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**Hungary's fire protection situation as a member of the EU, taking into account
public administration reform and the fire protection training situation**

doctorate (PhD) dissertation
outline by the author

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I. Summary and goals of the research task

Fire protection was confronted with considerable changes in Hungary after the change of regime. As from the beginning of the 90-ies, the Ministry of the Interior has opened towards the municipality concept that means that the state hoped to make fire protection more efficient in Hungary by introducing the act on fire protection, by creating voluntary fire brigades operating as public bodies, and by transferring professional fire-brigades to the municipalities. However, the past 15 years did not entirely live up to the expectations raised in connection with the fire protection reform. The duties of the fire service considerably increased, but the development, the number and availability of its tools could not keep up with the increased requirements. Having lived through the changes so far as an active fireman and then as an instructor, I am curious to know how Hungarian fire protection will manage to meet the challenges of the new millenium.

Definition of the issue

During the collection and systematisation of materials for this paper it has become obvious to me that every item mentioned in the title deserves a separate dissertation. After much struggle I found that I can choose from among two options: I either pick out some areas, which are important and current according to my opinion, and I try to elaborate them according to my best knowledge, or I try to introduce every part area without aiming at completeness. I chose the first option. I thought that I should write on what I can support not only by trade literature research, but also by professional work experience gained during the past 20 years.

Therefore, the **main goals of my research included:**

- to study the situation, role and duties of fire protection,
- to explore the organisational and management system of fire protection with regard to the role and expected development trends of the professional municipal fire service and voluntary fire service,
- to make proposals for the transformation of the regional, local level professional organisation and system of fire protection,
- to compare contemporary Hungarian fire fighter education with the education system in Austria and Slovakia, and to make proposals for eventual modernisations,
- to examine the impact of public administration regions on fire protection.

Methods applied during the research:

During the research I made efforts to work up and systematize related trade literature, legal provisions and other documents, to analysis scientific publications related to the issue, and to examine the cooperation possibilities of borderland fire brigades. I tried to show to existing problems and to elaborate novel and individual solutions for these problems.

My research was based on study tours made in the examined and other EU countries, the experience of which I have worked up and published.

I also used articles and studies published in written and electronic form and the materials of domestic and foreign conferences, conference lectures. I conducted consultations with the representatives of this issue in Hungary and in the examined countries. I have gained

theoretical and practical experience during domestic and international exercises, which I used in my paper.

II. Short description of the research conducted and the findings

In the first chapter of my dissertation I reviewed the development of fire protection in Hungary till today, the types and the duties of the fire service. In connection with the operation of the fire service I established that the number of brigades responsible for Hungary's fire protection was insufficient. The call-out time of the fire-fighting vehicles is 25 minutes in the average in case of fire. In the EU, the average call-out time is 12-15 minutes in the average, and this is what fire service in Hungary should also achieve. A reason of the striking difference is also that the number of fire-brigades able to fight fire decreased to 1/5 in the past 50 years; currently totally 142 fire-brigades protect Hungary's 3090 communities, most of whom are professional municipal fire-fighters.

Since the change of the regime either the state, or the municipalities could achieve a positive change in this area, since protection against fire was made compulsory only for municipalities having a professional fire service.

In the second chapter I examined fire protection in Austria, the actors in fire protection, which is basically built on volunteering, and the training system. The Austrian system basically differs from our system, since contrary to Hungary in Austria only the six large cities employ paid fire fighters. According to the Austrian constitution the municipalities of the communities are obliged to provide for fire protection in their administrative areas and to operate a fire service. In most communities this is voluntary fire service. It leads one to stop and reflect that the number of voluntary fire fighters in the smallest Austrian province equals with the number of professional fire fighters in Hungary.

Unlike in Hungary, no separate organisation has been established for the elimination of the eventual disasters in Austria, but this duty was added to the responsibilities of the fire service. In the interest of the best possible preparation of the voluntary and professional fire fighters fire-fighter schools are operated in every province. Following a basic training, which is compulsory for everybody, the fire fighters are prepared according to the positions. The Austrian training is more efficient, practical and cost-efficient than the Hungarian, because it takes the employees away from their work for a shorter period only.

In the third chapter of my dissertation I examined fire protection and fire service in the Slovakian Republic, since after 1945, fire protection in our Northern neighbour underwent the same changes like in Hungary. Fire protection in Slovakia underwent reorganisation after the splitting of the Czech Republic. The work of the new fire protection organisation is managed by the Fire-Fighting and Rescue Board. The state of Slovakia employs professional fire fighters. They all attend a basic level fire-fighter training course, where they learn the basics of the profession.

Following successful completion, they become prepared for fire-fighting and technical rescue under the leadership of a commander. The organisation of firemen working in the 24/48 hour service is hampered by the situation of the limited numbers, which the state endeavours to resolve by administrative means rather than by increasing the workforce.

The voluntary fire service of the Slovakian Republic has 98.000 members for the time being. The duties of the volunteers include community fire protection and fire prevention duties and to co-operate with the state-level organisations of fire protection, with the professional fire-fighters. The Slovakian Voluntary Fire Service provides training to its members in its own training institutions. New supplies are ensured by the training of young fire fighters.

It should be mentioned that in Slovakia no separate organisation has been set up for emergency, but this activity is classified among the primary interventional fields of the fire service.

In the fourth chapter I set out the development possibilities of fire protection in Hungary. I have found that all of the fire brigades in operation cannot ensure swift arrival for all towns and villages. In my view, there is a good chance of putting out the vast majority of fires with little damages caused in the first 5 minutes of the development of the fire. This is why it is necessary to expand and develop the fire service. In the first stage, it is practical to set the 15-minute callout time as a target.

It would be possible to provide fire protection for those settlements that cannot be reached within the target period by establishing and operating satellite stations and by creating public voluntary fire brigades, by strengthening voluntary fire-fighting associations, the impact of which could considerably be increased by extending the fire-fighting liability to every community. I think that also joint rescue-fire-fighting stations should be operated, because the common IT and placement system would result in considerable cost saving.

In the interest of the reinforcement of fire protection also the current organisational and management structure should be changed. The civil defence and disaster protection tasks of the state should be performed by disaster protection, while fire protection duties by the fire service as municipal organisations.

During fire-fighting and technical rescue operations, borderland fire brigades should sign cooperation agreements and maintain daily relations in the interest of overborder bilateral assistance.

In the fifth chapter of my dissertation I examined the possible impacts of the expected public administration reform. The European Union is a uniform area, and by adjusting itself to its statistical classification system our country has developed a structure, in the frame of which between the country and the more than 3,000 public administration unit settlement levels, in addition to the existing county system, a 7 area unit regional level and 150 area sub-regional, non-public administration levels have been established. The majority of state bodies operating at sub-regional level are made up of town and district units with jurisdiction over an area defined by regional or county level public administration. Such units are for example the professional municipal fire brigades. Such units can be the satellite stations proposed by myself.

The change and creation of region-based structures would be necessary also, if the counties remain the frame for the regional municipal system. But if regional municipalities are created instead of county municipalities, so also the regional structure of the decentralised organisational system should be adjusted to this regional municipal spatial structure. The move towards regionalisation is indicated by the fact that, alongside the unchanged upkeep of the county structure, individual county jurisdiction bodies have been allocated tasks whose fulfilment affect several counties. An example of this at fire protection level is the establishment of the Regional Technical Emergency Centres in the current jurisdiction fields of the fire brigades.

In the 6th chapter I examined the education of fire fighters in Hungary. Compared to those experienced in Austria and Slovakia I found that in both countries the stress is laid on fire protection preparation, while preparation related to disaster management takes place in form of continuance training. In fire protection training the stress is put on the practical training of the students (70 %). In Hungary this proportion is 40%.

As a new member, Hungary should adjust itself to the EU norms also in the area of fire protection education. Therefore I propose to separate fire protection, disaster management /civil defence profession and education. Disaster protection training should be built on the fire fighter and civil defence professions in the frame of postgradual training. The basic (organisational) conditions for degree re-training should include the completion of fire service professional training programmes. In addition to a basic training the members of voluntary fire brigades should be prepared for holding given positions. The achievement of these goals requires a practical venue, which is close to the site of the Training Centre. An excellent practical centre could be an abandoned ex-Soviet or Hungarian military base, where EU funds could be used to fulfil the old desire of Hungarian firemen, to have an ideal fire service practice centre.

III. Summary of the scientific results, recommendations

During collecting materials and writing the dissertation I was inspired by the fact that the selected issue is rather important now and in the near future, since fire service as a key public service municipal organisation is the only organisation in Hungary, which is able to move to the location of an event within two minutes from receiving the signal. In order to be able to perform its duties on a level, which complies with the current requirements, the development possibilities of the organisation and the possible alternatives of its economic operation should be reconsidered.

During its existence of more than 130 years the organised Hungarian fire service repeatedly proved its know-how, and this special know-how is more often and more rapidly required. The annually more than 50 thousand alarms suggest that this organisation which is looking back on a long standing tradition, can have a great future, if in addition to technical development also the knowledge of the firemen will grow.

On the basis of the above I reviewed in my dissertation the current situation of fire service in Hungary, its role and duties. I examined the organisational and management system of fire protection in Hungary, and the expected development trends, I made proposal for restructuring the organisation, the system. I examined the impact of the foreseeable public administration regions on fire protection.

I compared the fire-fighter education with the system applied in Austria and Slovakia and made proposal for modernisation.

On the basis of my dissertation please accept as a scientific result that...:

1. I elaborated a management model for fire protection in Hungary, which is based on a national and regional management system with regard to the foreseeable public administration reform.

2. On the basis of my analysis related to borderland fire protection duties I proved that regional cooperation with the examined countries such as Slovakia and Austria should be realised on local level in the area of fire-fighting and technical rescue, which should be extended to signal, alarm, mutual information and real assistance. I proved that fire protection can independently be integrated into international integration processes, and in the frame of international cooperation regional fire protection has a special importance.

3. I have shown the practicality, during the expected reform of public administration, that fire protection administration should be performed in the regions by regional fire service

federations and local fire protection administration by district fire service federations, as in this way setting and fulfilling the requirements for fire protection would become uniform and coherent.

4. I have shown that, using the present training system as a starting point, for the sake of efficiency, it would be practical to change over to separate fire protection civil defence training and to continue disaster protection training with supplementary knowledge.

Recommendations

The so-called competence and municipal act divided the range of the fire protection liabilities in a disadvantageous way, as a result of which the safety of the citizens and their right to safe life conditions cannot equally be enforced. Therefore I propose that following amendment to the law fire protection should be a compulsory public service duty for the municipalities, which could be the basis for the community-centred fire protection in Hungary.

After examining borderland cooperation I found that the cooperation of fire-fighting brigades near the internal borders of the EU is indispensable for ensuring necessary and sufficient fire protection. In the interest of the realisation of the above I propose to revise the existing cooperation agreements, respectively to initiate the signing of such agreements.

My dissertation can represent the basis for several amendments to legal rules, respectively for the elaboration of internal regulations.

My dissertation can represent the basis for the planned staff development of the fire service.

On the basis of those set out in my dissertation I propose to take into consideration my dislocation proposals in the development program of the fire service.

Guidelines requiring further research

By involving legal and business experts I propose to review the current financing system of the fire service with regard to funds for technical development and to tenders, since I found that the current financing system unduly represents too much burden in the area of fire protection for both the state and the municipal side.

Foreseeable practical application of the outcome of the research

If those set out in my dissertation will become reality at least partly, this can involve the following advantages for fire protection in Hungary:

- the extension and financing of the fire protection liability can give a new impulse to the creation and operation of the voluntary public fire brigade
- the foreseeable public administration reform can have an impact on the professional management and more efficient operation of the fire service.

- with the long term technical development of the fire service the efficiency of protection against fire and the safety of the citizens will grow.
- the overborder fire protection cooperation can give an impulse to Hungary's integration in the European Union.

IV. List of my publications relating to the topic of the dissertation

1. László Komjáthy- Zoltán Grósz: Transportation of dangerous materials on public roads. Új Honvédségi Szemle (New Army Review) 2003. Year LVIII., edition 11
2. László Komjáthy: Kismarton Province Fire-Fighter School. Tűzvédelem (Fire Protection) 2004, Year CXXVII., edition 10.
3. László Komjáthy: Dangerous materials on public roads. Lectures of conference on boring and explosion technology, pages 120-121. Miskolc University, 2004.
4. László Komjáthy: Fire protection in Austria. Tűzvédelem (Fire protection), Year CXXVIII., edition 8., pages 13-15.
5. László Komjáthy: Fire fighter education in Austria. Tűzvédelem (Fire protection), Year CXXVIII., edition 8., pages 12-13.
6. László Komjáthy: Fire protection in Slovakia. Tűzvédelem (Fire protection) Year CXVIII., edition 9., prior to publication.
7. Creative Community-László Komjáthy: Fire fighting and disaster protection knowledge. BM KOK Training Institute Notes, 2003, pages 179-181.
8. László Komjáthy –Zoltán Grósz: Road transportation of dangerous goods. AARMS 4. volume, edition 1., prior to publication.
9. László Komjáthy: Physical conditions for fire service intervention. Tűzvédelem (Fire protection) Year CXXVII., edition 10., pages 12-13.
10. László Komjáthy: Transportation of dangerous materials on public roads. Conference lecture, Miskolc University 2004, pages 117-122
11. Dr Zoltán Grósz-László Komjáthy: Preprava nebezpečných nákladov v Maďarsku. ARPOS 2005, pages 12-13.

V. Professional, scientific autobiography

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| 1985 | I became staff fireman at the Encs Fire Service Command. |
| 1989-97 | As Technical, material financial lecturer I acted as economic manager of the unit. |
| 1995 | I completed an Economic engineering course at the Agricultural College Department of Gödöllő University of Agricultural Sciences. I was promoted to lieutenant after completing my degree course. |
| 1996 | I completed the BM TOP TKI fire officer retraining course, which provides advanced fire protection training. |
| 1997 | I was employed as key head teacher at the Fire Service and Rescue Group of the BM TOP Fire Protection Training Institute. |
| 1998 | I passed the medium level, "A" type Slovak language exam. |

- 1999-2002 I continued my studies at the ZMNE VSzTK's Defence Administration department, which I completed with an outstanding result.
- 2000 I successfully passed the advanced, "C" type Slovak language exam, which included specialist military material.
- 2001 I successfully completed the Provost Management Training course at the Police Officers College and I took the course organised by the Further Training and Research Institute and successfully passed the provost exam.
- 2002 I was accepted in to the Zrínyi Miklós National Defence University for a 3-year correspondence doctorate (PhD) course.
- 2003 I successfully passed the medium level, "C" type Russian language exam, which included specialist military material.
- 2004- I teach Fire service technical rescue as an external tutor at the Zrínyi Miklós National Defence University.
- 2004- As an invited lecturer, I also teach at the Fire Protection Department of the Timber Industry department of Zvolen Technical University in the Slovak Republic.

Budapest, 5 September 2005.