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10 Years of Hungarian National Security Higher Education (2012–2022)

This study examines the place and role of Hungarian national security higher education coordinated by the Institute of National Security of the University of Public Service. Compared to the models seen on the international stage, the study describes the Hungarian university (UPS) form of national security training, the peculiarities that have developed as a result of the last ten years, and the framework of higher education in this special field.

Keywords: national security, training, university

1. Introduction

Nowadays, the scientific knowledge appearing in the university sphere is becoming more and more important. This is true for the training provided by universities, as well as for the university cooperated research. The acquisition of new knowledge is also important for the national security services of each country, which developed training and other scientific cooperation with the universities. These scientific connections are not new, and we can find many examples in the 20th century, during the operation of the secret services of both the Western and Eastern Blocs. However, the convergence that can be seen nowadays is becoming increasingly important as universities become the key centres of scientific and technological knowledge, highlighting the importance of higher education and the potential of scientific R&D and international cooperation. It can be seen that national security structures cannot ignore the training and research “opportunities” provided by their universities and scientific environment, and these collaborative interfaces can play catalytic role.

With the importance of national security thinking on the international level, national security training and knowledge tailored to the special needs of the sector have gained ground. Nowadays, the ever-changing security environment everywhere requires the work of professionals who understand and deal with new types of

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challenges and threats.² Accordingly, special forms of training have been developed, which take into account the special aspects of the national security sector and adapt to the framework of traditional higher education. The examples of university training on the international level also confirm this, so various courses can be seen in higher education that serve the education needs of the secret services.

All of this is the result of continuous development, although in the first half of the 20th century special training institutions, intelligence and counterintelligence professional courses and “spy schools” have already been operating in order to prepare the staff of the secret services. The change had occurred in the second half of the 20th century, when the higher education of secret services was given an independent framework in many countries including Hungary.

2. International training models³

There were many examples of training links between intelligence services and universities in the 20th century, in both Western and Eastern countries. The extremely closed military and internal higher education frameworks of the state security trainings can be highlighted in this period. Later, adapting to the dynamically evolving higher education environment of the 21st century, the educational relationships have also changed.

Concerning the international examples, it can be seen that specific relationship systems and institutional cooperation models have been developed to provide training. Based on the open publications and sites of international forms of higher education in national security, the present study defines the following categories:

- “Closed” institutional forms (e.g. national intelligence academies) established by the national security services of the respective states, which also teach the traditional knowledge of national security. (The “closed” indicator means that these institutions are not open for the non-members of the security sphere and organisations.)
- Accredited university education forms that are supported by the national security services of the given states and appear as part of law enforcement or military higher education.
- Open access university courses in topics related to national security and intelligence studies, with the partial support from national security services.

Concerning the international examples, several countries can also be mentioned.

1. Based on the international publication, the “Mihai Viteazul” National Intelligence Academy (MVNIA), accredited in Romanian higher education and operated by the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), is well-known,

² Csaba Vida: A tudományos képzés rendszere a nemzetbiztonság területén. *Nemzetbiztonsági Szemle*, 2, Special Issue 1 (2014). 40.

³ Imre Dobák: A nemzetbiztonság felsőoktatási képzéseinek külföldi modelljei. In Gyula Gaál – Zoltán Hautzinger (eds.): *A hadtudománytól a rendészettudományig – Társadalmi kihívások a nemzeti összetartozás évében*. Pécs, Magyar Hadtudományi Társaság Határőr Szakosztály Pécsi Szakcsoport, 2020. 154–156.

where, among other things, the national security staff and employees are trained.⁴ As defined on the official websites of the Academy: “While education in fields supporting intelligence activities – technical, logistics or administrative – can be ensured by other training units, the role of selecting and training future intelligence analysts and case officers goes exclusively to the Academy.”⁵ The MVNIA is a military higher education institution with a special status, involved in a number of scientific research and educational programs. Institutional development dates back more than twenty years, where 3 level higher educational framework (the Bologna System) was implemented in 2007. Accordingly, the MVNIA has Bachelor’s, Master’s and PhD degree programs.

2. In case of the Russian Federation, the Academy of the Federal Security Service (FSB) can be highlighted. According to the website of the institution, the FSB Academy celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2021, while the current institutional framework was established in 1992. Nowadays, as a multidisciplinary education and science centre, it also provides training and retraining for professionals in several federal security services.⁶ In addition to Russian practice, several states in the Central Asian region (e.g. Kazakhstan, Mongolia) also have an independent academic institutional form to national security education.⁷
3. Another institutional example is in Germany, where the Akademie für Verfassungsschutz (AfV) was established in 1955, which, however acts as a place for further training (not a place of higher education).⁸ (The Schule für Verfassungsschutz [SfV] was renamed to the “Akademie für Verfassungsschutz” [AfV] in 2014, parallel with the changes in the external environment.⁹) The institution affiliated with the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV) effectively supports the training needs of many organisations, especially the national security sphere. Their training profile consists of preparatory, initial and in-service training courses, seminars and courses on specific issues.
4. In case of the United States, the FBI Academy which was established in the last century, has become known as a law enforcement training centre. The Sherman Kent School for Intelligence Analysis (U.S.), which provides training for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) intelligence analysts is also noteworthy. It operates as part of the “CIA University” (CIAU) which basically holds different courses but does not issue degrees. It was founded

⁴ Csongor H. Gogolák: A romániai titkosszolgálatokról (II.). *Népújtság*, 13 December 2016.

⁵ See <https://animv.ro/en/despre-noi/>

⁶ See www.academy.fsb.ru/i_hist_8.html

⁷ János Béres (ed.): *Külföldi nemzetbiztonsági szolgálatok*. Budapest, Zrínyi Kiadó, 2018.

⁸ See www.verfassungsschutz.de/DE/karriere/arbeiten-beim-verfassungsschutz/lebenslanges-lernen/lebenslanges-lernen_node.html

⁹ Warg Günter: Wo wird man Dienstleister für die Demokratie? – Die Aus- und Fortbildungseinrichtungen für Mitarbeiter der Verfassungsschutzbehörden in Deutschland. *Nemzetbiztonsági Szemle*, 2, no. 3 (2014). 5.

in 2002 after the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States.¹⁰ Students in the institution can also take courses at other universities, but they are also provided full-time and part-time language training opportunities.

5. A similar U.S. institution is the National Intelligence University (NIU) higher education institution in the field of national security and intelligence in the United States Intelligence Community. The institution, founded by the Department of Defense, initially served the military intelligence agencies, but now is open to the non-military intelligence agencies as well. As Campbell articulates in his study: “The NIU operating as a “front office” for the full spectrum of community education and training programs is focused on the establishment of standards and policy.”¹¹ The “closed” form of enrolment is typical, and open only to those working in the national security sector with an appropriate security clearance. The institution accredited in higher education offers training in several Bachelor’s (BA) and Master’s (MA) courses in the fields of intelligence. The faculty members of NIU have extensive professional experience and scientific knowledge in topics relevant to the intelligence community.¹² “The NIU is governed by the NIU Council, in collaboration with the Distributed Learning Advisory Board and the IC Analyst Training and Educational Council.”¹³

After the turn of the millennium, in addition to the training and education institutions supported and maintained by the national security services, civilian universities also recognised the opportunities for teaching in the fields of security policy and approached the national security sector with their courses. In this regard, we can see a wide range of higher education courses dealing with the analysis and evaluation of the security policy environment. These postgraduate programs accredited in higher education already provided knowledge used by the business sector (e.g. business intelligence). These include the postgraduate training elements of security studies, which are already more closely related to national security in their topics.

Looking at current European university training opportunities, under the search term “national security” we can see training programs that focus on complex areas of security and counterterrorism activities. Intelligence-type training can be found along the notion of “(national security) intelligence”, where the portfolio is much more narrow.

3. The Hungarian practice

Forms of the national security higher education can be considered special in Hungary, as well. The closed nature of the sphere and the need for cooperation between

¹⁰ Stephen H. Campbell: A Survey of the U.S. Market for Intelligence Education. *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, 24, no. 2 (2011). 319.

¹¹ Campbell (2011): op. cit. 311.

¹² National Intelligence University: 2017–2018 *Catalog*.

¹³ Campbell (2011): op. cit. 313.

the education institutions and the national security sector are among the reasons. Looking back to the period of regime change in 1990, the state security trainings have been abolished, and later steps were taken to launch the new structure of higher education in national security. These milestones of both the pre-1990 and subsequent decades have already been reviewed in lots of studies. Nevertheless, it is worth outlining the main turning points in this area as well:

1. In 1990, the former training structure in both the internal security (state security) and military fields was abolished.¹⁴
2. According to the publications, after the change of regime in Hungary, it took many years for starting the higher education accredited national security training and education. An important turning point was 2004, when the National Security Department at the Zrínyi Miklós National Defence University created the first education to the national security sphere. It basically served the training needs of the military national security field. These programs (Bachelor's) have started in 2005, and later the Master's program started as well.
3. The next turning point was 2012, when the Institute of National Security was established at the National University of Public Service and the main goal was to revise the training structure.¹⁵ The modification work was completed by the end of the year, so from 2013, both the military national security and the civilian national security specialisation began the Bachelor's and Master's courses at the Faculty of Military Sciences and Officer Training of the University.¹⁶
4. After the complex training and organisational development processes, as part of the national security program the counterterrorism Bachelor's and Master's specialisation also started in 2015.
5. In the same year, in addition to the operation of military national security training, the development of an independent civilian national security course was started along new professional development goals.
6. In 2017–2018, after the necessary preparatory processes, the Faculty of Law Enforcement also announced the Bachelor's and Master's courses in civilian national security.

Nowadays, the higher education in national security is provided by the University of Public Service, where the Institute of National Security (INS) as a framework has been ensuring the training environment since 2012. The INS organises the current national security education programs with the coordination and cooperation of three university departments (Military National Security, Civilian National Security

¹⁴ József Boda: Az állambiztonsági és nemzetbiztonsági képzés története. In Orsolya Ilona Jámor – Máté Gábor Lénárt – Gábor G. Tarján (eds.): *A rendőrákadémiától az egyetemig: Rendészettörténeti tanulmányok*. Budapest, Rendőrség Tudományos Tanácsa, 2019. 362.

¹⁵ József Boda: A nemzetbiztonsági képzés helyzete Magyarországon. *Belügyi Szemle*, 66, no. 2 (2018). 9.

¹⁶ Boda (2019): op. cit. 366.

and Counterterrorism).¹⁷ The applications for training have been steady and stable for years, which are also reflected in the statistics.

4. The structure of the education and training

4.1. *Civilian National Security Bachelor's and Master's Degree Programs (according to the Training and Output Requirements)*

Degree obtained in the Civilian National Security Bachelor's Degree Program and the qualification in the diploma:

- title of the Bachelor's Degree Program: Civilian National Security Studies
- level of degree: Bachelor (baccalaureus – BA)
- qualification: Civilian National Security Expert

The training objective of the Civilian National Security Bachelor Degree Program and the professional competencies: “The aim of the training is to educate civilian national security experts for the national security services and other agencies authorised to gather secret information and to use disguised tools, who have up-to-date general and specific scientific, theoretical and practical knowledge on professional, professional-technical, legal, criminological, psychological, information technological, security policy aspects and foreign language.”¹⁸

Degree obtained in the Civilian National Security Master's Degree Program and the qualification in the diploma:

- title of the Master's Degree Program: Civilian National Security Studies
- level of degree: Master (magister – MA)
- qualification: Senior Expert in Civilian National Security

The training objective of the Civilian National Security Master Degree Program and the professional competencies: “The aim of the training is to educate national security specialists who are able to perform leadership and expert tasks in the administrative, military, law enforcement, scientific sectors, and to evaluate, analyse and solve national security problems on the basis of their professional knowledge. They are prepared to understand the functioning of political institutions, security processes, public policies and their interdependencies and interactions in the context of global security policy, and to support the preparation of government responses.”¹⁹

As for the civilian national security university training area, applicants for the specialisation are limited to those people who work for the national security services,

¹⁷ Imre Dobák: A nemzetbiztonsági felsőoktatás aktuális kérdései. *Hadtudományi Szemle*, 11, no. 1 (2018). 157–172.

¹⁸ Government Decree No. 222/2019 (IX.25.) on the register of qualifications in the field of science of public governance and the training and graduation requirements of the program.

¹⁹ Government Decree No. 222/2019.

as well as for the secret information collection authorised services, and who are supported by the supervisor or leader with the right to enrol, and who has a valid security clearance.²⁰

4.2. Military National Security Bachelor's and Master's Degree Programs (according to the Training and Output Requirements)

Degree obtained in the National Security Bachelor's Degree Program and the qualification in the diploma:

- title of the Bachelor's Degree Program: National Security Studies
- level of degree: Bachelor (baccalaureus – BA)
- qualification: National Security Expert

The training objective of the National Security Bachelor Degree Program and the professional competencies: “The aim of the training is to train national security experts for special-purpose national security services and other clients who are able to effectively fulfil the requirements and tasks belonging to their jobs in the organisations of the national security field using their up-to-date theoretical and practical knowledge. They are suitable for the practical application of professional theory and methodology, for the development of professional culture.”²¹

Degree obtained in the National Security Master's Degree Program and the qualification in the diploma:

- title of the Master's Degree Program: National Security Studies
- level of degree: Master (magister – MA)
- qualification: National Security Expert

The training objective of the National Security Master Degree Program and the professional competencies: “The aim of the training is to train national security professionals who, using their modern social science and profession-specific knowledge, are able to effectively fulfil the requirements and tasks of their job in the national security organisations, develop professional theory and methodology, and pass on professional culture and values.”²²

As for the military national security area of training, applicants for the specialty are limited to those people who belong to the Military National Security Service or to non-commissioned officers and officers of the Hungarian Armed Forces who are supported by the leader with the right to enrol, and who have a valid security clearance.²³

²⁰ See www.felvi.hu/felveteli/egyetemek_foiskolak/!IntezmenyiOldalak/szervezet.php?szer_id=843&elj=22a

²¹ Government Decree No. 222/2019.

²² Government Decree No. 222/2019.

²³ See www.felvi.hu/felveteli/egyetemek_foiskolak/!IntezmenyiOldalak/szervezet.php?szer_id=844&elj=22a&oldal=2&fej=A

Regarding the duration and internal structure of the above national security university programs in Hungary at Ludovika–UPS:

- on the Bachelor's (BA) courses, the training duration is 6 semesters, and the number of credits necessary for obtaining the BA's degree: 180 credits
- on the Master's (MA) courses the training duration is 4 semesters, and the number of credits necessary for obtaining the MA's degree: 120 credits

The trainings take place in the form of correspondence, which, due to its specific nature, are to contribute to the higher education of the staff who are already in the system. Serving the training needs of different sectoral directions, the trainings are open not only to the national security services, but also to other security organisations. Compliance with these can be ensured by the specialisation dissimilarities in the programs and the differentiated knowledge.

At the same time, higher education in national security is closely linked to scientific research in the fields of national security. All this can be seen among other things, in the development of training materials, the continuation of the scientific research and the creation of the relevant publication. It is true that scientific research in the field of national security can be found in several Hungarian individual departments and scientific centres.²⁴ Overall, it can be said that the current framework of Hungarian national security training is in line with the Bologna process, and the University of Public Service has a valid accreditation for Hungarian national security training. As with all university education, the relevant Training and Output Requirements are available in open form.²⁵

5. Summary

In the dynamically changing security environment, the tasks of national security organisations are constantly modifying, and the organisations are increasingly improving the professional skills and knowledge of their employees. All of this also means special training requirements for the Institute of National Security at UPS. The Hungarian national security higher education framework, in addition to providing a concentrated, developing environment in accordance with the training needs of the relevant organisations, can also indirectly strengthen the social acceptance of the sphere. Its activities can help to strengthen a more credible image of the sphere as well as security awareness.

Out of the characteristics of higher education in national security, perhaps the most common aspect is the non-open form of training, which can effectively provide the teaching of some special professional skills. However, all of this can be interpreted as a constraint, for example on the issue of education development or the difficulty of getting involved in research. In order to compensate these difficulties and to meet

²⁴ Vida (2014): op. cit. 43.

²⁵ Imre Dobák: Polgári nemzetbiztonsági képzések a hazai felsőoktatásban. *Nemzetbiztonsági Szemle*, 5, no. 4 (2017). 42.

the requirements of higher education, research programs, external partnerships and thematic training elements that meet specific criteria have been given prominence in the case of independent institutional forms. A further feature is that, although forms of higher education in national security provide specialist qualifications and recognised degrees in civilian life, as well as accountability and quality through higher education accreditation, these courses must primarily meet the professional requirements of a limited “recruitment market”. The statement is supported by the fact that the independent intelligence and national security academies and training institutions are professionally connected to the national security organisations and the governing ministries.²⁶

In summary, the university trainings can play a key role in the development of the whole sector, the integration of new knowledge, and in keeping the staff of the sphere, as the combined individual efforts to ensure successful completion and training support by the organisations together create the possibility of professional career within the sector.

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²⁶ Dobák (2020): op. cit.

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