

CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF THE INVESTIGATOR TRAINING CENTRE OF THE STATE POLICE COLLEGE IN EDUCATING LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL

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Abstract. *The Article is about the educational challenges and perspectives of the Investigator Training Centre at the State Police College. The objective of this study is to answer the question – does the establishment have the capability to fulfil the task given to it to involve professionals and experts with specialized knowledge in the training process of law enforcement officials, along with developing interdisciplinary cooperation between law enforcement and state security institutions of Latvia? To achieve the objective of the study, a monograph method was used, conclusions and interpretations were drawn from available information and data of the activities of the Investigator Training Centre since its establishment in February 10th, 2022, up until the start of the 3rd quarter of 2024. In order to achieve the objective, the study was researching the understanding of the uniform education system for adults in Latvia, which is based on European Union standards and ethical norms, and align it with the training needs of law enforcement officials. The following conclusion was formed: in order to improve the quality of pre-trial investigations, the Investigator Training Centre shall be able to strengthen the professional knowledge and skills of law enforcement officials through a methodological process of non-formal education standard combined with the specialized knowledge and training materials in the field of law enforcement.*

Keywords: *cooperation, investigator, law enforcement, non-formal education, operative, pre-trial, State Police College, training process.*

Introduction

The Investigator Training Centre (hereinafter – the Centre) carries responsibility to transfer the knowledge of law enforcement professionals for future generations by promoting the improvement of the quality of pre-trial investigation and a common and united understanding regarding the application of the regulatory framework. The purpose of the training Centre is to provide informal and professional improvement education measures for officials of the State Police and other law enforcement institutions, the duties of which include: ensuring pre-trial criminal proceedings in investigations, implementation of the operational activity, providing investigative support - analytical and criminal intelligence activity.

Problems arise in the development of those learning processes which require specific conditions for the implementation of many topics, for



example, the training of operational activities and operational process requires a lecturer with both experience in the service and active admission to state secrets, but combining it with the requirements of non-formal education and training programme documentation is challenging. The development and recording of such documents require the creation of special records, restricted access orders and other specific documentation, which may significantly hinder the implementation of the training process itself.

The study brings up the learning approach and the adequacy of methodology to the skills and technology requirements of modern investigations. During the research process, conducted from June 1st, 2024, till August 1st, 2024, an analysis of the existing procedures, the possibility of uniformity in the application of the legal provisions, was carried out with the Centre, in cooperation with the management of various law enforcement agencies of Latvia, continuously identifying the current training needs and addressing topical issues.

Establishing the Investigator Training Centre

The establishment of the Investigator Training Centre at the State Police College started in April 2021 with the setting up a working group at the initiative of the then Minister of the Interior S. Ģirģens, consisting of representatives of the Ministry of the Interior, the State Police, the State Police College, the State Border Guard College, Riga Stradiņš University, the State Border Guard, the Internal Security Bureau, the Prison Administration, the State Revenue Service, the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau, the Military Police of the National Armed Forces, the Prosecutor General's Office, the Financial Intelligence Unit of Latvia and the Trade Union of the Latvian Interior Employees. The conclusion of the working group was unanimous: there is no common training platform and no common understanding in the field of investigations has been developed.

The State Audit Office also stated in its audit report "Effectiveness of Pre-Trial Investigations in the State Police" in October, 2017: "[...] since closing Latvian Police Academy, second-level higher education programmes based on the competencies necessary for investigative work have not been implemented. Such a second-level higher education programme based on the knowledge and skills necessary for a police officer was established only in 2017, and its first graduates are expected in the State Police in 2022."

In December 2020, the State Audit Office completed the performance audit "Effectiveness of Investigation and Trials of the Criminal Offences in the Economic and Financial Area", which was carried out in response to the call of the Cabinet of Ministers to conduct a performance audit (comprehensive study) focusing on criminal proceedings for economic and financial offences

and including recommendations on measures to be taken to address negative factors affecting the effectiveness of the investigation and prosecution of financial and economic crime. The following issues were also prioritised in this plan: to develop a common understanding of the application of the rules of law, eliminating uncertainties as to the essential elements to be proved and the body of evidence required to prove guilt in criminal proceedings; to study and improve the framework of the Criminal Law and the Criminal Procedure Law, developing action mechanisms for identifying those legal provisions which are problematic in practice in addition to making recommendations for remedying shortcomings; to implement measures for ensuring that prosecutors receive qualified technical and advisory support at various stages of criminal proceedings; and other recommendations, the implementation of which will contribute to the effectiveness of work and, in accordance with the results, will increase public confidence in the Latvian judicial system and law enforcement authorities in general.

On 10th of February 2022, the Cabinet of Ministers endorsed the establishment of the consortium “Internal Security Academy”, bringing together the Ministry of the Interior, the State Police College, Riga Stradiņš University and the University of Latvia to achieve these common goals.

It was decided that there is an urgent need for a model of lifelong learning (non-formal education) for investigators and operatives. At several meetings of the working group, the participants elaborated a draft concept “On the improvement of the education system for law enforcement officials” and agreed on joint measures to improve the professional education system in the sector, envisaging not only the improvement of the higher education model, but also the immediate launch of a new and effective non-formal education model – within the framework of priority measures, the establishment of a separate unit, the Investigator Training Centre, which could later be integrated into the structure of the Internal Security Academy.

The given purpose and the chosen mission

The Centre is a structural unit of the State Police College, which is responsible for the performance of the tasks assigned to it within its competence.

In accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the Centre, its task is to organise the implementation of non-formal education activities and the provision of applied research in a qualitative and continuous manner:

- to identify and to compile the topics and applied research needs of the necessary non-formal education activities, as requested by the State Police and other law enforcement authorities, and to develop an implementation plan for the calendar year;

- to organise development, and implementation of said non-formal education programmes;
- by the request of the State Police, to organize the development of methodological teaching tools in the fields of investigative processes as well as operational, analytical and criminal intelligence activities that are providing support in said investitive processes;
- to provide applied research with the aim of introducing innovations in the teaching process and in the work of law enforcement authorities.

It is true that the Centre is not working at full capacity due to understaffing. For the first year since the opening of the Centre, it was manned by a three-people team, then in the second year the team took in additional member, and currently in the third year the Centre has grown to a team of six. The Centre is still looking and waiting for professionals who are enthusiastic about their work, who can carry out their duties with an exceptional attitude of being aware of their role and importance in the overall process, and who can share their professional experience and enthusiasm with others in recruiting for employees of vacant positions. The Centre is currently looking for the Head for the Education Programmes in the field of operational activities, as well as for knowledgeable colleagues that are willing and able to use the resources of Centres' newly created Laboratory of Innovations to research and identify, develop and implement latest solutions and methods.

Innovations and current developments

To find new innovative solutions for improving internal security, both closed and open hackathons are planned to be enacted in the Laboratory of Innovations. The word *hackathon* originates from the English word *hacking*, also known internationally as *hackday* and *hackfest*, and it can be either open or closed. For example, in closed hackathons, participants could bring in experts of the field, include them in the investigation team and jointly investigate cold criminal cases, thus involving trainees, academics and professionals (with specialist knowledge) in the research. The Criminal Procedure Law allows for this, and conducting research is one of the crucial tasks of the Centre. The open hackathon would provide an opportunity to gain knowledge and new ideas, as well as to acquire skills in working with innovative technologies, which would increase the professional competencies of the participants of the hackathon and thus improve quality of the investigations.

The priority of the Centre is to involve professionals and experts in the training process, along with developing interdisciplinary cooperation by bringing in specialists from other fields and disciplines whose knowledge and experience are relevant to the investigation of various criminal offences. It is important to develop a culture of learning as part of the professional

excellence of investigators, operatives and analysts, as by fostering mutual exchange of experience and by passing on knowledge to future generations of professionals, it contributes to improving the quality of investigations and the common understanding amongst law enforcers of the application of the legal framework.

One of the most important objectives of the Centre is to improve the quality of pre-trial investigative and operational activities by ensuring the continuous further training and professional qualification development of investigators, operatives and analysts of the State Police and other law enforcement authorities in accordance with the principle of lifelong learning enshrined in Latvian document planning and regulatory enactments. The duty of the Centre is to ensure identification of the necessary educational activities for ever-advancing qualifications for law enforcement officials, and to ensure administration of the training by attracting and involving seasoned experts and foreign lecturers in the process. The Centre has a dedicated training ground – an apartment and an office, a modern computer classroom and a server room for training of the server removal and retrieval of their data. To successfully implement the training process, the Centre regularly supplements its material and technological base, for example, thanks to successful cooperation with the Cybercrime Combating Department of the State Police, in addition to being informed about the latest trends in combating and investigating cybercrime, the Centre also purchases the appropriate specialised equipment to bring the training process closer to their current technical needs.

With the professional advice and support given from the colleagues of various law enforcement agencies, the staff of the Centre is also constantly developing their own professional qualifications, acquiring latest knowledge, skills and tools necessary to meet the continuously expanding training needs of investigators. One of the most prominent challenges that the Centre had to overcome was the purchase and transferral of cryptocurrency (bitcoins) to a “crypto wallet” for training purposes, so that the lecturers and the trainees had the opportunity to safely use cryptocurrencies in a real-life environment.

In 2023, within the framework of the funding allocated from the "Fund of the Proceeds of Crime from Confiscation" basic budget programme of the Ministry of Justice under the measure “Establishment of a Digital Forensics Research and Innovation Laboratory for the Implementation of Innovative Solutions to increase the Detection Capacity of Economic Crimes”, the Centre purchased the *XRY* and *XRY PRO* mobile forensics and data recovery software suite. The purchase of this solution and its training is a fantastic asset for providing a technical and academic base for law enforcement officials on decryption of encrypted mobile devices. In 2024, several law enforcement agency officials were trained as trainers to conduct training process of other

law enforcement officials in the upcoming years. The first training phase for future trainers took place in Sweden, the second in Latvia at the Centre’s newly equipped training ground. All trainers have obtained the relevant certificates enabling them to train officials in both data retrieval and data processing.

National and international cooperation

In response to changes in the regulatory framework or specific crime outbreaks, the Centre, in cooperation with the management of law enforcement agencies, continuously identifies current training needs and addresses topical issues by organising think tanks, seminars and practical sessions in order to provide training support as quickly as possible. For example, in May of 2024, the Centre, in cooperation with the Latvian National Defence Academy and the Military Police of the National Armed Forces, organised a seminar to discuss and debate the challenges of investigating war crimes based on the Ukrainian experience after the invasion of the Russian Federation. The seminar brought together various experts – academics from higher education institutions, forensic experts, military representatives – from Kharkiv, Ukraine, to implement a successful and professional cooperation between Ukrainian and Latvian institutions and to exchange their theoretical and practical experience. The topics discussed were related to the structural changes in Ukrainian law enforcement authorities and the difficulties associated with the specifics of investigating criminal offences in direct war zones, with particular emphasis on the specifics of documenting and investigating war crimes.

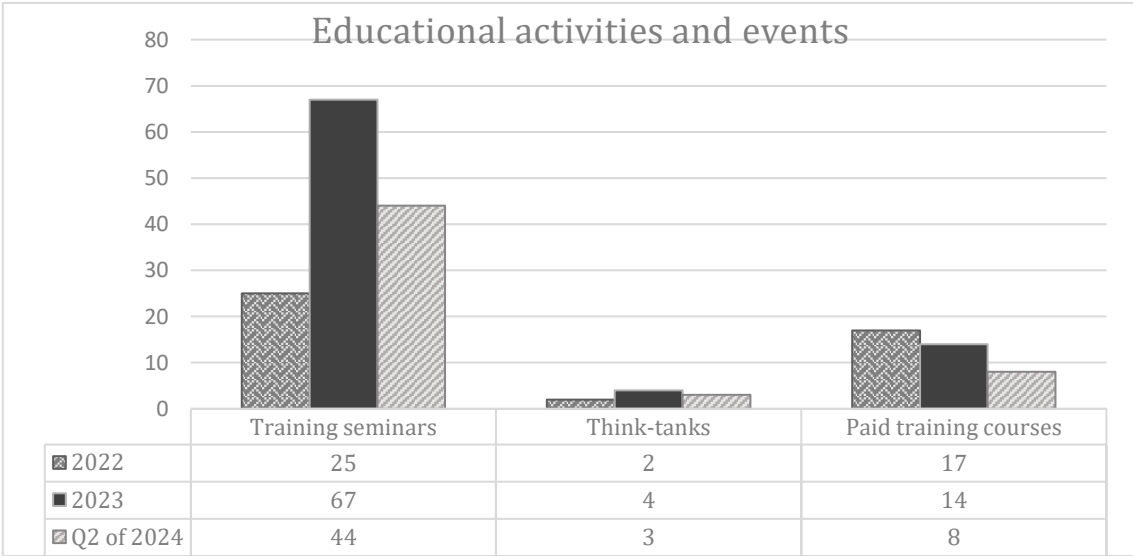


Fig. 1 Educational activities and events organized by the Centre from the start of 2022 till end of the 2nd quarter of 2024
(created by the authors)

Similarly in December of 2023, the Centre organized a week-long training cycle for the investigators of various Latvian law enforcement agencies to expand their knowledge and skills in investigating criminal cases tied to money laundering. During the training, invited experts of Britain’s economic advisory company “Adam Smith International” drew attention to the diversity of intelligence and evidence in these cases, provided the latest methods of finding information online, explained the importance of cooperation between investigators, police and courts, and discussed digital forensics, court presentation of said cases, tax evasion indicators and other topics. As a part of the Great Britain’s project “Serious and Organised Crime network (SOCnet)”, the training process was funded by the British government, and it was realized by virtue of the British Embassy in Latvia.

In order to develop a common understanding among law enforcers on the interpretation of the provisions of the Criminal Law and to promote its united application in practice, the seminar and think tank participants are not only investigators, but also prosecutors and judges, together analysing summaries of case law and exchanging individual viewpoints and experience.

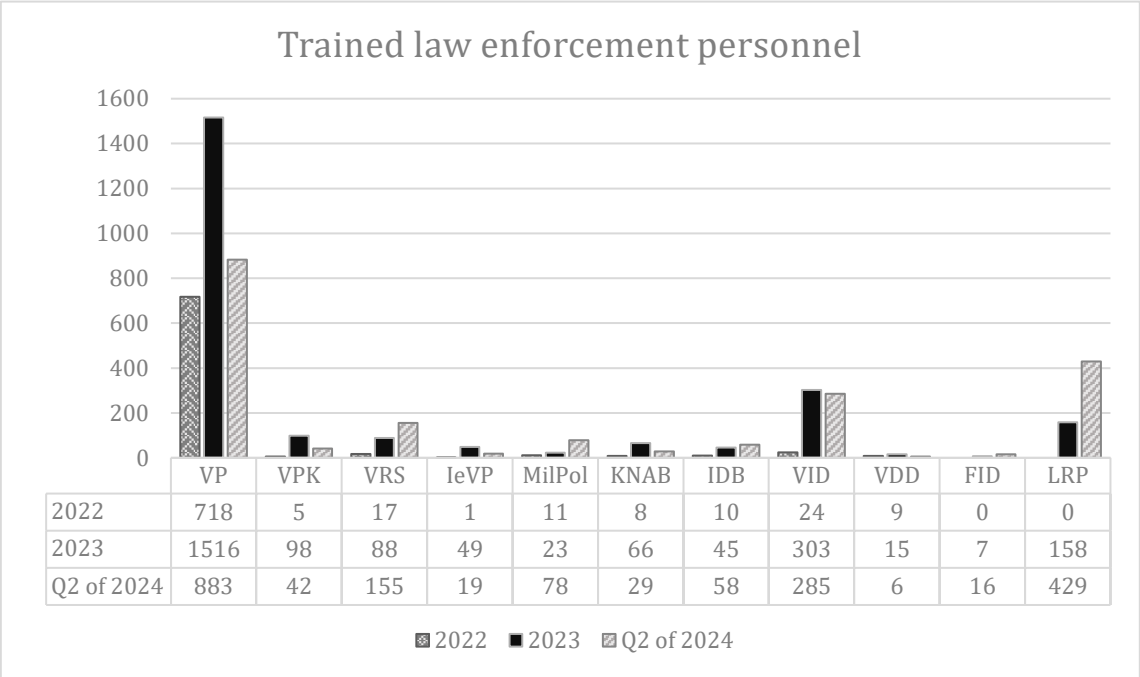


Fig. 2 Successfully trained law enforcement personnel from the start of 2022 till end of the 2nd quarter of 2024 (created by the authors)

Abbreviations: **VP** – State Police of Latvia, **VPK** – State Police College of Latvia, **VRS** – State Border Guard, **IeVP** – Latvian Prisons Administration, **MilPol** – Latvian Military Police, **KNAB** – Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau, **IDB** – Internal Security Bureau of the Ministry of the Interior, **VID** – State Revenue Service, **VDD** – Latvian State Security Service, **FID** – Financial Intelligence Unit of Latvia, **LRP** – Prosecution Office of the Republic of Latvia.

To organise such thematically targeted cross-sectoral seminars has now become a tradition. Thanks to the response of the judges of Economic Affairs Court, an event is organised once a year in May, to discuss topical issues and case law in proceedings on criminally acquired property. This provides a direct and immediate feedback and creates a common understanding of the application of legal rules in the investigation and trial of specific criminal offences. This year, the training was organised in a hybrid format, offering both face-to-face and remote participation. In terms of attendance, this is the best attended training event, with over 200 participants (mostly investigators) represented by all law enforcement authorities.

The Centre is also a participant in the project “Judicial Academy”, implemented by the Court Administration with the support of the European Union. It is a pleasure to be a partner in this project and to work together in developing a quality training processes and overcoming the challenges and difficulties faced by law enforcement officials in the investigation and adjudication of criminal offences.

Conclusions and suggestions

We, the Centre, are delighted and immensely proud when, after finishing the Centre’s training course, the trainee returns to their assignments with knowledge directly applicable to the needs of their job and that facilitates their future duties. The Centre regularly surveys participants, collects their responses, and implements solutions for the desired improvements and recommendations that are specified by the trainees themselves to better the learning process. In addition, new training topics specified by officials, which are necessary for the improvement of their professional activities and qualifications, are summarised which enables the development of an appropriate non-formal education curricula. It should be noted that the most relevant and unique training events are recorded and these recordings are available on E-Study platform of the State Police College (provided with Moodle), where they can be watched and re-watched in any time of the day. E-Study site also provides all law enforcement agencies with composite database that consists of methodological materials, publications of latest changes in legislation, guides and manuals, examples of official forms and other documents, training course presentations and more, that can be accessible without a time limit or any other restrictions.

By continuously improving the classrooms and training grounds of the Centre, the management and the staff can provide an inclusive learning environment to ensure that any investigator, whose workplace may not have comfortable and/or attractive circumstances, in addition to gaining knowledge and establishing contact with colleagues from other departments or institutions, also feels welcomed in the Centre and feels that their hard

work and responsibilities are understood and appreciated. It is warranted that they understand they are not alone with their issue and that they can get support and advice in one form or another, through discussions with their colleagues, superiors and the Centre's lecturers or through enlightening nature of the training process itself.

An investigator is and remains a leading force in any law enforcement authority because only he can enforce the true rule of law by treating every case with precision and objectivity. Through the training process, the staff of the Centre has got to know inquisitive, capable and professional investigators who care about their work, their profession and the prestige of their institution. This means only one thing: the criminal world in Latvia has no reason to rejoice, because there are countless bright, sharp and perceptive investigators who love their profession and who will make sure that the rule of law is of the highest value and that the justice will always prevail.

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