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THESES

of the doctoral (PhD) dissertation

Hungary's Trends of Illegal Migration on the Serbian-Hungarian Border between 2008 and 2023

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CONTENTS

DESCRIPTION OF THE SCIENTIFIC PROBLEM

Migration is a natural process in the world. Most people who leave a less developed country make a living in a neighbouring country, but some keep going until they reach a developed country – without taking into account the potential obstacles. Such a movement can also be made unlawfully, which is the case of illegal migration. The international illegal migration is one of today's most relevant and determining problems, besides the Russian-Ukrainian war. Basically (or in theory), the member states of the European Union jointly reinforce the security of the external borders, unify the systems of information and visa, negotiate with the source countries of migration, and return the rejected irregular migrants in cooperation with each other. However, the member states were interested in illegal migration differently, which led to political divisions. The member states went their separate ways and looked for – and are still looking for – solutions with more or less determination. Perhaps due to its significant involvement, Hungary approached the set of problems with firm ideas, which culminated in the beginning of the second half of 2015. The complex structure of measures brought to deal with security challenges has a major impact on law enforcement still today.

The root of the scientific problem is that there has not been any comprehensive study dealing with the historical period of the research topic (2008–2023), although there are studies that offer a professional and scientific analysis of a shorter period or a subtopic. What makes a comprehensive elaboration of the questions related to illegal migration necessary are the intensity of the illegal migration affecting Hungary – particularly on the Serbian border –, the alteration of the routes, and the fact that organized human smuggling bands tend to be more violent and to use more sophisticated methods.

Because the source data of my topic that originate from the fields of military science and law enforcement science have not been clarified in publications yet, I have examined them and found that such data do not give a correct number of irregular migrants. They show the number of people with whom the authorities had any interaction, but one person likely attempted to cross the border illegally more than once. Consequently, the secondary research data may not be reliable regarding the situation at the border.

Another problem is that organized crime related to state borders, as well as cross-border organized crime, which are not about illegal migration exclusively, became one of the most dynamically growing crime categories in the past one and a half decade, thus changing the thinking of "border guards" about illegal border crossing and related human smuggling.

In terms of border control and actions related to the "fight" against profit-oriented human smuggling, the following have become more intensive and more important:

- information gathering with systems approach;
- complex information handling.

The top leadership of the police also defined as a strategic direction the strengthening of the border police service branch with adequate information with the aim of handling illegal migration. This is to be realized through the information exchange between various law enforcement organs and the cooperation between border police and other law enforcement organs. In compliance with the requirements of border control, besides the weekly border situation pictures, monthly overview border situation pictures are made as well, which indicate the events of the month, and domestic and international review and risk analysis. Moreover, midyear and annual analysis of illegal migration are also done; and case studies, information and other analysis are also published occasionally.

In view of the above, the aims of the dissertation are to give an account of the risks through a scientific analysis of the methods of illegal border crossing, to draw the right conclusions, to highlight the importance of cooperation between the border police service branch and the criminal police service branch, and to list possible directions of further development.

HYPOTHESES OF THE RESEARCH

I have formulated my research hypotheses, as expressed below, based on the scientific problems, the research objectives and my own empirical investigation.

H1: The content of data about illegal migration concerning the period from 2016 may not be trusted without doubt. Because one person likely tries to cross the border at multiple points, the actual number of people committing or attempting illegal border crossing does not equal to the number of people that the authorities checked.

H2: On the Serbian border, since September 2015, people committing the misdemeanour of attempting to cross the border unlawfully have taken more and more aid from international human smuggling criminal organizations in order to increase their chances, because such organizations are capable of upgrading the level of their organization, their methods and means used for bypassing the so-called physical border.

H3: Before 2015, the police were not prepared to the necessary extent for tackling the challenges that massive illegal immigration posed in the field of law enforcement. They were

unable to realize relevant implementation plans and did not practise in advance the actions to be done at the organizational and inter-organizational level. As a result, the actions of the police were often characterized by improvisations at the beginning. However, having an accurate assessment of the situation, the leaders of police organs became capable of solving local and regional problems efficiently.

H4: After the government introduced administrative measures, the police's ability to respond gradually increased. The improved readiness for handling illegal migration is well demonstrated by the fact that Hungarian police contingents have participated in international police cooperation activities since 2016.

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

Academic works dealing with migration, in particular with illegal migration, usually start with two preliminary remarks. First, migration is an extremely complex, multifactorial phenomenon. Second, migration is one of today's most important problems and the attempts at handling the problem require a multi- or rather interdisciplinary approach. As a starting point of my dissertation, I accept both remarks.

First, I note that it is not an objective of my dissertation to detect each and every cause of the subject research problem or to give a solution to each of its segments. Instead, based on the studies and papers written in the past 16 years I examine what tasks and obligations the illegal immigration situation imposed on the Hungarian police, particularly on the police forces working on the Serbian-Hungarian border and how those forces tried to comply with their increased obligations. The real challenge for me was that besides examining – using new methods – the daily, "current" problems, for example the data of illegal border crossing or the effectiveness of the border control system, it was also necessary to examine a period that had not been examined in detail. This research was especially important, as I elaborated a new calculation method for a more accurate assessment of registered illegal border crossing misdemeanour cases, and I compared the effectiveness of the Hungarian border control system with that of other countries, such as Austria, Slovakia and Slovenia. Moreover, in my research I also dealt with the international experience of tackling illegal migration in law enforcement, with the aim of finding new opportunities to develop effectiveness.

O1: During my research the databases of the police were indispensable. Namely, the Emergency Reporting Service System (OZIRIS), the Domestic Alien Policing Procedure Support Application (HIDRA), the Robot Cop NEO Border Police Module (RZS HR module),

as well as data compiled on the basis of previous in-depth control reports. These databases accurately provide the data collected in the framework of law enforcement activities. The data enable an analysis and assessment of the situation of illegal border crossing and human smuggling, as well as a definition of trends at the national level, or with a breakdown regarding two counties, Bács–Kiskun and Csongrád-Csanád, or at the level of border police offices. It is not impossible that these databases which were created according to special requirements will not completely match the results of other research conducted on the subject of migration. Concerning this, I must mention that I noticed differences compared to previously published official statistical data. The data I use do not represent the total number of irregular migrants or human smugglers committing illegal border crossing but the detected and revealed cases, and those ending in arrest. Latency has to be taken into consideration as well. Nevertheless, what I consider as official police statistics are the previous Border Police Situation Pictures and Statistics published by the Division of Law Enforcement Analysis and Assessment of the Law Enforcement Directorate of the National Police Headquarters.

O2: The main objective of my research was to elaborate a new calculation method that demonstrates and assesses the data of registered illegal border crossings in a way that is more accurate and closer to reality. The objective of the new method is to provide more accurate data, facilitating the statistical analysis of illegal border crossings and the better understanding of their related trends. This method may not only be relevant to the period that I examined, but also to future analyses, contributing to the improvement of the border control system. If the objectives are accomplished with the help of a formula, one can identify the points that require intervention, which facilitates the development of the border control system in the medium term or in the long run.

O3: I summarize the research data received from the police – concerning particularly the conditions of actions violating the regulations of migration and focusing especially on the numbers of illegal border crossing and human smuggling – and I compare them to the absolute value numbers of apprehensions of Austria, Slovakia and Slovenia, with the aim of determining the efficiency of the border control system of Hungary. In addition to presenting my findings, I also aim to draw attention to possible necessary interventions and solutions.

O4: I also examine how law enforcement authorities have handled illegal migration and what impacts migration has had from the point of view of the police. From this aspect, I aim to seek answer to direct and indirect questions which affect the position and role of border police agencies in the fight against illegal migration. I present an elaboration of the handling and the experiences of illegal migration on the Serbian-Hungarian border in the examined period, as

well as its specific characteristics. I analyse the illegal migratory pressure on the Serbian border in the examined period (risk analysis).

O5: In addition, it is also an objective to explore new opportunities for international cooperation, based on the experiences of the law enforcement forces operating on the Serbian-Hungarian border and on the Greek-North Macedonian border. After summarizing the historical experience, I wish to give an account of the possibilities for improving efficiency.

I wish to emphasize that a deep analysis of issues related to asylum seekers and asylum rights is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Therefore, I only make general remarks on the directions of the development of alien policing authorities, for example the practical implementation of alien policing procedures within the framework of the police.

Finally, it is not an objective of my dissertation to recommend ideas for the improvement of the police or for structural improvement. Instead, I aim to create a scientific core that is based on quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis and on a quantitative impact assessment. With this, I aim to support the elaboration of interventions that have become necessary, as well as the decision-making related to the planning or modification of border police activities.

RESEARCH METHODS

My research method is mainly descriptive-analytical and is based on a secondary analysis of available Hungarian and foreign literature and on a critical assessment of relevant legislation. When selecting my sources, I tended to reference authors whose works I already knew during my studies. In addition, I examined police reports and professional conference presentations' material. During such presentations I made notes for a more accurate further review and data processing. I often discussed and analysed conference presentations with my colleagues.

In the framework of my primary research, I made interviews with experts in migration, who work in the fields of law enforcement or criminal police and have direct experiences regarding my topic. In the course of my research, I conducted surveys related to the topic of my dissertation, which were filled out by my colleagues whom I had chosen carefully, considering that they were relevant from the point of view of my hypotheses and research questions. During the empirical research, my professional dedication greatly contributed to the fact that I had the opportunity to conduct field research as a participating observer on several occasions, both in Hungary and abroad. I must add that while writing my dissertation, I gained personal

experiences and expanded my fundamental knowledge of the topic which I could build into my dissertation in the course of the research.

In order to carry out my research tasks successfully, it was necessary to query statistical data for the examined period from Hungarian and foreign databases of illegal migration. A comparative analysis of the data originating from various databases made it possible to make thorough assessments, based on which I drew well-grounded conclusions.

Figure 1: The connections between the objectives, hypotheses and methods of the research (author's own work)

Objectives	Hypotheses	Methods
O1: Use police databases for the analysis of illegal migration trends	**H1:** From 2016, the data of illegal migration may not be trusted, because the number of people committing illegal border crossing does not equal to the number of people that the authorities checked. **H2:** On the Serbian border, since September 2015, irregular migrants have taken more aid from human smugglers.	- Literature review - Methodological application - Data collection - Data comparison
O2: Elaborate a new calculation method for the data of illegal border crossings, closer to reality	**H1:** From 2016, the data of illegal migration may not be trusted, because the number of people committing illegal border crossing does not equal to the number of people that the authorities checked.	- Literature review - Creation of a formula - Statistical analysis
O3: Compare the effectiveness of Hungary's border control system with the data of Austria, Slovakia, and Slovenia	**H2:** On the Serbian border, since September 2015, irregular migrants have taken more aid from human smugglers. **H3:** Before 2015, the police were not prepared for massive illegal immigration, their actions were characterized by improvisations. **H4:** After the government introduced new measures, the police's ability to respond gradually increased and police contingents have participated in international activities since 2016.	- Literature review - Data collection and analysis - International comparison - Analysis of criminal organisations - Examination of police activities
O4: Analyse the law enforcement handling of illegal migration on the Serbian-Hungarian border	**H2:** On the Serbian border, since September 2015, irregular migrants have taken more aid from human smugglers. **H3:** Before 2015, the police were not prepared for massive illegal immigration, their actions were characterized by improvisations. **H4:** After the government introduced new measures, the police's ability to respond gradually increased and police contingents have participated in international activities since 2016.	- Literature review - Data collection and analysis - International comparison - Examination of criminal organisations - Evaluation of police activities
O5: Explore new opportunities for international cooperation	**H4:** After the government introduced new measures, the police's ability to respond gradually increased and police contingents have participated in international activities since 2016.	- Literature review - Data collection - Summarization of experiences - Comparison of countries

Figure 1 shows the main objectives of my research and their related hypotheses and the methods I used for their examination. This structure clearly demonstrates how the three main questions of my research are connected to the objectives and what methodological approaches I used to find the answers. The objectives and the hypotheses helped determine the focal points of the research, and the description of the methods ensured that the results are scientifically grounded and that the conclusions are relevant.

STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION, CONCISE DESCRIPTION OF THE CHAPTERS

The dissertation is made up of seven major units. The first chapter serves as introduction. The second one contains the theoretical foundations, i.e. the conceptual and theoretical bases of the topic, the definition of migration, an analysis of its types and its main forms. I also discuss Ravenstein's classical migration theory and examine the security risks posed by illegal migration.

The third chapter is dedicated to the reasons and the background of massive illegal migration. Based on the statistics of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), I examine the data of illegal migration in the European Union and present the routes of illegal migration – those relevant from the point of view of the member states, namely the Western, the Central and the Eastern Mediterranean routes. At the end of the chapter, I consider the causes and trends and summarize the – current – causes of the shrinking of massive illegal migration.

In the fourth chapter of the dissertation, I discuss the questions of how the phenomenon of illegal migration appeared and developed in Hungary between 2008 and 2023, comparing its numbers to the absolute value numbers of the cases Austrian, Slovakian, and Slovenian apprehensions of the same period. Through a comparative analysis, I demonstrate the trends using the statistical data of the border police. With a statistical analysis, I also evaluate the trends. In the second half of the chapter, I analyse how the place and role of the police changed in the fight against illegal migration following Hungary's accession to the Schengen Area.

The most prominent chapters of the dissertation are the fifth and the sixth one, in which I present the trends of illegal migration before and after the southern border was closed. During that work, I employ the method of data analysis in which I use data licensed to me by the Border Police Division of the Law Enforcement Directorate of the National Police Headquarters, as well as the risk analysis – "migration situation pictures" – of the police headquarters of two

counties, Bács-Kiskun and Csongrád-Csanád. To better understand the trends, I also use interviews that I made with people serving at relevant police headquarters, including police leaders, thereby complementing the analysis with the main findings of interviews and presenting how events related to illegal migration are understood from the perspective of the people serving on the "front".

In the sixth chapter, I summarise relevant measures of the police and the government, with emphasis on the construction of the southern physical border barrier, and then in a separate subchapter I discuss how the border control system was upgraded. With a political and legal analysis, I examine the regulations of the Criminal Code regarding illegal migration, including especially the felony of human smuggling and its amended regulation. I also mention other relevant regulations as well and briefly discuss how the rules of criminal procedure have been amended regarding felonies related to the border barrier.

The last, seventh chapter of the dissertation contains my conclusions, summaries, and the presentation of my novel scientific results, which I give using the methods of synthesis and conclusion drawing.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

I have examined the concepts related to the phenomenon of migration, and based on my conclusions drawn from the analysis of their contents, I have found that migration is a comprehensive phenomenon having various types. The actions which are connected with the types can have various legal or illegal consequences. Illegal migration is related to international organized crime from several aspects; thus, it is important to note that cooperation between the border police branch, the alien policing branch and the criminal police branch is indispensable for handling illegal migration. I have found the cause-and-effect connections that influenced the changes in Hungary's illegal migration trends at the Serbian-Hungarian state border between 2008 and 2023, and I have specifically determined the effects that influenced the changes as pull and push factors. My findings are supported by Frontex's statistical data. The interconnectedness of the routes is unquestionable. The intensity of the illegal migration into Europe is primarily determined by the social, economic, political, internal and external power, security, and public health situation of the countries triggering migration, as well as the livelihood opportunities of the people living there. Due to Hungary's geographical location and infrastructural characteristics, the Western Balkan illegal migration route crossing the Serbian-Hungarian state border is the most active route. I gathered and systematized data concerning

that route, and based on the analysis and assessment of the data, I have proved and illustrated with graphic diagrams that one of the important transit points of the Western Balkan route is Hungary, more exactly the territories belonging to the competence of the Border Police Office of Szeged and that of Kelebia. I have proved that the abolition of border controls on internal borders facilitated the work of human smuggling networks. After gathering, systematizing, analysing, and assessing the relevant data based on new aspects, I came to the conclusion that after the integration of the border guard and the police, the "new" police has not proved to be efficient in the in-depth control of both primary and secondary illegal migration movements. The main cause of this are the losses related to integration, especially the significant loss of qualified human resources. Based on the analysis of data of illegal migration, I have found that there were significant changes in the composition of citizenship and ethnicity of people having committed illegal border crossing. In particular, the number of Kosovars increased considerably starting from the second quarter of 2013. This change was not primarily caused by the prevailing economic difficulties in their country but by a legal hiatus in Hungary, due to which the institution of detention for alien policing purpose was not applied for half a year, and this was advantageous for the "Kosovar migrants", their number rapidly increased. During the study of this single problem, I could already see that the police had faced enormous challenges regarding illegal migration that were expected to have an impact on the future as well. We did not need to wait long, starting from the second half of 2014 Kosovar citizens have appeared on the Serbian-Hungarian border massively, especially at the end of that year. That situation was an enormous challenge for the authorities, because it became obvious that the existing implementation plans did not work effectively, and the relevant policies to be followed at the organizational and inter-organizational level were not practised in advance. In the beginning, the police did not have clear guidance concerning the most effective steps, thus, they mainly relied on previous experiences, especially on former border guard commanders who gained experience during the Yugoslav War and the Kosovar crisis. The first measures were rather creative, prototype-like, short-term solutions, for example the establishment of interview points and the introduction of identification with armbands. We had significantly more tasks that we were unable to do adequately on a regional scale, because we did not have sufficient human resource and the tools were insufficient too. Because of this, the relocation of tools and human resources became necessary from other counties. Even though we lacked external help, we managed to handle the increased challenges caused by illegal migration. The assessment of the effectiveness of Hungary's border control system also confirmed that such measures of the authorities were necessary, especially in consideration of the low number of apprehensions in

Austria. As it turned out later, this was the "main test" of large-scale illegal migration, when the people intending to cross the border appeared in large numbers in a small place. In the years 2013-2014, no one thought about what was to come in 2015. The change began, the only question was its extent, speed and direction. By the end of the first quarter of 2015, the numbers of Syrian, Iraqi and Afghan citizens significantly increased. The deterioration of the situation was caused by multiple factors, including the expansion of the Islamic State. In order to handle large-scale illegal migration – contrarily to the concepts of the European Union – we erected a Temporary Security Border Barrier (TSBB, in Hungarian: IBH) on the Serbian-Hungarian and then also on the Croatian-Hungarian border sections, for the purposes of curbing and preventing the wave of illegal migration. The idea that the TSBB would be sufficient for that purpose did not prove successful, the barrier was unable to curb the migratory pressure and handle the situation. It should have been anticipated during the construction of the TSBB that the "fence" itself would need protection too, for which, however, the optimal amount of human resource should have been ensured – a condition that was met only months later. We eventually realized, although it took some time, that the police alone, without help, would not be able to tackle its tasks. After the government introduced new administrative measures, the police's ability to respond, supplemented by supporting forces, gradually strengthened. It is evident that the innovation brought about results. In addition to the above, another element of the innovation was the strengthening of the foreign service line. A result of the cooperation was a decrease in the Western Balkan illegal migration. Having taken part in the common work personally, I drew the conclusion that although speaking different mother language and being located far from each other geographically, people in the same field can work with one accord with humility, perseverance and the right work ethics.

In order to realistically see the changes of the number of irregular migrants affecting our country after 2015 – because at that time the reliability of the data was already questionable – I considered it necessary to create a new calculation method – after systematizing the classification categories related to illegal border crossing. If we want to know the number of people intending to cross the state border illegally, it is not advisable to take into account only the number of police actions because of the multiple attempts of entry, as those significantly increase the value of the data. Perhaps this explains the increase on the Western Balkan route that does not correspond to the reality, because the new calculations cause notable distortions. Therefore, the analyses made by Frontex may be inaccurate still today.

I have showed that human smugglers are excellent at handling new situations. Overcoming the challenges of the time, they have always been capable of renewing themselves regarding the

methods of committing crimes, thereby giving the police quite a task. For example, they already realized in the initial stages of the massive illegal migration that the primary purpose of their "work" was not to help people cross the border, but instead to "show their knowledge" in the depths of the target country. In the framework of my research, I also distinguished radical changes in the methods of perpetration. I have found that there are two constant things, namely that irregular migrants do everything to cross the state border and reach the target country, even by adapting to the changes of external factors, and that human smugglers do everything to "help" migrants accomplish their objectives, in return for appropriate remuneration. Their "alliance" is characterized by rapid reaction to changes and having good situational awareness. In the examined period, nearly 90 percent of the illegal migratory pressure affecting Hungary concentrated on Bács-Kiskun and Csongrád-Csanád Counties. It is clear that the two counties were very popular in the examined period from the point of view of illegal migration. We also know that irregular migrants are committed and do not skimp when it comes to their arsenal of tools. Their commitment can be demonstrated with a very simple example. It happened that those who were stopped in the territory of Csongrád-Csanád County, or were led back through the "gate" in case of entry, the next time they attempted to enter Bács-Kiskun County, and if they were unsuccessful, they tried to cross the state border again in Csongrád-Csanád County. Why these two counties? Why the Serbian-Hungarian border? The answer is very simple: business. The "fence" was not an obstacle in the eyes of human smugglers, it was the opposite. It was an opportunity to convince irregular migrants that that was the border section where they should go through. There, and not on the Romanian border, where it would be easier to pass due to the lack of the "fence"; but on the Serbian border there was a visible "obstacle" to refer to, the "fence", a reason for setting a higher price. Business is business. The situation caused by the construction of the Temporary Security Border Barrier was new for everyone, for both "perpetrators" and "captors".

Concerning the subject period of the research, I considered it important to obtain information about the effectiveness of Hungary's border control system by comparing the border control data with Austrian, Slovakian and Slovenian data. As a result of the comparison, I found that the effectiveness of the border control system manifested a changeable tendency year by year. In 2014 and 2015, it was relatively effective, but the illegal migratory pressure often overcame the capacity of Hungary's border control system, and the authorities' measures were not always effective enough. There were major changes particularly in 2023, when the number of apprehensions was smaller in proportion compared to 2022, but at the same time, the number of irregular migrants who managed to get through the country increased by a record number;

thus, that year was rather unsuccessful concerning the performance of the border control system. The decrease in the effectiveness of the authorities' measures is explained by a combined effect of several factors. Human smuggling organisations continuously adapted to the authorities' measures, quickly responded to their changes and started to use new methods that were difficult to detect, for example new illegal migratory routes and more advance technologies, like smartphones. The latter led to the use of a new definition, namely Internet-supported illegal migration that I discussed in the dissertation in detail and verified by scientific methods. In addition, the border control system often lacked adequate and sufficient technical and human resources to handle the constantly increasing illegal migratory pressure that posed considerable challenges to the police. In my opinion, our country learned a lot from what happened, but I can only hope that in the future we will be able to adequately utilize the conclusions drawn from the lessons in the development of the border control system or the illegal migration policy.

Migration is as old as mankind, its be a real objective to stop it, because I consider it impossible to get everyone to "stay" at their place. The objective is to significantly reduce large-scale, massive migration, because they pose several complex security challenges, especially in today's geopolitical context. I believe that we will be able to efficiently tackle illegal migration in the long run with a well-thought-out strategy and with the necessary amount of police forces provided and by using broadscale integrated systems, such as the Integrated Border Management (IBM) and the Schengen Aquis System (SAS), like it happened in the autumn of 2023 when Serbian police authorities performed precision and concerted measures that led to a decrease in illegal migration on the Serbian-Hungarian border and to the elimination of the logistical centres of human smugglers. I have found that those two systems do not need further development, instead, the effective application of the already existing systems, the integration of technical novelties and the adequate balance of human resources will be crucial to success. Even the most modern technology is not a guarantee to success if there is not an adequate amount of qualified personnel who can handle it. For example, intelligent border control systems, like the Temporary Security Border Barrier can operate successfully if sufficient human resources and expertise are available to maintain them and handle any alarms.

The European Union's upcoming decision to end land border control of Romania and Bulgaria to the west may start new trends in illegal migration flows, which may directly affect Hungary's border areas as well. The expected changes may indicate that, while cross-border movements may decrease, the number of transport attempts of large "illegal groups" in deep areas, especially along highways, may increase, bringing about new types of security challenges. The

Hungarian authorities must not only find solutions to current problems, but also must anticipate future challenges. It is essential for the border security management to elaborate a comprehensive strategy to address the shortcomings of the border control system. Such a strategy would ensure the continuous availability of the necessary resources and skilled personnel, even if the number of illegal border crossings remains permanently low, thereby preparing for future changes. The analyses in the thesis highlight that a political decision, an effective law enforcement measure, and the influence of the media can all play a significant role in the development of illegal migration trends. In the light of future political changes and the possible "loosening" of border control, Hungary must prepare to effectively manage the increasing pressure, thereby preserving not only its own regional security, but also the stability of the European Union.

NOVEL SCIENTIFIC RESULTS

Besides the five questions of my research, I also stated four hypotheses, and in order to verify or reject them I conducted tests within the framework of my dissertation. Based on the examination of my hypotheses, summaries and conclusions, I have reached the following novel scientific results:

1. During my research, by collecting relevant border police statistical data and by using quantitative and impact assessment as well as qualitative research methods, I delineated and proved the changes in illegal migration affecting Bács-Kiskun County and Csanád-Csongrád County along the Serbian-Hungarian border in the period from 2008 to 2023 and also detected the cause-effect connections between the changes.

2. During the research, considering the time segmentation of the changes in the law enforcement situation, I was the first to comprehensively process and present the trends of illegal migration, the border policing methods as well as the direct connections, interactions, and consequences of the changes in domestic legislation related to illegal migration.

3. As a result of processing the data obtained from the police's own illegal migration databases and specialized system, I systematized the authority measures related to "illegal border crossing" and created a new model.

4. To correct the data of registered illegal border crossings, I created a new calculation method that shows the more accurate – and closer to reality – number of irregular migrants who have been subjects of police actions. The "new" calculation of illegal border crossing is

named as "discovered unlawful border crossings". The more realistic data were compared – through figures – in order to show the differences.

5. I have proved that human smugglers are capable of flexibly adapting and of varying their methods in relation to the development and transformation of the border control system and to the modifications of the legislation. Even so, the police countered them effectively from time to time, responding to the new human smuggling methods with technological upgrades, the amendment of legal regulations and/or the correction of its system of activities.

6. During the research, I determined, described and confirmed the concept of "Internet-supported illegal migration" using scientific methods. I placed the new definition in the complex system of the various forms and methods of human smuggling, and also defined its characteristics.

7. Based on the comparative analysis and assessment of the illegal migration trends of Austria, Hungary, Slovakia, and Slovenia between 2008 and 2023, I have proved that the authorities' measures regarding irregular migrants in Hungary can be considered effective only in certain periods. My analyses have confirmed that the border control system of Hungary was the most effective in 2014 and 2015.

8. Based on the analysis and assessment of the activities of Hungarian police contingents on the Greek-North Macedonian state border, I have shown that the Hungarian contingents accomplished positive results particularly in 2018 in the framework of joint operations with the relevant multi-national border police agencies when countering irregular migrants arriving on the Western Balkans illegal migration route. The effectiveness of the joint border control operation manifested in the decreasing number of irregular migrants reaching the Serbian-Hungarian state border.

RECOMMENDATIONS

I recommend my dissertation to my colleagues for expanding their professional knowledge and developing the practice of their actions, so that they can determine the factors that lead to the processes they face on duty. It is also important to know what events influenced the formation of illegal migration routes, as by knowing our history, looking back to the past, and properly learning the lessons, we can create a better, more positive vision of the future.

In addition to analysing the relevant literature of the topic, I made interviews with police chiefs and professionals, and considered the risk analyses and situation reports compiled by the

local county police headquarters as the basis of the investigation. The novelty of the research is greatly enhanced by the unique interviews with the professionals serving in the "line of fire". The information (individual stories) provided by the interviewees speaking at places serving as subject locations of the research contain details that were not accessible during source gathering; therefore, they offer opportunity for further research.

In my opinion, it is necessary to extend the research work that I initiated to the succeeding years. It would be useful to compare the statistics and analyses pertaining to those years with the data of the partner organizations in North Macedonia and others in the Balkans, because we can expect another increase in the illegal migration pressure after this short period that can be considered quiet from the point of view of illegal migration.

The results of my dissertation can contribute to the standardization of the practice that has been developed during the application of the police's database of illegal migration specialist system.

The "divisor" 4 in the calculation method I created enables specifications on the basis of practical experience and novel scientific results, if the repetition rates of nationality or age, for example, are known. With such information, the statistical system of the border police could be made more accurate.

In the framework of a new study, it is recommended to examine in detail the accuracy of the illegal migration data provided by the Western Balkan countries, like I did in the case of the data of Hungary. While analysing such data, deviations caused by distortions and different calculation methods should be taken into account in order to get a more realistic picture of the authenticity of the statistics published by Frontex. This is particularly important because, based on the data for the period between 2020 and 2023, Hungary's apprehension numbers were higher than in the entire Western Balkan region, which presumably indicates a distortion of the data. Due to the distortions, the real extent of the increase noticed on the Western Balkan route can only be estimated, thus, in order to determine the real numbers more precisely, it would be necessary to re-evaluate the data with a critical eye.

In my opinion, it is important to strengthen the security of state borders, especially the Austrian-Hungarian border, to find, apprehend and eliminate the irregular migrants entering Hungary unlawfully, and to increase – and effectively perform – the controls (measures) related to public order and public security, based on new tactics and methodology. Therefore, I recommend that the professional and academic management invite applications for research on these topics.

In order to effectively accomplish our tasks in the future, i.e. to effectively handle illegal migration and the activities of human smugglers, it is necessary to greatly upgrade the technical devices used by the police. Our world is changing rapidly, artificial intelligence is being used more and more widely – and it is only a matter of time when human smugglers start to use it too. I think it is crucial that we take control over and be the "first" to introduce and integrate the most modern developments into our work which could be milestones in terms of reconnaissance and risk analysis.

Based on my experiences in North Macedonia, for the sake of more efficient cooperation in the future, I recommend that strategy meetings with colleagues from neighbouring countries be introduced and held multiple times a year, which would provide opportunity for discussing experiences for people working directly on the "front".

In conclusion, supplementing Zoltán Szenes' thoughts on the international possibilities of handling emergencies,[1] I wish to emphasize – with regard to the possibilities of developing efficiency – the importance of studying and processing of international experiences as widely as possible, as well as of their incorporation into the Hungarian practice of border law enforcement and administration. As we geographically border the Balkans and most threats (organized crime, illegal migration, terrorism, health risks, illegal employment) come from that area, that region, special attention must be paid to it. On the occasion of further accession to the Schengen Area – for example in the case of Romania and Bulgaria – the reorganization of the police has to be performed very carefully to avoid the trap into which we fall after the expansion of 2008, when there was a shortage of professionals, and human smugglers and irregular migrants thus had easier job.

PRACTICAL USABILITY OF THE SCIENTIFIC RESULTS

The unique database that I created with my research and the new scientific results accomplished with quantitative impact assessments can significantly contribute to a more efficient coordination and development of the activities of the border police service branch. My findings can be utilized in the specialization of the bachelor's degree level border police training, as well as in the master's degree level police leader training, thereby improving the preparedness and strategic thinking of future professionals.

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[1] SZENES Zoltán (2006): *A veszélyhelyzetek kezelésének nemzetközi lehetőségei.* In: Pécsi Határőr Tudományos Közlemények, Vol. VI. pp. 34. Available at http://www.pecshor.hu/periodika/2006/VI/szenes.pdf (seen on 2 September 2023).

I hope that my dissertation can be used not only as a supporting material in trainings, but also during the ordinary operation of border police organs, since my findings, the data and trends that I identified, can directly contribute to the development of the border security strategy. The analytical methods that I elaborated and the results of my research can be a good starting point of further research and can be used for the better understanding of new illegal migratory dynamics and the development of human smuggling networks.

In addition, the methods that I elaborated during the analyses and research can also be used at the international level to increase the efficiency of border management, especially in the development of practices aimed at dealing with illegal migration, and in the framework of international law enforcement cooperation, for example, in the optimization of joint measures related to Frontex operations.

LIST OF AUTHOR'S PUBLICATIONS AND CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS ON THE TOPIC

Articles in scientific journals (published in Hungary):

1) *Helyzetkép a déli határszakaszon bekövetkezett tömeges migráció rendészeti kezeléséről*. In: Magyar Rendészet, Year 17 (2017), no. 5. pp. 39-50.

2) *Közép- és Közel-Kelet illegális migrációs elemzése, értékelése*. In: Magyar Rendészet, Year 18 (2018), no. 1. pp. 169-177.

3) *Az információkezelés szerepe az államhatárhoz kapcsolódó bűncselekmények megelőzésében, felderítésében, együttműködés a rendvédelmi és bűnügyi szakterületekkel*. In: Belügyi Szemle, Year 65 (2017), no. 6. pp. 84-93.

Publications available on the Internet (in Hungarian):

4) *A hazánkat érintő illegális migráció és az embercsempészés nyomozása*. In: Hadtudományi Szemle, Year 10 (2017), no. 4. pp. 533-549.

5) *A migrációval összefüggő rendészeti feladatok végrehajtásának aktuális helyzete Magyarország déli határszakaszán*. In: Határrendészeti Tanulmányok, Year 2018, no. 2. pp. 135-158.

6) *Magyarország a tömeges méretű illegális migráció időszakában és a fizikai határzár létesítése*. In: Rendőrségi Tanulmányok, Year 5 (2022), no. 2. pp. 80-103.

7) *A Magyarországra irányuló illegális migráció trendjei 2008–2023 között*. In: Magyar Rendészet, Year 24 (2024), no. 2. pp. 17-36.

Publications available on the Internet (in English language):

8) *The Border Guard, as an investigating authority – from a criminal point of view*. In: Határrendészeti Tanulmányok, 2014/2. pp. 59-85.

9) *Human Smuggling Today from the Point of View of Criminal Law*. In: Határrendészeti Tanulmányok, 2018/2. pp. 159-173.

Presentations at academic conferences:

10) *A migrációval összefüggő rendészeti feladatok végrehajtásának aktuális helyzete Magyarország déli határszakaszán.*
Conference title: Hadtudomány és a XXI. század.
Venue, date: National University of Public Service, Faculty of Military Science and Officer Training. 21 February 2018.

11) *A magyar-macedón közös határrendészeti művelet végrehajtásának tapasztalatai.*
International, scientific conference, entitled: A XXI. század biztonsági kihívásai.
Venue, date: University of Pécs, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Education and Regional Development. 28 June 2018.

12) *Magyarország illegális migrációs trendjei a szerb-magyar államhatáron 2008–2019 között.*
Venue, date: National University of Public Service, Faculty of Law Enforcement. 31 May 2023.

PROFESSIONAL CV

Higher education (majors and qualifications)

2009 – Bachelor's degree at Police College, major: Law Enforcement Administration, qualification: Law Enforcement Administrator (Specialization in Border Policing).

2014 – Master's degree at the National University of Public Service, major: Law Enforcement Manager, qualification: Law Enforcement Manager.

2024 – Pre-degree certificate in PhD program at the National University of Public Service, Doctoral School of Military Science.

Language examinations

2009 – State accredited language examination certificate of English language, intermediate level, combined type.

2024 – State accredited language examination certificate of German language, elementary level, combined type.

Other trainings

In-service trainings and professional courses completed in compliance with the Act on the Services of Armed Forces.

Promotions

Police ensign – 1 July 2009.

Police second lieutenant – 1 May 2010.

Police first lieutenant – 1 May 2013.

Police captain – 1 July 2015.

Police major – 1 July 2021.

Awards and recognition

Békés County Police Headquarters Chief's recognition, 24 April 2017.

Service Medal, 1 July 2019.

Award for 15 years of service at an organ of the Ministry of Interior, 1 July 2024.

Participation in professional organizations (experiences in the fields of criminal police and law enforcement)

Having completed my college studies, I served as an investigator at the Investigation Department of the Police Headquarters of Makó, from 1 July 2009 until 31 August 2014. I actively participated in the prevention, detection and preparation for indictment of criminal offences that crossed the state border or were related to it directly – particularly cases of illegal migration. From 1 September 2014 until 30 June 2021, I worked as deputy division head at the Border Police Division of the Border Police Office of Gyula, where my main task was to organise and manage border traffic control and border guarding. Currently I serve my country as deputy chief of the Border Police Office of Biharugra, where my duties are, among others,

the organization, management, and control of the protection of the "green border" and the management of the Border Police Division.

Short studies abroad

Since 2009, in Romania, Serbia, and North Macedonia, on 8 occasions in total.

Experiences in foreign missions

As contingent deputy chief of the 23rd North Macedonian contingent.
Mission place and time: North Macedonia, Gevgelija, 7 March – 6 April 2018.

As contingent chief of the 44th North Macedonian contingent.
Mission place and time: North Macedonia, Star Dojran, 13 Nov – 13 Dec 2019.

My tasks were to support the border police of the Republic of North Macedonia in the prevention and countering of illegal migration, and to organize and supervise border police actions during the meetings of police chiefs.

Teaching in professional organizations

From 2014, I held numerous lectures and made professional material for my own subordinates on the subjects of border guarding and border traffic control.
From 2018 to 2020, as a professional lecturer, I taught border law enforcement to non-commissioned police officers having guard/patrol qualification.
From 2022 to 2024, I worked as a professional lecturer in the training of contracted border police officers.
In 2024, I taught in trainings organised for compliance with FRONTEX Common Core Curriculum (CCC) requirements.