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THE NEED FOR A STRATEGIC MASTER IN COST ESTIMATION AND MILITARY ACQUISITION MANAGEMENT

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Abstract: *The article addresses the need to implement a strategic level master's programme (EQF 7) in cost estimation and military acquisition management in Romania. This initiative is a crucial investment aimed at optimizing resource allocation, reducing external dependence, and strengthening national defence capabilities. The article also highlights the role of master's programmes' graduates in facilitating Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP) and in capitalizing on funding opportunities offered by EU programs, such as Horizon Europe and the European Defence Fund. These skills are essential for aligning with the broader objectives of the ReArm Europe – Readiness 2030 Plan, contributing to a robust European defence industrial base and to increased interoperability.*

Keywords: strategic master, military acquisition, cost estimation, ReArm Europe Readiness 2030

1. Introduction

Before 1989, the Romanian economy was centralized, and the Ministry of National Defence prioritized the defence industry, in line with the National Program for the Development of the Defence Industry [1]. Essential to this were the methodological instructions regarding the assimilation phases of new military equipment products (Orders M23/1975 and M54/1987). These regulations defined a new product as any military equipment manufactured for the first time in Romania, superior to existing ones, and a modernized product as a redesign of existing ones with improved technical and economic characteristics. The process of assimilating new products included several phases, from the preparation and approval of the research and design project to the finalization of technical documentation for mass production.

After 1989, centralized management left a legacy of inefficiency, with managerial success dependent on political relationships, not efficiency, leading to a lack of innovation and accountability. Post-communist reorganizations were limited to staff reductions, without improving productivity or quality. Unprepared for the market economy, the defence industry lost traditional markets due to unchanged products and weak management. Additionally, experienced engineering groups, essential for the development of military products, were almost dissolved due to retirements and the departure of young and valuable personnel, as a result of inadequate personnel management. Organizations were predominantly bureaucratic, characterized by rigid rules

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and the promotion of incompetence, succeeding only in avoiding bankruptcy.

The current defence procurement system is unique, involving the planning, development, acquisition, maintenance, and use of combat equipment, materials, facility development, and services by the Ministry of National Defence [2]. The decision-making process involves three systems: the requirements issuing system, the procurement management system, and the planning, programming, and financing system. The implementation of a weapons system typically takes between 12 and 15 years. Part of the Ministry of National Defence, the General Directorate for Armaments (DGA) is responsible for defining policies and strategies for equipping the army, including defining operational requirements, planning procurement programs, and collaborating with national and international industry. The DGA plays a strategic role in connecting European initiatives, such as ReArm Europe and Horizon Europe, with national defence priorities.

The work "Management of Procurement Systems - Multimedia Bibliographic Support" published in 2005 by "Carol I" National Defence University Publishing House [3], served as a fundamental guide for developing military procurement skills, providing a solid framework for understanding and applying management principles specific to this vital sector. The content of the work covered fundamental aspects of procurement management, including, but not limited to, specific military procurement processes, legislation and regulations in force at the time of publication (2005), as well as strategies and good practices relevant to the acquisition of equipment and materials necessary for defence. This bibliographic support was improved based on students' graduation papers and was subsequently used for a master's program.

Research Question

The challenges inherited from the post-communist period, as well as the absence of specialists capable of solving the complexity of life-cycle cost estimations for military equipment, evaluating technological proposals in the context of limited national budgets, and efficiently managing knowledge transfer partnerships, demonstrate a stringent need to develop highly qualified internal capabilities in this field. The ***research question*** is whether and to what extent a master's programme can ensure the training of a new generation of experts capable of addressing the complexity of military acquisitions, from initial planning to implementation and support throughout the product life cycle

2. Master's Programme (EQF 7 - Management of Procurement Programmes and Projects (2007-2008)

The master's degree programme "Management of Procurement Programs and Projects" met the standards and performance indicators established by the External Evaluation Methodology, the reference standards and the list of performance indicators of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, approved by GD no. 1418/2006.

The master's programme "Management of Procurement Programmes and Projects" was developed (for the 2007-2008 academic year) by the Faculty of Command and General Staff, respectively through the contribution of the teaching staff from the Department of Human Resources Management, Educational Sciences and Procurement from "Carol I" National Defence University, Bucharest.

On January 1, 2007, Romania became a member state of the European Union. Member state status implies both rights and obligations. In this context, the ***mission*** of

the Master's Degree Programme "Management of Procurement Programmes and Projects" was to train military and civilian experts, selected for the application of the laws, principles and norms governing the management of procurement projects and programmes, as well as to plan, organize and conduct university scientific research in order to improve methodological skills for the administration of research programmes, as well as to develop individual and institutional competencies in attracting resources for scientific research, by developing internationally competitive research projects.

The ***objectives*** of the Master's Programme "Management of Procurement Programmes and Projects" were designed to: develop the professional skills of students in the field of management of procurement programmes and projects; allow in-depth study of the basic, theoretical and practical elements specific to project management; facilitate the training, development and improvement of project management-specific skills in a systemic and prospective vision; develop the ability to objectively and constructively evaluate critical project management situations, to act creatively and to lead working groups; form skills for identifying, developing, solving and substantiating new cognitive problems, applicable in the field of project management, based on modern techniques, methodologies and working tools.

These objectives led to the acquisition of basic and complementary skills necessary for specialties and functions of forecasting, programming, planning and management, ensuring the mandatory preparatory basis for doctoral university studies in the field of Military Sciences.

3. ReArm Europe/Readiness 2030 Plan

The European Commission's (EC) "ReArm Europe/Readiness 2030" Plan, presented in March 2025, proposes a massive financial mobilisation of over €800 billion for defence spending.

To address the challenges identified, the "White Paper for European Defence – Readiness 2030" proposes a multi-faceted strategy, structured around a cloud of pillars, aimed at transforming European defence into a coherent and effective force. The plan aims to strengthen the strategic autonomy of the European Union (EU) and its defence capabilities, in the context of geopolitical changes and the war in Ukraine. The plan is structured around five key funding pillars and has generated significant debate among experts and European institutions.

The European Commission's proposed plan for strengthening defence and joint procurement in the EU is structured around five main pillars [4], each addressing a distinct aspect of military financing, cooperation and capability management. This integrated approach aims to increase interoperability and cost-effectiveness at European level.

Pillar One - Security Action for Europe (SAFE) proposes the creation of a new financial instrument, SAFE, which would allow the European Commission to raise up to €150 billion on the capital markets in the form of loans [4]. The aim is to accelerate defence investment and joint procurement of equipment from European defence industries. The legal basis for this instrument is Article 122 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which allows for financial assistance in emergency situations. However, the use of this article has raised concerns about democratic oversight, as it excludes the European Parliament from the direct legislative process. SAFE aims to improve interoperability, cost-effectiveness and strategic coordination in the EU, by allowing the participation of Ukraine, EFTA/EEA countries and partner countries, with a "European preference" for the location of contractors' infrastructure and resources.

Pillar two - *Boosting National Defence Funding* - focuses on mobilising national defence funding by removing certain existing regulatory constraints. The Commission proposes to classify joint defence procurement as "public goods" and temporarily exclude related expenditure from the calculation of the excessive deficit for the application of the Stability and Growth Pact. It also aims to boost investment from the European Investment Bank (EIB) and national promotional banks. The proposal also includes the option to activate the debt support mechanism for joint procurement, part of the Recovery and Resilience Fund (RRF), but this has been criticised by the European Parliament.

Pillar three - *The European Defence Investment Programme (EDIP)* aims to continue and strengthen previous initiatives, such as the Ammunition Support Act (ASAP) and the Joint Procurement Instrument (EDIRPA). EDIP proposes to use €1.5 billion from the EU budget to stimulate joint procurement and production of defence equipment at European level. The main objectives are to reduce market fragmentation, increase cost efficiency and strengthen the EU's defence technological and industrial base. The programme could also include a fast-track procurement mechanism for emergencies.

Pillar four - *Strengthening the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB)* focuses on a long-term vision for strengthening Europe's defence technological and industrial base [4]. This involves rethinking industrial policies, promoting innovation and investing in research and development. The aim is to reduce external dependencies, increase the resilience of supply chains and ensure sufficient domestic production for the EU's defence needs. A particular focus is placed on the development of critical technologies and on supporting SMEs in the defence sector.

Pillar five - *Innovative Financial Instruments and Post-2027 Vision* explores new financial instruments and long-term strategies for financing defence after 2027. The Commission proposes €100 billion in direct funding for defence in the next seven-year EU budget (MFF post-2027), making defence spending a top priority. This option would allow for increased scrutiny by the European Parliament. Unused loans from the Recovery and Resilience Fund (RRF) are also being discussed, but this option was considered too complex and lengthy to be included in the current package. The European Parliament's position supports strengthening defence but calls for a comprehensive long-term strategy and expresses concerns about its marginalisation in legislative processes.

4. Master's Programme (EQF 7) - Strategic Procurement Management and Cost Estimation in Defence

4.1. Context and Justification

Modern national security is a dynamic and complex field, governed by rapid technological innovation and ever-changing geopolitical challenges. In this context, military equipment acquisitions are no longer simple transactions, but strategic processes that require in-depth expertise in economic analysis, risk management and advanced technologies. From a centralized military production system before 1990 to post-1990 Euro-Atlantic integration, Romania's experience underlines the urgent need to develop highly qualified domestic capabilities in this field.

The absence of specialists able to solve the complexity of life-cycle cost estimates for military equipment, to evaluate the technological proposals in the context of limited national budgets, and to effectively manage knowledge transfer partnerships [5] can lead to significant risks: budget overruns, delivery delays, suboptimal procurement, and inefficient use of public resources.

This strategic level (EQF 7) master's programme will have the mission of training a new generation of experts capable of supporting decisions at the highest level within the Ministry of National Defence, defence industries and related institutions. Inspired by the success of the Master of Cost Estimating and Analysis (MCEA) programme of the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) in the USA [6], the programme will offer a rigorous approach, based on quantitative methodologies and international best practices, adapted to the national and European specificities.

The ***objectives*** of the Master's Programme "Strategic Procurement Management and Cost Estimation in Defence" aim to train specialists with a holistic understanding of military procurement processes, capable of:

- estimating with high precision the costs of defence projects throughout their entire life cycle, using advanced methodologies and dedicated software tools;
- analysing financial and economic procurement alternatives, substantiating strategic decisions based on the principles of cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness;
- managing the risks associated with military equipment procurement, including technological, financial and performance risks;
- implementing efficient procurement and contract management strategies, ensuring compliance with national and international regulations (NATO, EU);
- facilitating the transfer of knowledge and technology by initiating and managing Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP) and by using European funding programmes such as Horizon Europe;
- supporting innovation in the national defence industry, promoting the development of autonomous capabilities and reducing external dependence.

4.2. Curriculum Design

The programme will last 2 years (4 semesters) and will include a combination of theoretical courses, practical case studies, simulations and applied projects, culminating in the development of a research-based dissertation (Table 1).

Table 1: Curriculum design

Semester	*Subject-matter*	*Description*
1st Semester - Basic Knowledge and Concepts	Defence Economics and Defence Markets	Economic principles applied to the defence sector, analysis of demand and supply of military equipment, structure of international defence markets, geopolitical and economic factors.
	Introduction to Military Procurement	Procurement life cycle, relevant national and international legislation (NATO Standardization Agreements, EU Defence Procurement Directives), types of contracts.
	Mathematics and Statistics for Cost Estimation	Concepts of probability, statistical inference, linear and multivariable regression, data analysis.
	Models of Innovation and Knowledge Transfer in Defence	Analysis of Triple, Quadruple, Quintuple Helix Models, Open Innovation, KTP (Knowledge Transfer Partnerships) models, the role of KTPs in overcoming the "Valley of Death" and the "Missing Middle" in financing.
Semester - Cost Estimation Methodologies and	Advanced Cost Estimation Methodologies	Analog, parametric, bottom-up (engineering), top-down, expert judgment analysis, life cycle costing (LCC) techniques.

Semester	*Subject-matter*	*Description*
	Cost Estimation and Data Analysis Software	Use of specialized platforms (e.g. ACEIT - Automated Cost Estimating Integrated Tools, @RISK, Crystal Ball) and statistical programmes (R, Python) for modelling and simulation.
	Cost Database Management	Collection, validation and management of historical cost data, use of standardized databases (e.g. DoD Cost and Software Data Reporting).
	Fundamentals of Financial and Budgetary Analysis	Cash flow analysis, discount rates, financial indicators, budget planning in the public sector.
3rd Semester - Strategic Analysis and Programme Management	Cost-Benefit and Cost-Effectiveness Analysis in Defence	Quantitative and qualitative evaluation of procurement alternatives, decision support for major defence programs.
	Risk Management in Military Procurement	Identification, assessment, quantification and mitigation of risks (technological, programme, cost, performance, legal), development of contingency plans.
	Management of Complex Defence Programmes	Strategic planning, organizational structure, progress monitoring, performance reporting, stakeholder management.
	Management of Procurement Contracts and Negotiation	Contract types (cost-plus, fixed price, incentives), negotiation strategies, dispute management, contract audit.
4th Semester - Innovation, Policies and Dissertation	Innovation and Emerging Technologies in Defence	The role of research and development (R&D) programmes, technology transfer from civil to military, limitations and adaptations of the TRL (Technology Readiness Level) scale in the military context.
	Defence Public Policy and Procurement	The role of government, industrial policies, exports and imports in the defence industry.
	Horizon Europe and Defence Research Funding	Funding opportunities for defence research and development projects through the Horizon Europe programme.
	Ethics and Governance in Defence Procurement	Ethical aspects, transparency, anti-corruption, social responsibility.
	Research and Dissertation	Research methodologies, data analysis, academic writing and the development of a master's dissertation on a relevant topic.

4.3. Knowledge and skills of the graduate

Graduates of the master's programme "Strategic Acquisition Management and Cost Estimation in Defence" will acquire a robust set of theoretical knowledge and practical skills, essential for strategic roles in the defence field, summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Knowledge and skills of the graduate. Graduates' potential roles

Knowledge and skills of the graduate		*Description*
Knowledge	In-depth Knowledge in Defence Economics	In-depth understanding of the economic principles governing defence procurement, including the specificities of defence markets, life cycle costing (LCC) analysis, and the economic impact of procurement decisions.
	Advanced Cost Estimation Methodologies	Mastery of a diverse range of cost estimation techniques (parametric, analogue, engineering), with a clear understanding of the applicability, limitations, and uncertainties of each.
	National/International Regulations and Standards	Detailed knowledge of national and international (NATO, EU) legislation, policies, and procedures governing defence procurement and technology transfer.
	Innovation and Knowledge Transfer Models	Understanding of key concepts in the field of innovation (Triple, Quadruple, Quintuple Helix, Open Innovation) and knowledge transfer mechanisms (KTP), including the role of EU programmes, such as Horizon Europe.
	Risk Management	Solid knowledge of the types of risks in defence procurement (technological, financial, programmatic, operational) and methodologies for their identification, assessment and mitigation.
	Defence Technologies and Systems	A general understanding of the main categories of military equipment, technological trends and specific development cycles.
Skills	Advanced Analytical and Quantitative Skills	Ability to collect, process and analyse complex data sets, build cost estimation models and perform sensitivity and risk analyses.
	Use of Specialized Software Tools	Practical skills in the use of software programmes dedicated to cost estimation (e.g. ACEIT) and data analysis (e.g. R, Python, @RISK).
	Critical Thinking and Strategic Decision Making	Ability to critically evaluate information, identify complex problems and formulate substantiated recommendations for strategic decisions in procurement.
	Effective Communication and Presentation	Ability to clearly and concisely communicate, both orally and in writing, the results of complex analyses to diverse audiences (technical, managerial, political).
	Project and Programme Management	Ability to plan, execute, monitor and control complex procurement projects and programmes, including resource and timeline management.
	Negotiation and Contract Management	Effective negotiation and contract management skills, ensuring optimal results and compliance with clauses.
	Interdisciplinary and International Collaboration	Ability to work effectively in multidisciplinary teams and in international contexts, facilitating the transfer of knowledge and best practices.
	Problem Solving	Ability to work effectively in multidisciplinary teams and in international contexts, facilitating the transfer of knowledge and best practices.

Knowledge and skills of the graduate		*Description*
	Innovation and Adaptability	Openness to new technologies and concepts, ability to adapt to changes in the security environment and integrate innovation into procurement processes.
Graduates' potential roles	Defence Acquisition Cost Analyst	
	Military Acquisition Programme/Project Manager	
	Defence Contract Specialist	
	Military Acquisition Management Consultant	
	Defence Technology Transfer and Innovation Expert	
	Defence Economics Researcher	

4.4. Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the master's programme "Strategic Procurement Management and Cost Estimation in Defence" (EQF 7), the learning outcomes are the ones systematized in Annex No. 1. These competencies are designed to educate and certify graduates who are not only knowledgeable in theory, but also practitioners capable of generating real added value in the complex and critical processes of military equipment procurement, directly contributing to the modernization of the armed forces and the strengthening of national security.

4.5. EU Financing Sources

Due to its strategic importance for the development of human capital and defence capabilities, a master's programme of this calibre has the potential to attract funding from various European Union programmes and instruments. Some of the most relevant sources are systematized in Annex No. 2.

Annex No. 2 illustrates that the financing of a strategic master's programme in procurement management and defence cost estimation would require a multi-source approach. Combining national funds with calls for proposals from Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, potential educational components of the EDF and the European Structural Funds (ESF+) would maximise the chances of success. It is crucial that project proposals highlight the strategic relevance of the programme, its contribution to EU and NATO objectives, and its impact on the development of human capital in the defence sector. Transnational cooperation with universities and research institutions from other EU Member States with expertise in the field would increase the attractiveness and chances of funding.

5. Conclusions

The historical context reveals a transition from a centralized military production system (before 1989, governed by internal regulations such as Order M23/1975 and M54/1987 on the assimilation of new products), to a post-1990 Euro-Atlantic integration, imposing alignment with Western standards and a strategic approach to acquisitions. The proposed master's programme, inspired by the success of the Master of Cost Estimating and Analysis (MCEA) of the Naval Postgraduate School (USA), aims to train specialists capable of applying advanced methodologies for life cycle cost estimation (LCC) and risk management.

Against a geopolitical landscape marked by uncertainty and rapid technological progress, national security crucially depends on a country's ability to equip its armed forces with modern and efficient equipment. For Romania, the transition from a centralized military production system (specific to the pre-1990 period,

governed by the "Methodological Instructions on the Assimilation Phases of New Military Equipment Products" [1] to an open procurement model, aligned with NATO and EU standards, highlighted a pressing need: the training of highly qualified specialists in strategic procurement management and defence cost estimation.

The proposed strategic level master's programme (EQF 7), inspired by the success of the Master of Cost Estimating and Analysis (MCEA) Program of the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) in the USA, addresses exactly this gap. Such a programme would prepare a new generation of experts capable of solving the complexity of military acquisitions, from initial planning to implementation and support throughout the product life cycle. Graduates will acquire in-depth knowledge in defence economics, advanced cost estimation methodologies (parametric, analogue, LCC), risk management and the use of specialized software tools. Furthermore, the programme will integrate the understanding of innovation and knowledge transfer models (Triple, Quadruple, Quintuple Helix, Open Innovation, KTP), instrumental in overcoming the "Valley of Death" and the "Missing Middle" in financing and technological development [5].

Given the Learning Outcomes (Annex No. 1), this master represents a vital strategic investment for Romania. In addition to streamlining the massive budgets allocated to military procurement – through precise estimates and rigorous cost-benefit analyses – the programme will contribute to reducing waste and increasing transparency and accountability in the management of public funds. It will also reduce dependence on expensive external consultancy and strengthen the national capacity to negotiate advantageous contracts. In addition, trained specialists will be able to initiate and manage Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP) and access European research and innovation funds, such as those in the *Horizon Europe Programme* and the *European Defence Fund (EDF).*

In conclusion, a master's programme in strategic acquisition management and cost estimation in defence is not just an academic option, but an imperative strategic necessity. It will train the necessary experts to modernize the armed forces, support the national defence industry, and strengthen Romania's national security in the Euro-Atlantic and global context. The funding for such a programme could be generated from multiple EU sources, including Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, and structural funds, underlining the strategic importance of this initiative.

Annex No. 1 – Learning Outcomes

Knowledge and Understanding	*Application and Problem Solving*	*Responsibility and Autonomy*
1. To deeply and critically understand the fundamentals of defence economics, including the particularities of arms markets, the principles of supply and demand in the military sector, and the geopolitical implications of procurement decisions.	8. To autonomously apply advanced cost estimation methodologies to generate accurate and credible estimates for complex military procurement projects, taking into account uncertainties and risks.	15. To operate with a high degree of autonomy in addressing complex issues in the field of defence procurement, demonstrating initiative and critical thinking in resolving them.

Knowledge and Understanding	*Application and Problem Solving*	*Responsibility and Autonomy*
2. To explain and compare various Life Cycle Costing (LCC) methodologies for complex defence systems, including parametric, analogue, bottom-up, and expert-based methods.	9. To effectively use dedicated software and tools for cost estimation (e.g. Automated Cost Estimating Integrated Tools - ACEIT), data analysis (e.g. Python) and risk management (e.g. @RISK, Crystal Ball).	16. To critically evaluate and adapt international good practices and advanced methodologies to the specific context of the national defence system and Romanian legislation.
3. To identify and analyse the national and international legislative and regulatory framework (NATO Standardization Agreements, EU Directives on defence procurement, international export control regulations) that govern defence procurement and technology transfer.	10. To conduct complex cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analyses in order to strategically evaluate procurement alternatives and base optimal decisions on the allocation of budgetary resources.	17. To demonstrate professional ethics and integrity in all aspects of procurement processes, promoting transparency and accountability in the management of public funds.
4. To critically evaluate models and conceptual frameworks of innovation and knowledge transfer (e.g. Triple, Quadruple, Quintuple Helix, Open Innovation, Knowledge transfer partnership - KTP), understanding their applicability and limitations in the context of security and defence.	11. To develop and implement robust risk management strategies in defence procurement, including mitigation and contingency plans to minimize the impact of unforeseen events.	18. To effectively and persuasively communicate the results of complex analyses to various audiences (decision makers, technical experts, the general public), both in written and oral format, including in internationally spoken languages.
5. To describe and exemplify the role and structure of European funding programmes for defence research and innovation, such as Horizon Europe and the European Defence Fund (EDF), and the mechanisms for accessing them.	12. To manage the key stages of the life cycle of military procurement programmes, from requirements definition and planning, to execution, monitoring and evaluation.	19. To collaborate effectively in multidisciplinary and inter-institutional teams, contributing to achieving common objectives in strategic procurement programmes.
6. To recognize and explain the types of risks associated with military procurement (technological, financial, programmatic, operational, legal) and their potential impact on projects.	13. To initiate, develop and manage effective knowledge transfer partnerships (KTP) between academic institutions, industry and government agencies, facilitating innovation and adoption of new technologies.	20. To engage in continuous professional development, keeping their knowledge and skills up to date in the face of rapid changes in technology, legislation, and the geopolitical environment.
7. To understand and interpret financial and performance indicators relevant to the management of procurement programmes in the public sector.	14. To prepare and negotiate complex procurement contracts, ensuring the protection of national interests and compliance with legal and operational requirements.	

Annex No. 2 – Possible EU financing sources

Programmes and instruments	*Budget*	*Description (relevance)*
Horizon Europe	95.5 billion EUR (2021-2027)	Although its main focus is research and innovation, Horizon Europe also supports skills development through Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) [7] which may include funding for PhDs and post-doctoral fellows, but also through collaborative research projects which may have a skills development component. Cluster 3 "Civil Security for Society" and Cluster 4 "Digital, Industry and Space" are particularly relevant, as they may include calls for skills development in areas critical to defence and security [8].
European Defence Fund - EDF	7.9 billion EUR (2021-2027)	EDF supports collaborative research and development projects in the field of defence. Although they focus on technologies and prototypes, EDF projects often require the development of specific skills and may include a training component for personnel involved in defence project management. A master's degree programme could train future EDF project managers [9].
Erasmus+ Programme	Approximately 26.2 billion EUR (2021-2027)	Erasmus+ is the EU's main programme for education, training, youth and sport. It can fund [10]: - Cooperation projects (Key Action 2): Including partnerships for excellence (Centres of Professional Excellence), which could aim at developing innovative master's programmes in strategic areas. - Individual mobilities: Exchanges of students and academic staff, which would allow Romanian students and faculty to study or teach at leading EU institutions with expertise in defence procurement (e.g. universities with similar programmes or institutions with partnerships with defence agencies).
European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) - in particular the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)	European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) €142.7 billion for the period 2021-2027	Although not directly targeted at defence, the ESF+ [11] supports investments in human capital, education and skills development. A strategic master's programme could be eligible for funding under Priority Axes that aim to increase the level of higher education and adapt skills to the needs of the labour market, including in strategic sectors. The ERDF can support research and innovation infrastructure. The funds are managed by Member States through Operational Programmes. Romania has Operational Programmes that can allocate funds for the development of higher education and research.
European Peace Facility (EPF)	Approximately 17 billion EUR (2021-2027)	Although the main purpose of the EPF [12] is to finance EU actions in the field of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), including the provision of military equipment to partners, the general context of strengthening defence capabilities could indirectly support capacity development initiatives. Technical assistance or institutional capacity-building projects could include a training component.

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