

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF PUBLIC SERVICES
Doctoral School of Law Enforcement

Mogyoródi Gergely:

Examining the selection of the police's professional staff

author's review of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) thesis

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1. THE FORMULATION OF THE SCIENTIFIC PROBLEM

Social changes shape the demands placed on law enforcement agencies, to which the police constantly adapt. Adaptation processes have an impact on tasks, which place different demands on staff. Examining the selection systems according to this aspect (searching for relevant data, synthesizing it, analysing it with a system and process perspective), comparing the results is a scientific work, the main task of this dissertation.

To examine the outlined problem area, I used the following guiding questions:

1. What is the organizational structure of the foreign police?
2. What is the number of foreign police?
3. What is the composition of the staff?
4. How and with what methods are they recruited?
5. How is the professional staff selection system structured?
6. What is the selection process?
7. What kind of training is the selection made for?
8. What are the eligibility criteria?
9. What aptitude tests are used?
10. How does the selection system adapt to environmental influences?

During the processing of the publications, I identified two more research areas. One is the examination of the trends of international literature published recently (between 2015 and 2020 on a global level, in foreign journals, in English), and the second is the analysis of social media related to the recruitment of the Hungarian police. Due to their volume compared to the research of foreign practices, I considered these subject areas as supplementary research.

The benchmarks of the international literature indicate how the expectations related to the police and the desirable role perception are changing. During my research, I investigated questions such as:

1. How does the selection of police officers appear in the international literature?
2. What are the areas of emphasis in the past period?
3. What scientific indicators characterize the relevant international literature?
4. How are Hungarian authors, institutions and publications represented in this circle?

The importance of the online space has increased in all areas of life, in which the various social media platforms have a special role. Exploiting these can be an important task from the point of view of recruiting the police and addressing target groups, which has not been dealt within the literature so far. By researching the appearance of the conceptual system of selection on the online interface, I sought answers to the following guiding questions:

1. Does the selection of police officers appear in social media (indirectly in public consciousness)?
2. If so, which aspects?
3. Where, on which surface and to what extent?

2. FORMULATION OF RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

1. *The international literature deals with the selection of police officers in connection with recruitment, aptitude tests, and training, and the majority of publications come from Anglo-Saxon countries (the United States and the United Kingdom).*

My hypothesis was based on the fact that the Hungarian literature can be organized accordingly. Among international publications, the use of the English language is widespread, but I assume that, due to the mother tongue, Anglo-Saxon institutional or author affiliation may be the dominant feature.

2. *The selection of police officers appears in domestic social media in connection with the staffing situation of the police force, and society does not deal with professional subjects, such as aptitude tests or personnel conditions.*

The Hungarian police started using social media recently, so it can be assumed that its role in supply insurance cannot be significant either.

3. *The police forces in the examined countries have specific characteristics (different number of personnel, organizational management mechanisms, position structure, etc.), but their social purpose and main scope of activity are fundamentally the same, therefore it is assumed that the individual selection systems are structured in almost the same way.*

The selection processes operate according to the same schemes, in addition to unique characteristics derived from social needs and organizational culture. In the case of the eligibility conditions, this means physical, mental and fitness tests, the selection process, the training and the probationary period depending on the position to be filled.

4. *In accordance with the external environmental expectations that develop from time to time (e.g. the fulfilment of political goals, manpower requirements, mechanisms affecting the supply of personnel), the system of requirements imposed on the police changes, and in this context, the selection of police officers.*

Presumably due to external environmental influences, the police selection system is changing. Thanks to social processes and the development of technology, the nature of policing and police activity, the image of the policeman is changing, in this process the role of the physical demands is decreasing, the importance of psychological competences is increasing. This phenomenon can also be seen in the various selection processes, where applicants are differentiated primarily on the basis of mental abilities and secondarily on the basis of their physical fitness (performance).

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In accordance with the hypotheses, I set four research goals. These are the following:

1. To search and examine the literature, to organize the knowledge to support researchers or practitioners. As part of this, I analyse the trends and actualities of the literature published in foreign journals in English according to scientometric aspects, and reveal the most important characteristics of the publications;
2. Using the key concepts of the dissertation, I will examine the role played by the selection of domestic police officers in social media, to show how and in what proportion the related questions appeared on various online platforms;
3. I will research the systems for selecting professional members of foreign police forces together with the characteristics of the organization and the personnel, sum them up based on a uniform system of criteria, create a comprehensive system picture of the various practices, and then draw conclusions from their examination;
4. I will explore the staffing difficulties of foreign police forces (for example, recruitment problems, lack of demand for the profession, turnover, etc.), identify the processes that appear in the background, the way the problems are handled and their effects. Using these, I will show that the challenges related to personnel supply are permanent phenomena, they appear from time to time for different reasons and to a different extent, in the complex evaluation of which the study of foreign practices can provide significant help.

4. RESEARCH METHODS

Research and examination of the literature

During the literature research, I collected the relevant printed and electronic publications, from which I prepared a summary. I explored the specialist materials with the help of library and university repositories, as well as the generally known domestic and foreign scientific databases.

Scientometric analysis of the international literature

I used Elsevier's research support services (Scopus, ScienceDirect, SciVal) to analyse the international literature. Among the research support functions of SciVal, I used the overview and the trend analyser. For this purpose, I previously collected the literature in Scopus. I defined the period between 2015 and 2020 as the examined period.

Examining the appearance of the research topic in social media

For domestic social media analysis, I used the Sentione program, which performs automated analyzes based on keyword searches. I defined the glossary using keywords known in academic and professional life. Sentione is able to collect and analyze data going back three years, which is why I set June 1, 2017, and February 29, 2020 as the start date of the examined period.

Research methods for examining international practices (application of questionnaire and interview)

I examined the practices of foreign police forces by recording interviews in English and by distributing questionnaires in English. The structure of the **questionnaire** followed the classic structure (consisting of introductory, substantive, and concluding sections) (Hornycsek, 2014, 94), it included a total of 31 questions, of which 10 were formulated as side questions and 21 as main questions. The secondary questions focused on the organization of the foreign police, the composition of the personnel and the nature of the training. The main questions served to learn about recruitment and selection. I used two platforms to distribute my questions to foreign bodies. One of these was forwarded to similar offices of Europol with the help of the Europol Hungarian Liaison Office a so-called "out-of-mandate request", and the other was carried out with the help of the Cepol Hungarian National Office. In addition, I also sent the questionnaire to the Polish police liaison officer delegated to our country.

The introductory questions of the **structured interview** - following the structure of the questionnaire - focused on the person of the subject (gender, age, nationality, employer), and the additional questions (9) on the structure, personnel and training of the foreign police. The latter also related to the interpretation and contextualization of the information obtained in connection with the selection. The main questions (18), i.e. the third stage, focused on recruitment, the establishment and obstacles of the service relationship, aptitude tests, turnover, and personal experiences. The form of answering was open, however, in order to provide a uniform and appropriate interpretation, as well as to make the interviews easier to process, I helped some questions with examples. I recorded the interviews with foreign police officers.

Analysis of research data

Elsevier and Sentione are also research-supporting IT software capable of machine data collection and data analysis, as well as graphical display of the analyzed data. Accordingly, I carried out the data analysis using the international literature and social media analysis with the help of these programs. I manually synthesized the knowledge from the literature and electronic sources, processed the data obtained with the help of questionnaires and interviews, and illustrated the statistical data. For the analyses, I used structured data grouping (presentation in graphs and tables), in addition, I created illustrative figures that help draw conclusions, simplify data transparency, and improve the quality of processing.

5. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY CARRIED OUT BY CHAPTER

I divided the dissertation into **five chapters**. The **first chapter** organizes findings from the literature on recruitment, selection, and its methods, which I supplemented with my results related to the research of the international literature. The relevant issues are dealt with by a large number of domestic and foreign publications, among which materials concerning the private sector and the public service can be clearly distinguished. The subject's scientific involvement is diverse, but due to the decision-preparatory role of selection, due to the dominance of management science and aptitude tests, medical sciences and psychology are of particular importance. In the international literature dealing with selection, I identified nearly 300 relevant publications, which scientometric characteristics were examined according to uniform criteria. Based on this, I found that the international professional materials dealing with the selection of police officers mostly come from researchers (institutions) of Anglo-Saxon countries, they primarily deal with social science issues, psychology and medical sciences play an important role thanks to aptitude tests. Overall, the international literature dealing with selection is structured similarly to the Hungarian publications, and examines suitability, training and recruitment issues according to social and medical science aspects.

In the **second chapter**, to study the selection system of the Hungarian police, I examined the literature and the relevant legal documents, and I also requested data from the Hungarian Police. With the help of these, I established that the police is not in an easy situation in terms of recruitment, staffing tasks must receive increasing and constant attention. Recruitment is a regulated, multifaceted and complex process. Due to the social challenges of recent years, the number of police officers had to be increased due to political will, therefore, in addition to the transformation of training institutions, new forms of training appeared, powerful recruitment campaigns were conducted addressing different target groups, and recruitment methods were expanded in the online space. The number of employees increased overall, but from the statistics and the analysis of the sources, it can also be seen that this took place in a particularly difficult external environment, in a challenging labour market, in a changing legislative environment, with a decrease in interest in the police profession. In connection with recruitment, with the help of a program using artificial intelligence, I searched for and examined the numerical characteristics of the domestic online space through the use of keywords. In doing so, I found that the police and the police appear in many different contexts on social media, but recruiting, the conditions for becoming a police officer, or eligibility criteria are dealt with to a negligible extent with neutral emotional content.

In the **third chapter** of the thesis, I examined the selection of professional police officers in the Central European countries of the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia, Poland, Austria, Switzerland and Germany with the help of literature findings, electronic sources, as well as questionnaires and interviews used in the international environment. I organized the research data in the same structure. I started the processing by placing it in context, which was essential for the interpretation of the selection processes. Secondly, I summarized the characteristics of recruitment, especially the methods, possible challenges and the application method. This was followed by synthesizing the information gathered on the shape criteria and differentiation. I organized the aptitude tests into a separate subheading, and then finally dealt with the training structures and the question of the probationary period. I used additional subsections for the German and Swiss systems, which was necessary due to the complexity of the systems there.

The **fourth chapter** of the dissertation summarizes the research data on the selection of professional staff members of the island countries (Ireland, the countries of the United Kingdom (England and Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland), Malta, the Republic of Cyprus), which is based on the findings of the literature, electronic sources, and the collected using questionnaires used in an international environment. The structuring of the research data followed the methodology used in the third chapter. I started the process with an introduction to the organization and personnel, and then I wrote down the characteristics of recruitment, especially the methods, possible challenges and how to apply. Then I discussed the application conditions, eligibility criteria and the selection process. Finally, I dealt with aptitude tests, as well as training structures and the issue of probationary periods.

The **fifth chapter** of the thesis serves to summarize the knowledge and my findings from the research. In this section, I organize the partial conclusions formulated at the end of each chapter of the dissertation. In the same place, I refer to the relationship between theoretical knowledge and research data, and in addition, I separately evaluate the support of the statements made in the hypotheses, as well as the realization of the research goals.

6. SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

In order to carry out my research, I set up four hypotheses, in relation to which the following summary conclusions can be made.

Based on the identification and analysis of the **scientometric characteristics** (authors, institutions, citations, countries, fields of study) of the international literature dealing with the selection of police officers, I have shown that the publications mainly from the Anglo-Saxon area deal with the social and natural science aspects of suitability, training and with recruitment questions. My findings confirm my hypothesis, according to which the emphasis areas of the foreign literature on selection are recruitment, aptitude tests and training, and that the publications typically come from Anglo-Saxon countries.

Examining the appearance of the **selection of police officers in domestic social media**, I found that in that environment the conceptual system related to the topic is negligible, while the police staffing issues receive more marked attention. The research data supported my assumption that society does not deal with the professional areas of selecting police officers in the online space. Based on the similar social purpose and main scope of the foreign police forces, I assumed that the individual **selection systems** are structured in an almost identical way. Using scientific methods, I was able to show and prove that the selection of police officers in the examined countries serves the same purpose, the processes are characterized by similar schemes, in addition to organizational characteristics, there are selection criteria, aptitude tests that differentiate applicants, and preparation related to future positions.

Changes in the external environment have an impact on the requirements placed on the police, so I assumed that the selection of police officers should also change in this context. Confirming my hypothesis, I found a decrease in the emphasis on fitness, but an increase in the importance of mental competences, which can be seen in the characteristics of the literature and in the selection practices of the police.

7. NEW SCIENTIFIC FINDINGS

- 1.** I carried out a scientometric analysis of the international literature published in the period between 2015-2020 dealing with the selection of police officers. Through this, I was the first to reveal which scientific fields, researchers and educational institutions dealt with issues closely related to the selection of police officers, and to what extent.
- 2.** For the period between June 1, 2017 and February 29, 2020, I used machine processing to examine the appearance of issues related to the selection of police officers in domestic social media. In this regard, I was the first to establish that in the online space, the police and the police appear in a variety of contexts, and in comparison, selection issues, such as recruitment, conditions for becoming a police officer, or eligibility criteria appear to a negligible extent.
- 3.** By searching and examining the relevant literature, as well as by collecting data with questionnaires and interviews, I was the first to reveal that the selection of police officers in the countries affected by the research works according to almost identical schemes, which include recruitment, the application process, the suitability test, and the differentiation of applicants and training.
- 4.** Through an empirical examination of the selection systems of foreign police forces, I was the first to establish that multiple sets of methods can be used to achieve the same goals, the processes change in accordance with the requirements imposed on the police and the police and the development of science, which is reflected in the relaxation of the criteria systems and the reduction of the emphasis on physical conditions, in the increasing importance of intellectual competences.
- 5.** After analysing the selection of domestic and foreign police forces using scientific procedures, I identified and then developed procedures to help optimize the Hungarian processes, and made a proposal for their application.

8. TESTIMONIALS AND THE PRACTICAL APPLICABILITY OF RESEARCH RESULTS

To prepare the thesis, I carried out extensive **literature research**, and synthesized a significant amount of knowledge to verify my hypotheses. The totality of knowledge accumulated in this way can be of help to researchers dealing with the topic, and can support the performance of the daily tasks of practitioners at a higher level.

The **experiences of interviews and questionnaires used in the international environment** can be considered unique, they can be used as a starting point for researchers interested in similar data collection. Of these, I think it is worth emphasizing the possibility of involving Hungarians posted abroad and foreign liaison officers stationed in Hungary in research. The **research support services of Elsevier and Sentione** can be applied in many fields and are systems capable of fast and reliable data synthesis and information processing, which I can recommend to theoretical and practical professionals alike.

From the processing of the **international literature**, it can be seen that the subject of the foreign researches coincides in several points with the projects aimed at the modernization and development of the domestic practice. This is also significant from the point of view that the difficulty of supply is typical for the examined police stations. Research on the selection of domestic police officers and their results can be considered significant, increasing their publication at the international level can promote the cooperation of those working in the same field, and the broader solution of problems affecting both parties.

The data from the analysis of **social media** and the conclusions drawn from it have the most feedback value in the sense that the online space is an area waiting to be exploited at a higher level in terms of the recruitment of Hungarian police officers, which can be key in addressing the future generation.

The selection practice of professional police officers is structured according to almost the same characteristics, but increasing the probability of being selected can be achieved through several procedures and a different set of methods. This is particularly interesting from the point of view that there are countless areas in Europe that are aimed at harmonizing police work, but no such efforts have been made in this field. In the future, similar research in other countries, involving several scientific fields, may be suitable for the development of a system of recommendations that fills gaps, in addition to the systematization of knowledge.

The **selection of police officers** is a complex, highly environmental-dependent, sensitive issue in many aspects, characterized by constant change and adaptation. Through social processes,

scientific and technical development, the role of the police and the expectations placed on the police are changing, which affects the selection. Bearing in mind the importance of this, in my view, the dissertation also conveys the message to the specialized fields dealing with selection that due to the complexity of the topic, the changes of the globalized and transforming world must be monitored together, it must be accepted that there are no set-in-stone solutions, that adaptation transformation must be managed together.

In my opinion, I have identified several practices suitable for adaptation in the domestic system in the selection of professional members of foreign police forces. These are the following:

1. The Hungarian police using a variety of recruitment methods, however, further improvements are needed in the use of social media. Part of this could be the development and integration of the aptitude-checking questionnaire used by the English and Welsh, as well as the German (Bavarian) police. This could help in self-monitoring, it would have a positive effect on reducing the number of applicants who do not meet the selection criteria and those who leave the field within a short time, as well as on the economic operation of the system.
2. Elite athletes are an important recruitment target group for the German and Austrian police forces, for whom a separate entry and training system is operated. Different sports and police training involve different physical demands, which is why they require different types of preparation, however, these people are likely to be able to meet the challenges, so the creation of a separate procedure for addressing, selecting and preparing this group should be considered. Their application can be important not only for recruitment, but also for organizational representation.
3. In the German territories, a special role is devoted to persuading parents and teachers, and through them to reach the target groups. As part of career guidance, this is also important in Hungary, however, it may be advisable to examine the advantages associated with increasing emphasis (for example, creating publications).
4. Institutional open days are part of the recruitment of Hungarian police officers. The paid rookie program used by the Bavarian police can have a motivating effect, where one can gain more realistic and enriching experiences of everyday police work compared to open days.

5. In the selection system of the Polish police officers, the results obtained during the differentiation of the applicants are kept and can be used by the applicants in the following recruitment periods. The introduction of a similar system at home could compensate for the differences between stronger and weaker recruitment periods, and could have a positive effect on staffing.

6. Task-specific recruitment and selection processes appear in the practice of several investigated police forces, where entry requirements are markedly lower, and training times are significantly shorter. In Hungary, a similar system operated in relation to border policing staff. In the case of priority tasks, in order to achieve the appropriate number of employees, consideration should be given to further reducing the strict selection and eligibility conditions, for example imposing lower educational or physical fitness requirements.

7. There are different forms to apply to the police, among which electronic procedures are typically the most common. It is also advisable to centralize the Hungarian processes as much as possible, move them in the direction of paperless and automated data processing.

8. Among the selection criteria, several police forces allow the employment of foreign nationals, and in some cases they recruit human resources from the territory of other countries. In order to change the domestic system of conditions in this direction, it would be advisable to carry out a separate research to determine whether there are potentially areas from which a significant number of people from across the border, who speak Hungarian and who presumably meet the other requirements, can be oriented to the police career.

9. There are different requirements for age and education. In some places, it is possible to meet the selection criteria even before the age of 18, even without a secondary education. In relation to the Hungarian police, a separate study is needed to expand the lower and upper age limits, and to explore the expected beneficial and negative effects of introducing a lower requirement than a high school diploma on the organization.

10. Suitability tests are costly, time- and energy-consuming processes, which police departments mitigate in various ways. In some areas, the processes are outsourced, in others they are reduced to the minimum level, or an external examination system is introduced, with which the expected performance can be properly verified. With regard to the Hungarian system,

separate research is recommended to determine whether there are processes (for example, to verify physical or health fitness) that can be implemented reliably outside the system, thereby making the operation more economical. For example, the introduction of psychological aptitude tests or knowledge assessments used for differentiation, which can be carried out remotely, online as a pre-screener, the aptitude tests outside the system (in public or private health, within the framework of a regulated procedure in the school system).

9. THE LIST OF PUBLICATIONS OF THE DOCTORAL CANDIDATE

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