and resolve any unclear questions and appeals by simple majority vote.

- More specific instructions and rules will be collected in the 'Jury Guidelines' document, approved by the ECSC Steering Committee.

6.4 SCORING PRINCIPLES

- During the ECSC final the jury will follow the below principles for giving the scoring:
  - Scoring should be as simple as possible, so everyone can calculate the expected results and figure out priorities easily.
  - Scoring database should count events and times rather than awarded points.
  - The score should be the result of applying scoring formula to event data.
  - Scoring should be done, ideally, in real time.
  - All scoring schemes shall be assessed by jury members.
  - Scoring schemes shall be approved by the ECSC Steering Committee at the proposal of the jury.
  - The jury shall appoint a Chairperson who is responsible for communicating with the ECSC Steering Committee and will make the judging announcements.
  - Scoring systems shall be kept agnostic and should not depend on platforms or infrastructures used during the execution of the Final.

To keep everything transparent, every scoring or vote should be accompanied by a short justification statement by a jury member, which will be made public to all attendees.

7. PUBLIC AFFAIRS PRINCIPLES

- Each edition shall include a public affairs strategy.

- The hosting country and ENISA are expected to implement the strategy.

- Participants shall be provided with an official media pack, which may include: lines to take, brand identity information, press releases, official photos etc.

- The hosting country must provide the list of sponsors in order to be approved by the ECSC Executive Committee by consensus.

8. CONFIDENTIALITY AND PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION

8.1 ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- Documents submitted to members of the ECSC Steering Committee shall be handled as confidential, unless access is explicitly granted to other persons, otherwise the ECSC Steering Committee makes them public. Article 8.1 applies insofar as it is not superseded by legal and regulatory requirements to which the attendees of the ECSC Steering Committee meetings are subject to under national law.

8.2 PROTECTION OF PERSONAL DATA

- The processing of personal data by the ECSC Steering Committee shall be in conformity with Regulation (EU) No 2018/1725/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 and Decision No 1247/2002/ECr. Furthermore, all persons present at ECSC Steering Committee meetings or included in any communications regarding activities, discussions, or decisions of the ECSC Steering Committee must respect the Chatham House Rule principles that the ECSC Steering Committee works under.

9. CHARTER APPROVAL AND MAINTENANCE

9.1 CHARTER CHANGE PROCEDURES

The ECSC Charter is a "living document" maintained by the Secretariat of the ECSC Steering Committee. The Secretariat of the ECSC Steering Committee reviews and updates the ECSC Charter on an annual basis. During the update process the ECSC Charter is under version control at all times. Updated versions are submitted to the library of the Secretariat of ECSC Steering Committee and available to all staff. The library of the Secretariat of the ECSC Steering Committee is found on CIRCAB.

9.2 CHARTER ACCEPTANCE

The Chairperson of the ECSC Steering Committee and the standing members of the ECSC Steering Committee must approve the ECSC Charter following the agreed procedures.