

INTEGRATION OF THE HUNGARIAN POLICE AND THE BORDER GUARD

The Police, nowadays, is the largest organisation among law enforcement agencies in Hungary, especially after 1 January 2008, following the integration of the Police and the Border Guard.

After joining the European Union (EU) and the Schengen Territory (on 21 December 2007), the border enforcement tasks of Hungary changed. On the one hand the border control (checks) were abolished at the "Schengen internal" borders, on the other hand the protection of the public and national security required more strict control at the "Schengen external" border sections. The "Schengen external" borderline is shorter than the frontier of Hungary, so a new organisational model was needed, which resulted in the integration of the Border Guard to the Hungarian Police. Border enforcement became one of the branches of the police service.

Objectives of the integration were the following:

Establishment of a cost-effective and EU-compatible organisation of proportionate staff;

Reduction of the central managerial unit (Hungarian National Police Headquarters);

Decreasing of the number of leaders;

Ending parallelism;

Establishment of a service providing policing of a new kind;

Full implementation of Schengen tasks.

The necessary legal amendments required by the integration included the amendment of the Constitution (abolishment of the Act on Border Protection) and of the Act on Police.

Staffing situation: upon the direction of the Minister, the institutional number of Police staff following 1 January 2008 was limited to a maximum of 45,000.

There were also factors negatively affecting the staffing situation during the integration, in particular:

The unsettling of the staff,

The fear of losing their job,

The prestige loss (decreasing of managerial levels),

The requirement to move home,

Fears around pension regulations changing.

To tackle these factors, the Minister of Justice and Law Enforcement and the Police management took *measures to retain staff:*

Providing employment for everyone,

Undertaking disproportionateness,

Undertaking employment guarantees in unity with trade unions,

Amendment of the Act on the Service Relations of Members of the Career Active Duty Personnel of Armed Organizations: retirement; private pension funds.

Features of the new Police structure and tasks are:

Centralized, uniformed, armed state organization

Tripartite structure: central organization; county and metropolitan headquarters; police stations (in cities, towns and districts of the capital)

Beside police stations there are border policing stations (29) in counties affected by the "Schengen external" border.

The Hungarian Police worked under the direction of the Minister of Justice and Law Enforcement following the abolishment of the Ministry of Interior.

The central organization is the Hungarian National Police Headquarters, led by the High Commissioner.

The High Commissioner has the right to supervise police activities all over the country.

There are also Deputy High Commissioners (Director Generals): for criminal investigation, for law enforcement, and for economic affairs. Commander of the Government Guard is also a Deputy of the High Commissioner. Within the Director Generals there are separate departments for the services branches - the Border Policing Department within the Law Enforcement Director General became a new unit.

Heads of departments directly supervise and control the activities of county police headquarters in their fields of work and indirectly supervise police stations and border policing stations (through county headquarters).

There are also police organizations with special tasks:

The National Bureau of Investigation

The Riot Police (earlier: Law Enforcement Security Service)

The Airport Police Directorate (earlier: part of the Law Enforcement Security Service)

They have nationwide jurisdiction in their respective field.

Field organisations: their structure varies among counties depending on whether they have a "Schengen external" border section. If they do, the county headquarters structure is completed with a Border Policing Service – within the Law Enforcement Directorate – that directly supervise the activities of Border Policing Division and Aliens Policing Division and control the work of Border Policing Stations. County headquarters with no external border do not have a Border Policing Division. These counties were reinforced with border guards to carry out in-depth checks (for the compensation of Schengen border control) and to reinforce the public security services.

Budapest, the capital of Hungary, has a special organizational structure.

Local organisations include police stations and border policing stations. The new police tasks of border protection, border control and aliens policing developed in the local field – mainly to be carried out by border policing stations. Police stations on "Schengen internal" border sections were reinforced to improve the efficiency of crime prevention and to improve public safety.

The integration was an enormous piece of work that is to continue. Meanwhile, the management of the Police determined top priorities and tasks for 2008. The general organisational objectives include the 'fine-tuning' of the integration; retaining and stabilising the staff situation; police preparation for the 2011 EU Presidency and carrying out the integrated police training.

The Hungarian Association of Policewomen (which has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Hungarian National Police Headquarters) also has new tasks in this work, in particular by striving to retain the services of female employees.

Ildikó Kincses

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Following the integration, it became more favourable for police employees because it generated more financial support from the employer.