

EFFECT OF COOPERATION WITH THE EUROPEAN AGENCY FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF OPERATIONAL COOPERATION AT THE EXTERNAL BORDERS OF THE MEMBER STATES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (FRONTEX) ON THE FACILITATION OF TRAINING PROCESS OF THE LATVIAN STATE BORDER GUARD OFFICERS

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Abstract. *The research focuses on major cooperation directions established between the State Border Guard of Latvia and the European Agency FRONTEX. It deals with the legal regulation of SBG and FRONTEX cooperation, depicts and analyses SBG and FRONTEX cooperation in the field of training as well as explores the main pillars of SBG and FRONTEX cooperation development perspectives. The aim of the research is to investigate how SBG cooperation with the Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (Frontex) influences the increase of SBG officers' capacity regarded in carrying out their functions. The main tasks that were brought up are as follows: to investigate the legal regulation of SBG and FRONTEX cooperation as well as to analyse the main directions of SBG and FRONTEX cooperation in the training process of the officers, finally, to study perspectives of SBG and FRONTEX cooperation development aiming at officers' capacity building. The key methods employed in the framework of this research are: descriptive method, analysis and synthesis, clustering, graphical method.*

Keywords: *cooperation, training, the State Border Guard of Latvia, capacity of border guard officers*

Introduction

Under conditions of tighter global integration the European Union (hereinafter – EU) jointly and in cooperation with strategical partners is solving issues related to illegal immigration from third countries, prevention of organised crime and terrorism, thus increasing the area of stability and safety at the external borders of EU. Based on the integrated management principle, some attempts were made to standardize border crossing procedures and to establish common requirements in training officials of border guard units. Thus the basis was built for creation of a new

agency – the Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union – Frontex (European Parliament and Council Regulation (EC) No 2007/2004). State border guard in fulfilling its functions is cooperating with various international organisations, including Frontex. Within the framework of the cooperation meetings and seminars are organised, common operations are implemented with participation of specialists from several countries etc. The State Border Guard of Latvia actively participates in Frontex activities. There are no studies of Frontex cooperation influence on SBG functioning. It is necessary to note that in foreign research considerable attention is paid to Frontex agency and its activities. Issues of management of joint operations of Frontex were studied by R. Cortinovis (2015) and S. Leonard (2009). In Frontex research, attention is mainly paid to problems of refugees and asylum seekers, for instance, Frontex cooperation with the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights and the European Asylum Support Office was studied by L. Klostermann (2015), but G. Camperi (2015) investigated the role of Frontex in protection of the Mediterranean Sea border, in issues related to human rights of refugees and asylum seekers. Analysing the studies, it is necessary to conclude that in Latvia there is no research into the influence of Frontex cooperation on SBG functioning. At the moment Latvia has become involved into the latest Frontex product – European Joint Master’s programme. Frontex agency has launched European Joint Master’s in Strategic Border Management in September 2015. This master study programme is truly unique by its nature due to various reasons, where the leading expertise is drawn from across the European Union (EU), valuing cooperation between operational and academic approaches and encouraging peer-learning. It is new experience, which will contribute significantly to increase of the potential of human resources in the future and, namely, the State Border Guard officers.

The aim of the research is to investigate how SBG cooperation with the Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (Frontex) influences the increase of SBG officers’ capacity regarded in carrying out their functions. Tasks that were brought up to achieve the aim are:

- to investigate the legal regulation of SBG and FRONTEX cooperation;
- to analyse the main directions of SBG and FRONTEX cooperation in the training process of the officers;
- to study perspectives of SBG and FRONTEX cooperation development aiming at officers’ capacity building.

Hypothesis is: SBG cooperation with FRONTEX has contributed to SBG officers’ capacity increase. The key methods employed in the framework of

this research are: descriptive method, analysis and synthesis, clustering, graphical method.

Legal regulation of SBG and FRONTEX cooperation

The Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union was established by the Council Regulation (EC) 2007/2004/ (26.10.2004, OJ L 349/25.11.2004). The aforementioned document defines the main tasks of FRONTEX, which were supplemented, when the latest Amendment became operative in 12.12.2011. It is necessary to observe that the following tasks are included:

- assist Member States on training of national border guards, including establishment of common training standards;
- follow up on the development of research relevant for the control and surveillance of external borders.

After analysis of FRONTEX general reports it is possible to conclude that FRONTEX started cooperation in the field of training in 2005. In 2006 – 2007, in total 97 training activities, meetings and operation seminars were organised, including border guards' training activities and "training of trainees", with the total number of participants 1,341. In 2013 the Training Unit organised 205 activities with participation of 3,253 attendees (training experts, participants, etc.). In total, three training programmes were realised. In accordance with the first programme, the sectoral qualification network for border guarding was launched and common basic curricula integration, as well as the joint Master's study programme development, was continued. The second programme relates to border guards' further education and specialisation and the Training Unit developed the Manual of fundamental rights, which is designed for border guards. Introduction training courses were organised for border guard units of Europe and a new debriefing concept was worked out to ensure that all guest officers participating in the Agency's coordinated joint operations have received adequate training prior their deployment. In relation to cooperation networks and IT issues the Training Unit introduced new administrative tools for registration of activities on-line, for joint usage of documents and planning. New e-training components are being developed, which will ensure the possibility to provide training in a modern and workable way. The Research and Development Unit realised 8 projects (including the European Border Surveillance System), carrying on with development of best practice guidelines with regard to automated border control solutions, border control at the land border crossing, introduction of the Visa information system in the Member States. In order to improve capabilities in the detection of document forgery several activities were organised with

the purpose to evaluate both the performance of the equipment and specialists' work efficiency. In 2013 the Research and Development Unit initiated activities for boosting the Member States' awareness of new developments in the field of surveillance through sensors, platforms and advanced system solutions while also facilitating the installation (trial) of new technologies for border surveillance in Member States in the context of the Agency's coordinated joint operations. Frontex also established an end-user driven advisory group on border security research. This group prepared a report on border security problems, as well as defined research topics for the mid- and long-term perspectives with the goal of contributing to the European Commission research activities, which will be organised and financed according to the new EU research funding framework "Horizon 2020".

One of the Frontex priorities for 2015 is development of operational abilities directed to the European research programmes (Horizon 2020), as well as improvement of border guard capacity with special trainings, including training on fundamental rights. It enables to conclude that establishment of FRONTEX was a natural necessity. Now FRONTEX coordinates cooperation between the Member States in the field of management of external borders, providing assistance to the Member States in organisation of border guard trainings and research development. The integrated management of the state border is impossible without cooperation of the State Border Guard and Frontex in all levels.

Cooperation between the State Border Guard and Frontex is organised on the basis of the Council Regulation (EC) No 2007/2004 of October 26, 2004, which established the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union and the Regulation (EC) No 863/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council of July 11, 2007 establishing a mechanism for the creation of rapid border intervention teams and amending Council Regulation (EC) No 2007/2004 as regards that mechanism and regulating the tasks and powers of guest officers, as well as a range of legal acts of the Republic of Latvia and internal legal documents of the State Border Guard. The cooperation is organised in two main directions: operational cooperation and development cooperation. Basic directions of the development cooperation are:

- Participation in research and innovation projects
- Participation in development conferences and training
- Participation in training and studies.

SBG and FRONTEX cooperation in the field of training

SBG officers actively participate in Frontex activities – meetings, seminars and trainings. According to the SBG data (fig. 1) in 2014 the number of SBG officers who had participated in Frontex organised activities doubled in comparison with 2010. It affirms the development of cooperation between SBG and Frontex during previous five years.

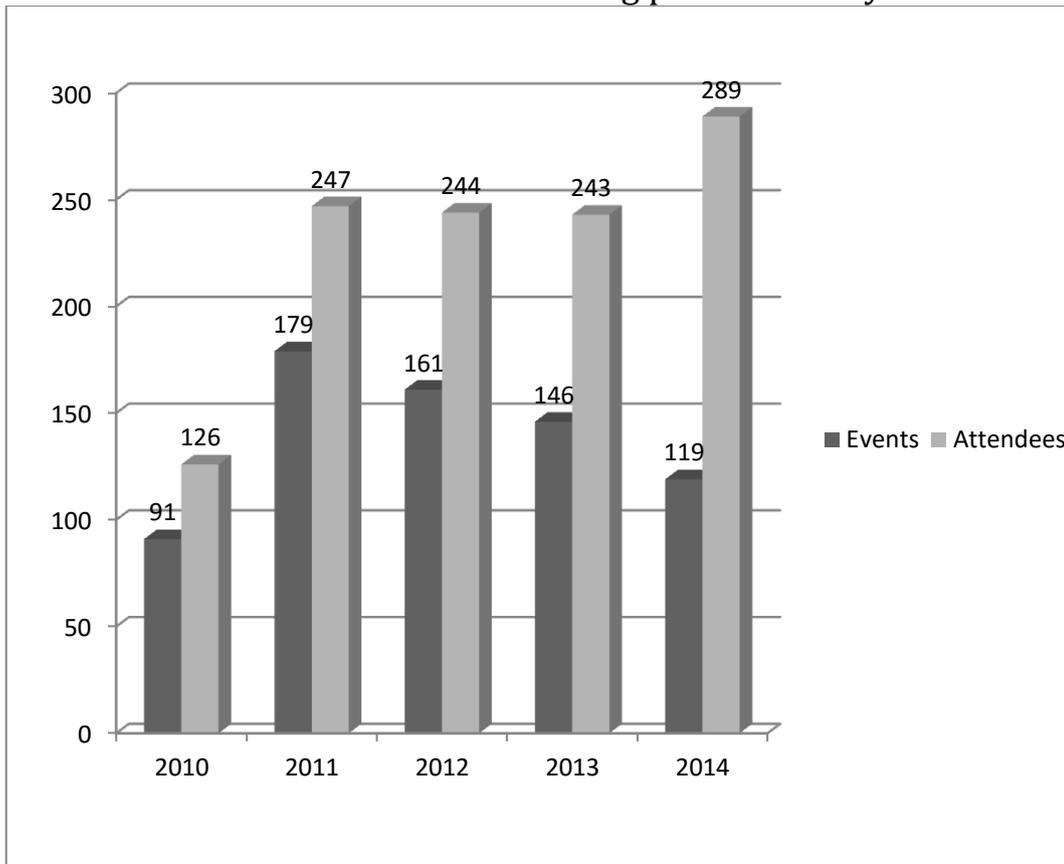


Fig.1. SBG officers' participation in other Frontex activities in 2010 – 2014 (Source: SBG annual report 2014)

SBG and FRONTEX cooperation in officers' training is organised in various ways:

- Joint mobility and exchange programmes;
- Consular training;
- Seconded guest officer;
- Professional qualification improvement;
- Development of training materials.

The most topical training direction is EBGT unit expert training. The trainings are organised according to the necessary profiles. The internal Regulation of the State Border Guard No 15 "Rules of selection of candidates for participation in the European border guard pools of the

European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union, for recruitment procedures for national expert and short-term national expert posts of, as well as for participation in joint activities, pilot projects and trainings” of December 19, 2013 regulate the procedure of selection of officers for participation in Frontex pools. In accordance with the rules, a candidate is a border guard or an employee who has applied for participation in Frontex pools, recruitment procedures for national expert and short-term national expert positions, as well as for participation in joint events, pilot projects and training. The national expert is a border guard or an employee who is sent on mission in Frontex, but the short-term national expert is a border guard, who is sent on mission to Frontex for six month period with the purpose to take part in a joint Frontex event and pilot project.

Joint mobility and exchange programmes

Personnel’s training as one of the main personnel development functions is becoming more and more significant in the personnel management practice. Successful organisation of staff training, defining employees’ real training needs and wishes is one of the motivation tools.

Development of structural units of SBG is warranted by qualified employees. It is necessary to take into account that personnel of every structural unit need different training and methods. The process of evaluation and selection of appropriate training and more efficient methods is a complicated and time-consuming process. In order to successfully organise the personnel training it is necessary to choose the correct training type, to organise, coordinate and control the process. The process of determination of the training needs is influenced by the analysis of annual personnel evaluation, discussions with the employees and the results of these discussions.

Professional training is a definite system, a sequence of logically ordered stages, having the single purpose – to prepare people for better function performing. In Latvia such training is provided by the State Border Guard College.

Development and introduction of the Common Core Curriculum (CCC) in 2008 and its updating in 2012 became a significant achievement in the field of standardization and harmonisation, and in 2010 the teachers’ mobility project was launched. In 2013 the pilot project “Students’ exchange” was worked out and implemented with the aim to promote CCC application and ensure sustainability, facilitating international cooperation mutual understanding, team work and cooperation between future border

guards. It is necessary to note that such projects are important for border guard trainers from various European educational institutions. It is a possibility to know other countries' experience, exchange with best practice examples. Participation as an observer in Frontex joint operations and "Focal Points" events is an opportunity to face specific work-related situations, circumstances and environment with the regard to crime prevention and fight, feeling direct membership in the European Community.

Education curricula

SBG of Latvia is interested in improvement of professional qualification of its personnel. Officers' capacity building is facilitated by cooperation with FRONTEX. Frontex agency together with experts representing the Member States and different organisations and institutions has developed various products, including the basis for all kinds of training for border guard officers – Sectorial Qualifications Framework for Border Guarding. It shall be stressed that it is one of the key concepts that has been introduced by the Agency. Frontex helps to harmonise border guard education and different kinds of training at the EU level, thus enhancing each country's national capacity and reaching comparability of national training systems.

SBGC and Rezekne Academy of Technologies have been involved in various FRONTEX Agency projects. One of them is noteworthy not only for Latvia but also for Europe - "European Joint Master's in Strategic Border Management" (EJMSBM) aimed at development of the Joint Degree Study programme (EQF Level 7). The aim of the project is to adopt best experience during joint studies of border guards of Europe, to learn in the context of the operational activity, to develop the European border guard culture at the higher level, thus highlighting the European dimension in border guards' work. It is planned that after mastering the EJMSBM the graduate will acquire the European Master's degree of border security and cooperation. The programme was launched in September 2015.

The springboard of this strong cooperation between the SBG and Rezekne Academy of Technologies was the idea to create the opportunity for border guards to continue their professional education. For example, the study direction and the incorporated second level professional higher education bachelor's study programme "Border Guarding" was established in accordance with the State Border Guard and RHEI agreement of 26.10.2010, its amendment of 29.01.2011 and its annex No 1 of 29.03.2011, as well as in cooperation with the State Border Guard and the State Border Guard College as the extension for studies after the first level professional higher education (college) with qualification acquired – junior officer of the

State Border Guard. Organising studies in the field of the internal security and civil defence Rezekne Academy of Technologies is realising the order of the State Border Guard of Latvia. SBG of Latvia is interested in capacity building of border guards in order to ensure the employees competitiveness in the EU area. The study programme is created as an extension of the first level higher education programme of the SBGC in cooperation with the State Border Guard and other foreign universities and institutions:

- in cooperation with universities with similar study programmes (Mykolas Romeris University (Lithuania), Estonian Academy of Security Sciences (Estonia) and other partners within the framework of Frontex project;

As the next stage in building border guard capacity, it is necessary to observe that estimating the necessity to ensure the united approach in understanding the European Union integrated border management strategy, requiring common criteria for senior management officers in border guard education institutions in the entire European Union, in 2011 Frontex started the project “Joint Master’s Study Programme” with the purpose to develop and realise the joint master’s study programme of the European level in the border guard field. The aim of the joint study programme is to ensure border guards with common understanding of challenges in the sphere of border guarding at the higher level, as well as to develop the European border guard culture. Frontex invited five EU countries to implement the programme: Latvia, Estonia, Spain, Lithuania and the Netherlands.

The consortium of the European universities was established consisting of the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences, Rezekne Academy of Technologies (Latvia), the Netherlands Defence Academy, Salamanca University (Spain), the State University of Further Education (Spain) and Mykolas Romeris University (Lithuania).

The study programme that was worked out is innovative and unique by its nature as it is the first joint study programme, which is the largest one not only in Latvia, but also in Europe, in terms of the number of Member States involved with high quality end product, which was created using many experts’ and partner institutions’ technical basis, knowledge and experience. Furthermore, it is the first consortium of universities of Europe that was established, where all participants are equal members in sharing responsibility, implementing the programme and ensuring its quality. This study programme covers the existing gap in border guards’ education and is therefore important for addressing existing border guard training needs for mid- and high level management.

The development of the study programme was supported by the Ministry of Interior and the State Border Guard of Latvia, acknowledging its significance for preparation of specialists necessary not only for Latvia's, but the entire Europe security. Latvia has gone a long way to be able to implement this study programme and remain a worthwhile member of the Consortium.

It is necessary to conclude that Latvia's participation in realisation of the study programme "European Joint Master's in Strategic Border Management" will ensure Latvian higher education system's recognition in the European Union, will contribute to its significance in issues of EU border security senior specialists, as well as it will develop training personnel. In addition, there will be more possibilities to improve and develop the technical basis of the educational institutions involved in it, using available European Union's funding.

Conclusions and suggestions

1. Researching the Frontex Agency regulation, it can be concluded that Frontex has been established as a fixed asset of the EU's common external border policy with the aim to create an integrated management to ensure a uniform level of border checks and border surveillance, it has an important role in the integrated border management system. It is also an important driving force of required training and education at the EU level.
2. Basic directions of the development cooperation between the SBG and Frontex agency are: participation in research and innovation projects, participation in development conferences and training, participation in training and studies.
3. SBG officers actively participate in Frontex activities – meetings, seminars and trainings. According to the SBG data in 2014 the number of SBG officers who had participated in Frontex organised activities doubled in comparison with 2010. It affirms the development of cooperation between SBG and Frontex during previous five years.
4. SBG and FRONTEX cooperation in officers' training is organised in various ways:
 - Joint mobility and exchange programmes;
 - Consular training;
 - Seconded guest officer;
 - Professional qualification improvement;
 - Development of training materials.

5. Finally, joint mobility, exchange programmes and education curricula strengthen the national training needs with clear integrated European dimension, thus facilitating capacity building of SBG officers, setting also targets for future cooperation and development perspectives.

It shall be stressed that the established cooperation mostly exists at the institutional level, facilitating the training of specialists and bringing together experts from across Europe. It would be even more beneficial if there were more opportunities to grow and develop for a larger audience, i.e. Frontex could organise professional qualification improvement courses on the latest trends and topical issue arising in the field of border guarding for academics, and students, thus spreading the knowledge and not limiting to a restricted number of attendees.

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