

HEAT

Hostile Environment Awareness Training

FAQ's



Be informed. Be prepared. Know what to expect.

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1. About the program

What is HEAT training?

Hostile Environment Awareness Training (HEAT) is a specialized programme designed to prepare participants to operate safely and effectively in hostile, unstable, or high-risk environments. The training develops the knowledge, skills and confidence required to identify threats, assess risks, make decisions under pressure, and respond appropriately to security incidents. Participants are introduced to key areas such as operational safety, personal security, crisis management, self-protection, emergency response, resilience and coordination in complex environments.

The training is delivered by professionals from security forces, healthcare services, and trauma psychology backgrounds, combining operational expertise with practical learning.

Who is this course designed for?

The HEAT training is designed for individuals who may be required to operate, travel, or work in hostile, unstable, or high-risk environments as part of their professional responsibilities, as well as for anyone who wants to be better prepared to respond to emergencies or security incidents.

The training is particularly relevant for:

- Humanitarian and international cooperation personnel.
- NGO staff and grassroots organizations.
- Journalists, investigative journalists and media professionals working in conflict, crisis-affected or high-risk areas.
- Members of international organizations and peace missions.
- Diplomatic personnel.
- Human rights defenders, environmental defenders and community leaders.
- Emergency response, disaster management and risk reduction teams.
- Security professionals.
- Election observers and international monitors.
- Young professionals and students preparing for international careers .

The programme is also suitable for anyone seeking practical skills to improve their **personal safety, preparedness, situational awareness and resilience** when operating or travelling in challenging environments.

Is prior experience required?

No. No prior experience in security, humanitarian work or similar fields is required to participate in the HEAT programme. The training is designed to be accessible to participants with **different professional backgrounds, ages, and levels of experience**.

Previous experience in security may help participants become familiar with certain procedures and develop faster decision-making and response patterns. However, the programme is specifically designed so that participants with no previous experience can fully engage in and benefit from the training.

The training provides the knowledge, practical skills and guidance needed to develop a solid foundation in personal security and safety awareness.

Is the course theoretical or practical?

The HEAT training combines both theoretical and practical learning. The theoretical component provides participants with the key concepts, knowledge and rationale behind the procedures and decisions covered during the training, helping them understand not only **what to do, but why**.

However, the majority of the programme is practical and based on **experiential learning**. Participants learn through hands-on exercises, group work, practical activities, field exercises and realistic simulations that allow them to apply the knowledge acquired in real-life scenarios.

The aim is to move beyond simply understanding security concepts and to develop practical skills, decision-making abilities and appropriate responses through direct experience and **active participation**.

Are they realistic simulations?

Yes. Realistic simulations are one of the core elements of the HEAT programme. Participants take part in carefully designed scenarios that simulate situations commonly encountered in hostile or high-risk environments, including security incidents, emergency evacuations, checkpoint procedures, civil unrest, kidnapping scenarios, vehicle-related incidents and medical emergencies.

These exercises allow participants to apply what they have learned in a safe and controlled environment while developing confidence, resilience and decision-making skills under pressure.

Can the training be taken online?

No. The HEAT programme is delivered exclusively in person.

The training relies heavily on hands-on exercises, interactive activities, field-based scenarios and realistic simulations that require direct participation and instructor supervision. These practical components are essential to the learning experience and cannot be effectively replicated through an online format.

The programme is based on experiential learning, allowing participants to develop practical skills and decision-making abilities through direct experience and active participation.



How many participants are admitted per course?

Each HEAT training is limited to a **maximum of 30 participants**, in some editions, the number may be even lower. Participant numbers are intentionally limited to ensure personalized attention, effective instructor supervision, safety and meaningful participation in practical exercises and realistic simulations.

This approach allows instructors to provide individual guidance and ensures that every participant has the opportunity to actively engage in the training and benefit fully from the learning experience.

2. Duration, dynamics and experience

What is the daily schedule like?

The HEAT training is an intensive, full-day training course. Training activities generally begin after breakfast and continue throughout the day, with sessions typically finishing shortly before dinner.

The daily programme includes a combination of classroom sessions, practical exercises and field-based activities. Regular breaks are scheduled between activities, including coffee breaks and a lunch break, to allow participants to rest and recharge throughout the day.

Participants will receive a detailed training schedule before the course, outlining the timetable for each session and workshop, as well as scheduled breaks and meal times.

Is accommodation mandatory?

Yes. The HEAT programme is a residential training course, and staying on-site is an integral part of the training methodology. The programme is designed to provide an **immersive learning environment** in which participants experience, as realistically as possible, the conditions and routines they may encounter when operating in a high-risk environment.

Participants are expected to stay with the group throughout the duration of the course. This allows the training team to maintain a continuous operational environment and enables participants to put into practice the security protocols, situational awareness and procedures covered during the training.

As the training programme runs throughout the day and is designed around an immersive residential experience, staying at the designated accommodation is required for all participants unless otherwise agreed with the training team in advance.

What language is the training delivered in?

The language of instruction depends on the specific HEAT edition. All our training courses are available in both English and Spanish. The language of instruction for each edition is announced when registration opens.

Are meals included? What dietary requirements can be accommodated?

Yes. All meals are included as part of the residential programme, including breakfast, lunch and dinner, as well as coffee breaks and snacks throughout the training day.

We are happy to accommodate dietary requirements and restrictions whenever possible, including vegetarian and vegan diets, food allergies, intolerances and other specific dietary needs.

Participants are asked to inform the HEAT team of any dietary requirements or food allergies when registering, or as early as possible before the course, so that the necessary arrangements can be made in advance.

Is transportation to and from the training facilities provided?

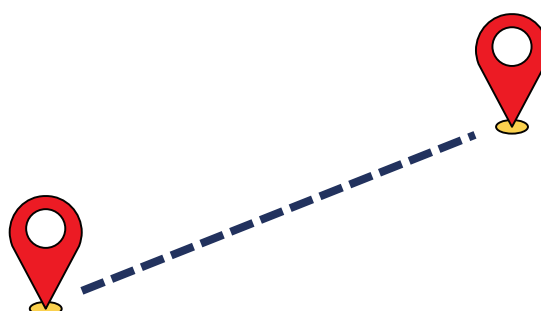
Yes. Helsinki España organises **group transportation to and from the training facilities** as part of the HEAT programme.

In the afternoon before the course begins, transportation is organised from a designated meeting point in the city to the training facilities, allowing participants to arrive together and settle in before the start of the programme.

At the end of the course, transportation is also organised from the training facilities back to a designated meeting point in the city.

The meeting point and transportation arrangements are determined according to the needs of the group and will be communicated to participants in advance.

Please note that this group transportation is organised from the designated meeting point in the city and does not constitute an individual airport or train station transfer service. Participants are responsible for making their own arrangements to reach the meeting point.



Can I bring my laptop or other electronic devices?

Yes. Participants may bring laptops and other personal electronic devices to the HEAT programme. The accommodation and training facilities normally have **Wi-Fi access**, although availability may vary depending on the location.

The HEAT programme is an **intensive and demanding training experience**, and we strongly recommend that participants focus primarily on the training and take advantage of the course as a fully immersive learning experience. However, we understand that some professionals may occasionally need to use their free time or breaks to keep up with essential work responsibilities.

Laptops and other electronic devices may be used in **participants' rooms, classrooms and common areas**, subject to the following restrictions:

1. **Laptops and other devices may not be used during theoretical sessions**, as they can interfere with participants' attention and engagement with the training.
2. **Electronic devices may not be taken to field simulations or practical outdoor exercises**, as they may be damaged during the activities.

Participants are therefore welcome to bring their devices, but should plan to **limit their use during the programme and prioritise their participation in the training activities**.



Can I take photos or videos during the training?

Yes. Participants are welcome to take photos and videos during the HEAT programme and may share appropriate content on their social media channels. However, there are some important restrictions to respect the **privacy of other participants, the security of our instructors and the integrity of the training.**

1. **Always ask for permission before taking or sharing photos or videos in which other participants appear.** Some participants may not wish to be photographed or identified publicly.
2. **Please avoid taking photos or videos of instructors,** particularly during practical activities and field exercises. Some members of our training team may have restricted public profiles due to their professional background, including previous or current service in special forces or protective security roles.
3. **Certain scenarios, exercises, or training details should not be photographed, recorded or shared publicly.** Maintaining an element of surprise is an important part of the HEAT methodology and sharing specific scenarios or details could compromise the experience and effectiveness of the training for future participants.

Participants are welcome to **share appropriate photos and videos on social media,** provided that these guidelines are respected and that no confidential, sensitive, or restricted training content is disclosed.

The instructors will also indicate when photography or recording **is not permitted during a particular activity.** When in doubt, please ask before taking a photo or recording.



3. Physical and medical requirements

Is the training physically demanding?

The course includes active participation in practical exercises, outdoor activities and simulation-based scenarios that may require movement, teamwork and sustained attention under stressful conditions.

While participants should be prepared for an intensive learning experience, the training is focused on safety, decision-making and crisis management rather than physical endurance or athletic performance.

We take into account the physical condition, injuries and individual limitations of each participant when carrying out the activities. Exercises can therefore be adapted to participants' individual circumstances whenever necessary.

Participants can also inform the instructors at any time if they need to stop, take a break, or require any adjustment during an activity. Our priority is to ensure that everyone can participate safely and benefit from the training

What level of physical fitness is required?

There is **no minimum fitness standard or specific athletic requirement** to participate in the HEAT programme. Participants should be in generally good health and able to take part in practical activities throughout the five-day residential programme.

A reasonable level of mobility, the ability to work outdoors, and readiness to participate in dynamic exercises are recommended. However, the training is not designed to test physical endurance or athletic performance.

There are **no specific sprinting exercises**. However, some activities may involve short bursts of running, for example when getting in or out of vehicles or during simulated exercises such as applying a tourniquet.



What happens if I have a medical condition, injury, or disability?

Participants with medical conditions, injuries, or disabilities are welcome to discuss their individual circumstances with the HEAT team before the course. **Where possible, practical exercises can be adapted to accommodate individual needs and limitations** while maintaining the learning objectives of the training.

However, the HEAT programme involves outdoor activities, movement, practical exercises and realistic field-based simulations. **Some activities take place in environments that may not be fully accessible**, and certain levels of reduced mobility may make it difficult or impossible to participate safely in some parts of the programme.

For this reason, participants with significant mobility limitations or specific medical conditions are encouraged to contact the HEAT team before registering. We will assess the requirements of the programme together and discuss whether appropriate adaptations can be made to enable safe and meaningful participation.

What happens if I cannot participate in a particular exercise?

If you are unable to participate in a particular exercise due to a justified medical, physical, or other valid reason, please inform the instructors. Where possible, the exercise can be adapted to your circumstances or an alternative way of participating can be considered.

However, active participation in the training programme and completion of the required exercises are necessary to receive the HEAT certificate. If a participant chooses not to take part in a significant part of the training without a justified reason, the HEAT Certificate may not be issued.



Is medical support available during the training?

Yes. Some instructors are qualified healthcare professionals, so **basic first aid support is available throughout the training.**

In the event of a medical emergency, the training team has identified the nearest medical facilities and on-duty pharmacies. First aid kits are also available, and emergency procedures are in place to ensure that participants can receive further medical assistance when required.

Participants are encouraged to inform the HEAT team in advance of any relevant medical conditions, allergies, or other health considerations that may need to be taken into account during the training.

Participants are also advised to bring any medication they may need during the course, particularly prescription medication or medication that must be taken according to a specific treatment plan. **Each participant is responsible for bringing a sufficient supply of medication for the entire duration of the training.**

Will psychological support be available during the training?

Yes. You will have access to psychological support and ongoing guidance throughout the training. The aim is to provide support and guidance, helping you manage many challenges that may arise during the training and promoting your overall well-being.



4.What ´s included and what to bring

What is included in the course fee?

The course fee includes:

1. Classroom instruction and practical exercises
2. Realistic field simulations and scenario-based activities
3. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE),
4. Civil liability insurance during the training
5. Full-board accommodation throughout the course
6. Activity photographs
7. HEAT issued by the International University Center for Peace Missions of Helsinki España

Participants are responsible for their travel expenses to and from the meeting point, visa-related costs and any personal expenses incurred during the course.

What clothing and equipment should I bring?

The clothing required for the HEAT may vary depending on the season and weather conditions, as courses are held at different times of the year.

Participants should bring:

- **Comfortable clothing** suitable for practical activities and outdoor exercises.
- **Comfortable sports or outdoor footwear** suitable for walking and practical activities.

Please keep in mind that clothing may **get dirty or damaged** during exercises and field activities.

Participants should also make sure that their clothing is appropriate for the expected weather conditions, including warm or waterproof layers when necessary.

Before the course begins, participants will receive practical recommendations based on the expected weather conditions, including guidance on the type of clothing and footwear that will be most appropriate for the course.

What other items should I bring?

In addition to appropriate clothing and footwear, participants may wish to bring the following personal items:

- **Personal medication**, if required
- **Identification documents**, such as a passport or national ID
- **Headlamp** — optional, but always recommended
- **Sunscreen and sunglasses**, depending on the season and weather conditions
- **Personal snacks** — snacks are provided by the organisation, but participants are welcome to bring their own if they wish
- Any other **personal hygiene items or essential personal belongings** required during the residential programme

The HEAT team will provide the personal protective and training equipment required for the activities, so participants do not need to bring specialised safety or training equipment unless specifically advised in advance.



5. Inscription and documents

Which documents are required for registration?

The required documents are:

- HEAT Registration Form
- Resume/CV
- Recent passport-size photo (digital)

Where should I send my application documents?

Please send all required documents by email to:

iucpm@helsinkiespana.org

What should I take when applying for a visa?

Helsinki España supports participants throughout the visa application process by providing the necessary documentation, including an official letter of invitation, as well as guidance and assistance where needed. Please note that participants are required to pay the registration fee before the letter of invitation can be issued.

It is the participant's responsibility to make the appropriate visa arrangements before travelling. We strongly recommend allowing at least two months for the visa application process and scheduling an appointment with the nearest Spanish embassy or consulate as early as possible.



6. Price, payment and receipt

How can I pay?

Payment can be made through the following methods:

1. **Bank transfer**
2. **PayPal**

In certain cases, **payment by instalments may be available upon request**. Please contact the HEAT team to discuss the available options and applicable conditions.

Can my organization pay for my participation?

Yes. Organizations can pay for their staff members' participation in the HEAT programme. It is common for NGOs, international organizations, companies and other institutions to cover the cost of HEAT training for their personnel.

If your organization is covering your participation, please let the HEAT team know during the registration process so that we can provide the appropriate payment and invoicing information.

Can I receive an invoice or proof of payment?

Yes. An official invoice is issued for every HEAT programme registration. The invoice includes the billing details provided during the registration and payment process and can be issued in the participant's name or in the name of their organization.

Is there a discount for groups or organisations?

Yes. We understand that organisations may wish to train several members of their team through the HEAT programme.

If several participants from the same organisation are interested in attending a HEAT training, please contact the HEAT team before registering. Depending on the number of participants and the specific circumstances, special group rates or other arrangements may be available.

We are happy to discuss the available options and provide a tailored proposal for organisations interested in training multiple members of their team.

7. Certification and recognition

What happens if I miss part of the training?

Full attendance and active participation throughout the HEAT programme are required to successfully complete the training and **receive the HEAT certificate**.

If a participant misses part of the programme, they may not be able to complete all the required training activities and, as a result, the may not be issued.



Does the certificate have international recognition?

Yes. Participants who successfully complete the programme receive a HEAT Certificate issued by the International University Center for Peace Missions of Helsinki España.

The HEAT certification is widely recognized by international organizations, NGOs, humanitarian agencies and UN-style missions as evidence of training in hostile environment awareness and personal security. It is designed to prepare personnel for deployment in high-risk and crisis-affected contexts and reflects internationally accepted HEAT training principles.

Can I use the HEAT certificate for professional deployment?

Yes. The HEAT Certificate can be included in your professional records, CV, or deployment documentation.

For many organizations working in humanitarian action, international cooperation, journalism, security and other high-risk environments, having completed HEAT training can be a **valuable and differentiating qualification**. It demonstrates that you have received practical training in personal security, risk awareness, emergency response and decision-making in challenging environments.

Depending on the organization and position, HEAT certification may also be considered as part of the **selection criteria for certain professional deployments or job opportunities**.

How long is the HEAT certificate valid?

The HEAT certification does not have a formal expiration date.

There is no single international standard establishing a fixed validity period for HEAT certificates. However, organizations and training providers working in the humanitarian and high-risk sectors commonly recommend periodic refresher training to ensure that security knowledge, practical skills and emergency response capabilities remain up to date.

As a general recommendation, Helsinki España suggests **renewing HEAT training every 3 years**. This is in line with the refresher periods used by several organizations working with personnel deployed in humanitarian and high-risk environments.

Participants should always check the specific requirements of the organization or employer they intend to work with, as some organizations may require refresher training at different intervals.



Can I take the HEAT training again as a refresher?

Yes. Participants who have previously completed a HEAT training are welcome to take part in the programme again as a refresher.

Refresher training can be particularly useful for **updating practical skills, reinforcing security procedures, and maintaining confidence and decision-making abilities** in emergency situations.

If you have previously completed HEAT programme with Helsinki España and would like to attend a new edition as a refresher, please contact the HEAT team before registering. We may be able to offer a special rate for returning HEAT participants, depending on the course and availability.

We generally recommend refreshing HEAT training every three years to help keep knowledge and practical skills up to date.



8. Cancellation and changes

What happens if I cancel my participation?

If the cancellation is made **more than 20 days before the course start date**, the amount already paid may be **transferred as credit towards a future edition of the HEAT programme**.

Please note that cancellations made 20 days or less before the course start date are not eligible for a refund or transfer of the amount paid.

Can I transfer my registration to another person?

Yes. **A participant may transfer their registration to another person**, provided that Helsinki España is informed sufficiently in advance and the replacement participant meets the requirements and is considered suitable to take part in the HEAT programme.

The new participant will need to provide the required registration documentation and complete the necessary registration process before their participation can be confirmed.

Please contact the HEAT team as soon as possible if you wish to transfer your registration so that we can assess the replacement participant and make the necessary arrangements.

What happens if Helsinki España cancels the course?

Helsinki España reserves the **right to postpone or cancel the programme if the minimum number of participants is not reached** or if circumstances beyond the organisation's reasonable control prevent the course from being delivered as planned.

In such cases, all registered participants will be notified as soon as possible and will receive a full refund of the amounts paid for the programme. If the programme is postponed, participants will also be informed of the new proposed dates and any available options regarding their registration.

9. Formation for organisations

Is the course suitable for NGO personnel?

Yes. The HEAT programme is particularly relevant for NGO personnel, international cooperation professionals, and humanitarian workers involved in peace missions, especially those working in fragile, remote, conflict-affected, or otherwise high-risk environments.

Although the training is open to professionals from different sectors, the programme is specifically designed with the needs of humanitarian and international cooperation personnel in mind. **The scenarios and practical exercises are based on contexts similar to those that may be encountered during a humanitarian mission, including situations in a compound and humanitarian aid delivery operations** in conflict-affected areas, involving tensions between different local population groups and the presence of armed actors.



Can HEAT training be organised specifically for an organisation or group?

Yes. In addition to our scheduled HEAT courses, we can explore the possibility of **organising tailored training specifically for an organisation or group**, depending on the number of participants, training requirements, availability, and other practical considerations.

Organisations may contact the HEAT team to discuss their **specific needs, including the number of participants, preferred dates, training objectives, scenarios** and any particular operational or professional context they would like the training to address. The HEAT team will assess the requirements and, where feasible, propose a suitable training format and programme.

CONTACT US



iucpm@helsinkiespana.org



0034 91.533.54.55



0034 61.326.39.13

FOLLOW US



@helsinkiespana



@helsinkiespana



Helsinki España Training



@Helsinki España



@helsinkiespana

VISIT US

Helsinki España - Dimensión Humana

C/ Santa Cruz de Marcenado, nº11, 2ºA

28015 Madrid

SPAIN