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Quality Control in European Border Management

Kontrola kvality v rámci evropské správy hraníc

Abstract

The establishment of a national quality management system capable of effectively supporting border control – both at the level of operational processes and the equipment deployed – constitutes an integral part of the Schengen evaluation mechanism, which serves as a cornerstone of European integrated border management (IBM). In 2023, within the framework of a joint EU-funded project, the Ministry of the Interior of Hungary and the Academy of the Police Force in Bratislava (Slovakia) launched a cooperative effort to develop an internationally recognized and

accredited mechanism based on European standards. As a result, the European accreditation of the Hungarian national quality control mechanism for integrated border management was achieved in November 2025, while the launch of a similar system on the Slovak side is now imminent. This study presents the organizational and regulatory background of the national quality management mechanism for border management, as well as the path leading to its implementation and the corresponding implementation alternatives.

Keywords: Integrated border management, quality control, Schengen evaluation mechanism.

Abstrakt

Zavedení národního systému kontroly kvality schopného efektivně podporovat hraniční kontrolu – a to jak na úrovni operačních procesů, tak i nasazeného vybavení – tvoří nedílnou součást schengenského hodnotícího mechanismu, který slouží jako základní kámen evropské integrované správy hranic (IBM). V roce 2023 zahájily Ministerstvo vnitra Maďarska a Akadémie Policejného sboru v Bratislavě (Slovensko) v rámci společného projektu financovaného EU spolupráci s cílem vyvinout mezinárodně uznávaný a akreditovaný mechanismus založený na evropských standardech. Maďarský národní mechanismus tak v listopadu 2025 získal evropskou akreditaci kontroly kvality pro integrovanou správu hranic, zatímco spuštění podobného systému na slovenské straně se bezprostředně blíží. Tato studie představuje organizační a regulační rámec národního mechanismu kontroly kvality pro správu hranic, jakož i cestu vedoucí k jeho implementaci a příslušné alternativy realizace.

Klíčová slova: Integrovaná správa hranic, kontrola kvality, schengenský hodnotící mechanismus.

Introduction¹

Following their widespread adoption across various sectors of industry and services, the terms quality assurance and quality management are becoming increasingly commonplace in law enforcement as well. Beyond the accredited methods and procedures traditionally associated with forensic sciences, the demand for quality standards is now most pronounced in the area of integrated border management (IBM).² Within the European Integrated Border Management (EIBM) framework established by the European Union, quality assurance is no longer understood solely as a technical inspection function, but as a governance instrument supporting

¹ This contribution was prepared within the framework of the project No. 101102709 – HSQA, entitled “Hungarian, Slovak development of quality assurance mechanism on border management”. The project is implemented under the thematic facility of the Border Management and Visa Instrument (BMVI), following the European Commission’s call for proposals ref. no. BMVI-2021-TF1-AG-NQAM.

² PORUBSKÁ, Dominika. 2025. Bezpečnostné hrozby v súvislosti s migráciou na vonkajšej hranici Slovenskej republiky [Security threats in connection with migration at the external border of the Slovak Republic].

operational effectiveness, institutional learning, and continuous improvement across all thematic components of border management.

Process quality assurance primarily covers the professional and management control processes of the organization directly executing border control.³ These can subsequently be supplemented by the related activities of all national IBM stakeholders, with the ultimate expectation that the system will comprehensively cover every aspect of their operations. The requirement to establish a quality control mechanism was laid down as early as 2019 among the thematic components of European Integrated Border Management; however, Member States have responded to this task with diverse solutions and, thus far, limited success. The European Commission and Frontex emphasize that national quality control mechanisms should ensure the systematic integration of Schengen evaluation findings, vulnerability assessments, and operational experience into national border governance.

One of the most important guarantees for the proper functioning of the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice⁴ is the complex evaluation mechanism commonly known as the Schengen evaluation. Today, this evaluation system relies on three pillars and is composed of regular Schengen evaluation visits (SCH-EVAL), vulnerability assessments, and – where applicable – the national quality control mechanism of the respective Member State.⁵ Although this approach has determined the developmental directions of the evaluation and monitoring mechanism to verify the application of the Schengen acquis since 2019,⁶ its third pillar – namely the operation of national mechanisms and the consideration of their experience – remains missing to this day. Consequently, considerable differences remain among Member States regarding the institutional organization, governance, and practical implementation of

³ LÓPEZ, Covadonga B. 2023. Border policing at sea: Tactics, routines, and the law in a Frontex patrol boat, *The British Journal of Criminology*, Volume 63, Issue 1, pp. 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azac009>

⁴ Title V, Articles 67–89 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (2016/C 202/01) deal in detail with the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice. In addition to general provisions, this Title discusses the following topics in separate chapters:

- policies on border checks, asylum and immigration;
- judicial cooperation in civil matters;
- judicial cooperation in criminal matters;
- police cooperation.

⁵ BALLA, József. 2018. Schengeni értékelési mechanizmus [Schengen evaluation mechanism]. ZSÁKAI, Lénárd. 2023. A schengeni értékelési mechanizmus nemzetközi és hazai koordinációja [International and domestic coordination of the Schengen evaluation mechanism].

ŠKRINÁR, Tomáš; ODLEROVÁ, Miriam. 2024. The Schengen evaluation and monitoring mechanism.

⁶ A turning point in the regulation of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) occurred in 2019 with the entry into force of Regulation (EU) 2019/1896, which replaced Regulation (EU) 2016/1624; furthermore, the Frontex Management Board adopted the first technical and operational strategy on European Integrated Border Management. These documents already explicitly referred to the necessity of a national quality control mechanism, although they did not yet provide guidelines for its appropriate design. (For more details, see: VÁJLOK, László; VEDŐ, Attila. 2023.)

national quality assurance mechanisms, while comparative academic analyses of these models remain limited.

In addition to the aforementioned, with the gradual strengthening of the role of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), common standards concerning the compliance of equipment deployed in border control have also gained prominence and conformity with unified sets of requirements – insofar as it can currently be spoken of – has become increasingly critical.⁷

On the one hand, Member States are expected to establish permanent national quality assurance mechanisms that support continuous organizational improvement; on the other hand, these mechanisms must simultaneously meet the requirements of the Schengen Evaluation and Monitoring Mechanism. These two sets of requirements necessitate a comprehensive approach to quality control, with the strategic directions defined in alignment with one another. Hungary's National Integrated Border Management Strategy⁸ addresses, in a dedicated chapter, the establishment of the quality control system (process quality assurance) for national integrated border management, as well as the certification of equipment to be deployed in border control in accordance with tool- and method-specific requirements (equipment quality assurance). The objective of this study is to present the results already achieved in these fields and, by evaluating them, to draw conclusions in order to support the definition of further developmental directions. The study aims to identify governance principles that can support the development of credible national quality assurance mechanisms in other Schengen Member States. During the pilot implementation in Hungary and Slovakia, the main challenge was the initial reluctance of border personnel, who were worried that the new system would create an unnecessary bureaucratic burden and increase their workload. However, during testing, these concerns gradually subsided as practitioners realized that the mechanism actually helped improve their daily work.

⁷ PORUBSKÁ, Dominika. 2018. Funkčnosť schengenských hraníc [Functionality of Schengen borders].

AAS, Franko K.; GUNDHUS, Helene O. I. 2015. Policing Humanitarian Borderlands: Frontex, Human Rights and the Precariousness of Life, *The British Journal of Criminology*, Volume 55, Issue 1, pp. 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azu086>

⁸ Hungary's National Integrated Border Management Strategy, completed in 2018 and promulgated by Government Resolution No. 1471/2019 (VIII. 1.), addressed the quality management mechanism in a dedicated chapter. Independent of this chapter, the strategy also defined the establishment and development of a quality assurance system to be operated in connection with border management activities; furthermore, during the analysis of the national integrated border management system, it identified the incomplete design of the quality assurance system for border control tasks as a weakness, though treating quality-based operation and management as an opportunity.

In 2022, Hungary's new, revised National Integrated Border Management Strategy came into force, spanning six years and promulgated by Government Resolution No. 1891/2021 (XII. 13.). This strategy also contained the objectives for developing the mechanism in a dedicated chapter, with more specific formulations. (For more details, see: HERCZEG, Mónika. 2024a.)

The national quality control mechanism of integrated border management

The regulatory basis for national quality control mechanisms is established by Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 of the European Parliament and of the Council, which groups the components of European Integrated Border Management into 12 thematic and 3 horizontal points. Among these – already present in the previous 2016 version of the regulation – we find the overarching component: “quality control mechanisms, in particular the Schengen evaluation mechanism, vulnerability assessments and national mechanisms, to ensure the implementation of Union legislation in the area of border management”, an element that also appears in several other EU regulatory instruments.⁹ Within the EIBM framework, a national quality control mechanism is understood as a governance instrument designed to support continuous institutional learning, evidence-based decision-making, and the consistent implementation of the Schengen acquis through systematic evaluation and feedback. On this basis, during the evaluation of compliance of border management according to uniform requirements – and within this, *inter alia*, border control – the current Schengen evaluation mechanism takes into account previous similar evaluations and their results, the latest risk analyses (vulnerability assessments), continuously expanding regulations that form an integral and mandatory part of the Schengen acquis, information obtained from other sources and gathered by the Commission regarding Schengen compliance, and the results of national quality control mechanisms. Furthermore, there is no legal source on which the regulation on the evaluation and monitoring mechanism to verify the application of the Schengen acquis could rely, since none explicitly requires Member States to establish a national quality control mechanism; it is therefore formulated cautiously, stating that these should be taken into account “where appropriate” – that is, if such a mechanism exists at all.

It follows from the above that the Commission is under no obligation to take into account the results of national mechanisms. The question may rightly arise as to what kind of national conformity assessment system needs to be established so that its results can be factored into Schengen evaluations. These requirements reflect internationally recognized principles of quality assurance, namely methodological consistency, impartiality, transparency, and comparability of evaluation results across Member States. Based on the spirit of the regulation and the experience gained from Schengen evaluations conducted in other Member States, the requirements for a national quality control mechanism can be summarized as follows:

1. The methodology applied within the mechanism must be internationally accepted.
2. The data provided as an output must be credible and free from bias.

⁹ Quality control already appears, among others, in the development of Eurosur (European Border Surveillance System) – the integrated border surveillance framework established to maintain and increase situational awareness and reaction capability – which explicitly accounts for the quality control of the data and information transmitted within it. The detailed rules for the Schengen evaluation and monitoring activities to verify the application of the Schengen acquis regarding border management, and specifically border control, are contained in Council Regulation (EU) 2022/922, which likewise incorporates quality control.

3. The outputs must align with a benchmark that is interpretable and acceptable to all Member States.

Against this regulatory background, Hungary and Slovakia initiated a joint pilot project to develop and test a sustainable national quality-assurance mechanism that is consistent with the EIBM governance framework. On 17 May 2022, the European Commission launched the call for proposals under reference number BMVI-2021-TF1-AG-NQAM, entitled “Call for proposals to support a pilot project for the development and launch of national quality assurance mechanisms”. At the request of the Ministry of the Interior of Hungary, the academic staff of the Department of Border Management of the Faculty of Law Enforcement at the University of Public Service and the Department of Integrated Border Management at the Academy of the Police Force in Bratislava prepared and developed the details of the proposal. Following its approval by the European Commission, the implementation of the project commenced on 1 April 2023.

The development of national quality assurance mechanisms is carried out within the project numbered 101102709 – HSQA entitled “Hungarian, Slovak development of quality assurance mechanism on border management”, implemented under the thematic facility of the Border Management and Visa Instrument (BMVI).¹⁰ The lead applicant is the Ministry of the Interior of Hungary, while Slovakia is represented by the Academy of the Police Force in Bratislava. The Hungarian expert working group of the project consists of 22 members – highly experienced personnel from the Ministry of the Interior, the National Police Headquarters, and the county police headquarters managing external Schengen borders – while the Slovak group consists of 6 members, comprising border police lecturers and researchers from the Academy of the Police Force in Bratislava.

The Hungarian and Slovak working groups perform their tasks based on the division of labour. The Slovak partner assumed the lead (developmental) role concerning air borders, while the Hungarian partner took the lead regarding land and water (river) borders.

The primary objectives of the project are as follows:

- To establish and operate, in the execution of border control, a national quality control mechanism that is verified and aligned with European Union expectations and Schengen monitoring requirements
- To develop a system for a national quality control mechanism that can be operated as a “best practice” at the European Union (international) level
- To lay down the foundations of a national quality control mechanism that can be broadly extrapolated to other law enforcement and public administration sectors
- To develop a long-term, sustainable, and mandatory training framework concerning the European Union quality control mechanism, vulnerability assessment, and national quality control mechanism for personnel participating in national border control

¹⁰ VÁJLOK, László; VEDŐ, Attila. 2023. Minőségügy és határellenőrzés európai uniós stratégiai megközelítésben [Quality Management and Border Control in the Strategic Approach of the European Union]. *Magyar Rendészet*. 2023, vol. 23, No. 4, pp. 203–219.

Collectively, these objectives aim to strengthen institutional credibility, improve interoperability among Member States, and enhance evidence-based governance within European Integrated Border Management.

In order for the results of the national integrated border management quality control to be taken into account within the Schengen evaluation mechanism, the system was developed based on the highest international standards, in a format accepted by international and European accreditation organizations within the framework of the European Co-operation for Accreditation Multilateral Agreement (EA MLA). Accreditation is a guarantee that inspection activities are carried out in accordance with internationally accepted principles of competence, impartiality, and consistency. This strengthens institutional legitimacy and mutual trust between Member States, which has also been confirmed by the procedure of the Hungarian National Accreditation Authority.

In accordance with the regulations of the accreditation authority and the relevant system standard, a successful pilot operation of the Inspection Body of the national quality control mechanism for integrated border management took place starting in February 2025, during which the border police branch of the Hungarian Police conducted its comprehensive self-assessment. The implementation of the subsequent conformity assessment was examined in detail by the National Accreditation Authority within the framework of the accreditation procedure initiated on 30 June 2025, culminating in a decision on 14 November 2025 to grant accredited status. It is crucial to highlight that the certification does not validate the standardized conformity of the Hungarian border management system itself; rather, it recognizes the results of the analytical and problem-identifying processes carried out within the framework of this system's operation as credible.

The Inspection Body operates as a virtual organization with 4 permanent staff members (the head and their deputy, as well as the quality management representative and their deputy) and currently 4 independent external experts; its operational framework is also incorporated into the Organizational and Operational Regulations of the Ministry of the Interior. The operational costs until the end of 2026 – on the part of both the Ministry of the Interior and the Police – are covered by the HSQA project, while European Union funding opportunities for subsequent sustainability (and further development) are currently being mapped out.

By achieving accredited status, Hungary became the first among the Schengen Member States to establish an internationally recognized border management quality control mechanism. This result has also attracted the attention of the European Commission and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency. Should the system be introduced in other Member States, it can only take place with Hungary's cooperation.

In the medium term, it is expected that the number and weight of recommendations issued as a result of Schengen evaluations will decrease in the areas covered by the quality control mechanism. The proper operation of the system will lead not only to the continuous monitoring of sector-specific issues but also to the targeted utilization of development resources and, in the long term, to a higher standard of border control.

As a result of the project – representing EU added value – an English-language manual is being prepared, enabling any Schengen Member State to develop its own quality control mechanism. The manual will offer two implementation alternatives: the establishment of an inspection body with accredited status (the Hungarian example), or an operation supervised by the accredited inspection body of another Member State (the Slovak example). The Slovak quality control mechanism is expected to commence its operation in the fourth quarter of 2026, with the methodological support and under supervision by the Hungarian partner.

Specific features of the Hungarian mechanism

International acceptance is achieved through certification carried out within the framework of the European Co-operation for Accreditation (EA), which is confirmed by the accredited status obtained following the procedure of the National Accreditation Authority (NAH).¹¹ The national quality control mechanism established and implemented in Hungary fulfils the aforementioned requirements and represents an institutional implementation of the quality assurance component of European Integrated Border Management (EIBM), thereby providing well-founded input data for future Schengen evaluation visits. Established within the structure of the Ministry of the Interior and operating since 1 February 2025, the “Inspection Body of the National Quality Control Mechanism of Integrated Border Management” obtained accredited status under the procedure of the NAH according to the requirements of the standard MSZ EN ISO/IEC 17020:2012 entitled “Conformity assessment. Requirements for the operation of various types of bodies performing inspection”, meaning that its results are acceptable and credible in all Schengen Member States – as EA signatory states.

Credibility, impartiality, and independence are guaranteed by the hierarchical relationships and operation of the Inspection Body. The central public administration body encompassing the inspection body is the Ministry of the Interior, which, under the legislation in force on the tasks and competences of members of the Government,¹² is responsible for the border control tasks that constitute the subject of the national quality control mechanism for border management. The Organizational and

¹¹ Regulation (EC) No 765/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council setting out the requirements for accreditation and market surveillance relating to the marketing of products lays down the Community policy to be applied in the field of accreditation. It establishes a comprehensive framework for accreditation and sets out the principles governing its operation and organization at the Community level. It imposes obligations on national accreditation bodies, Member States, and the European Commission, and defines the scope of responsibility and coordinating role of the European Co-operation for Accreditation (EA). On the one hand, the EA, and on the other hand, the European Commission, the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), and the competent national authorities confirm that accreditation is an independent and credible certification performed by accreditation bodies possessing the competence, impartiality, and professional integrity of conformity assessment bodies; therefore, its value and credibility correspond to the value and credibility of test and inspection reports, calibration certificates, management systems, product certificates, personnel certificates, and other certificates issued in accordance with harmonized standards. Source: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2009:116:0006:0011:HU:PDF>

¹² Government Decree No. 182/2022 (V. 24.) on the Tasks and Competences of Members of the Government, Chapter IV, Title 7.

Operational Regulations of the Ministry of the Interior¹³ define the operational framework of the Inspection Body, while its rules of procedure govern its internal relations of competence and responsibility as an independent organization, directly subordinate to the Administrative State Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior, which does not possess a separate staffing table and whose head and personnel are appointed by the Minister of the Interior. Given its organizational placement, the Inspection Body has no direct hierarchical relationship with the National Police Headquarters – which is currently the sole entity involved in the quality control mechanism – meaning that it cannot directly instruct the body responsible for border control and is independent of its operation. The connection with the inspected organization is ensured by the Partnership Cooperation Agreement concluded between the Ministry of the Interior and the National Police Headquarters, which was established specifically for the development and operation of the national quality control mechanism for border management.¹⁴

According to the Organizational and Operational Regulations of the Ministry of the Interior, the department providing the operational framework for the Inspection Body – in connection with its coordination tasks – performs the coordination and accreditation-related duties linked to the operation of the national quality control mechanism established in the field of integrated border management. Furthermore, in connection with its other tasks, acting as the independent inspection body of the national quality control mechanism established in the field of integrated border management, it conducts periodic conformity assessments, prepares the necessary audit programmes, and selects and trains its own auditors.

The organizational framework of its operation simultaneously provides an opportunity for the Inspection Body to utilize the professional knowledge and experience of the relevant organizational elements of the Ministry of the Interior, thereby also creating a link between the various tasks. An impartial and competent procedure is guaranteed by the safeguards laid down in the Quality Management Manual of the Inspection Body, the involvement of external experts independent of the inspected organization, the training system,¹⁵ and a traceable and transparent system of rules.

The operation of the national quality control mechanism of integrated border management comprises the activities performed by the border police branch of the Police within the framework of the conformity assessment subsystem entitled “The National Quality Control Mechanism of Integrated Border Management 1:2024”, as well as the conformity assessment activities performed in respect thereof by the Inspection Body in accordance with the standard MSZ EN ISO/IEC 17020:2012.

¹³ Ministry of the Interior Instruction No. 12/2022 (VI. 28.) on the Organizational and Operational Regulations of the Ministry of the Interior, Appendix 2 – 2.1.4.2. Department of European Home Affairs Cooperation.

¹⁴ BALLA, József; VEDÓ, Attila; BARTUS, Gábor; KAKÓCZ, Krisztián; PULICS, János; NÉMETH, Gábor; ŠKRINÁR, Tomáš; HOLUBICZKY, Vincent. 2026. Nemzeti minőség-ellenőrzési mechanizmus a határigazgatás területén [National quality control mechanism in the field of border management].

¹⁵ PULICS, János. 2025. Az integrált határigazgatás nemzeti ellenőrzési mechanizmusának képzése Magyarországon [Training of the national control mechanism of integrated border management in Hungary].

The common benchmark listed third among the requirements for the national quality control mechanism is provided by the self-assessment carried out within the framework of the conformity assessment subsystem operated by the Police, which examines the border control process by organizational levels and types of activity through the components of European integrated border management and, regarding certain matters, the criteria of the Return Directive.¹⁶ A standardized self-assessment framework ensures comparability of assessment results across organizational levels and facilitates longitudinal monitoring of institutional performance.

The methodology applied during the operation of the mechanism is underpinned by numerous scientific publications.¹⁷ The foundations of the scientific results presented in these works can be traced back to the quality management system of the former Hungarian Border Guard.¹⁸ This system ultimately laid the groundwork for

¹⁶ BALLA, József; VÁJLOK, László; VEDÓ, Attila; KAKÓCZ, Krisztián; NÉMETH, Gábor; BARTUS, Gábor; PULICS, János 2024a. Önértékelés a határrendészeti szolgálati ágnál [Self-assessment in the border police branch].

HERCZEG, Mónika. 2024b. Minőség-ellenőrzés a határigazgatásban [Quality control in border management].

¹⁷ VÁJLOK, László; VEDÓ, Attila. 2023. Minőségügy és határellenőrzés európai uniós stratégiai megközelítésben [Quality management and border control in a European Union strategic approach].

BALLA, József; VÁJLOK, László; VEDÓ, Attila; KAKÓCZ, Krisztián; NÉMETH, Gábor; BARTUS, Gábor; PULICS, János 2024a. Önértékelés a határrendészeti szolgálati ágnál [Self-assessment in the border police branch].

BALLA, József; BARTUS, Gábor; KAKÓCZ, Krisztián; NÉMETH, Gábor; PULICS, János 2024b. A magyar–szlovák minőségbiztosítási mechanizmus kidolgozásának előkészítése [Preparation for the development of the Hungarian-Slovak quality assurance mechanism].

HERCZEG, Mónika. 2024b. Minőség-ellenőrzés a határigazgatásban [Quality control in border management].

KOŠČ, Ivan; KOŠČOVÁ, Michaela; ODLEROVÁ, Miriam; ODLER, Robert. 2021.

Specialties of Remote Educational Process at Academy of the Police Force in the Time of Crisis Situation, INTED2021 Proceedings, pp. 3591–3599.

<https://doi.org/10.21125/inted.2021.0747>

KOŠČ, Ivan; KOŠČOVÁ, Michaela; STOLÁRIK, Peter; MOKRÁ, Jana 2024. Modern technical solutions for border control (Mobile, Data, Collection and Analysis Center).

MOKRÁ, Jana; KOŠČ, Ivan. 2024. The Schengen Evaluation Process in the Conditions of the Slovak Republic, Positives and Negatives and Its Development in the Future.

ODLER, Robert; HOLUBICZKY, Vincent. 2024. Quality of Airport Border Control at the M. R. Š. Airport in Bratislava.

VÁJLOK, László; VEDÓ, Attila. 2025. Minőség és stratégiai gondolkodás határok nélkül. Újfajta kihívás – újfajta szemlélet – újfajta gondolkodás – újfajta megoldás [Quality and strategic thinking without borders: New challenge – new approach – new thinking – new solution].

MOKRÁ, Jana; KOŠČ, Ivan. 2024. The Schengen Evaluation Process in the Conditions of the Slovak Republic, Positives and Negatives and Its Development in the Future.

¹⁸ TEKE, András; VERESS, Gáborné; VERESS, Gábor. 2005. A határőrségi tevékenységek minőségmenedzsmentjének alapjai [Foundations of quality management in border guard activities].

TEKE, András. 2007. Miért a minőség? Minőségfejlesztés és minőségirányítás a Határőrségnél [Why quality? Quality development and quality management at the Border Guard].

a quality-oriented approach to law enforcement, which enabled Hungary to become the first among the Member States of the European Union to establish a full-fledged national quality control mechanism for border control. The Hungarian model therefore demonstrates how internationally recognized accreditation principles can be integrated into national border governance while simultaneously supporting the objectives of the Schengen Evaluation and Monitoring Mechanism.

Specific features of the Slovak mechanism

Building on the Hungarian model, the Slovak solution represents a specific yet complementary approach. The two approaches offer alternative governance solutions for implementing national quality assurance mechanisms within the European integrated border management framework. While the Hungarian side chose the legislatively and administratively demanding path of full national accreditation under MSZ EN ISO/IEC 17020:2012, the Slovak research team focused specifically on developing a so-called supervised model. This model relies on the operation of a national self-assessment system under the direct methodological guidance and supervisory oversight of the already accredited Hungarian partner.¹⁹

From the perspective of project output management and European added value, this decision carries strategic significance. For many EU Member States, full national accreditation is unfeasible or inefficient due to financial, personnel, or legislative constraints. The Slovak alternative thus introduces a “dual solution” into the final output of the project – the English-language manual. Thanks to this, other countries in the Schengen area will be able to choose between a robust accredited model (the Hungarian example) or a more flexible, yet fully verified supervised model (the Slovak example).

The formal and political-professional framework for Slovak participation was defined already during the project’s initial phase through the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation between the President of the Police Force of the Slovak Republic and the National Police Commissioner (ORFK) of Hungary. By this act, both parties committed to full cooperation in building an integrated quality self-assessment system.

One of the most important specific features of the Slovak solution is the institutional anchoring of the control body (analogous to the Hungarian Inspection Body). While in Hungary this body is integrated into the structure of the Ministry of the Interior, on the Slovak side, its establishment is planned at the Academy of the Police Force in Bratislava, which acts as a direct beneficiary and guarantor of research tasks within the project.

This solution elegantly and effectively meets the fundamental requirement of independent quality assessment – objectivity and the elimination of conflicts of interest. Institutional independence is a crucial aspect. The Academy of the Police Force in Bratislava is an autonomous contributory organization with its own budgetary chapter, standing outside the direct management structure of the Presidium of the Police Force.

TEKE, András. 2024. Minőségirányítási tevékenység a teljes jogú schengeni csatlakozás előtt [Quality management activity before full Schengen accession].

¹⁹ HOLUBICZKY, Vincent. 2025. Kontrola kvality a inovácie v integrovanom riadení hraníc [Quality control and innovation in integrated border management].

Conversely, the executive units subject to control – specifically the Bureau of Border and Foreign Police (ÚHCP) and its subordinate departments – fall directly under the competence of the Presidium of the Police Force. Separating the evaluating (academic) team from executive police practice ensures that the control body is not hierarchically subordinate to the evaluated entities.

Within the personnel structure of this newly established body at the Academy of the Police Force, permanent coordination and auditor positions are proposed to ensure the smooth transfer of the methodology as well as audit planning and communication with the Hungarian supervisor.

The quality self-assessment mechanism itself is implemented vertically across three hierarchical levels within the structure of the ÚHCP P PZ in the context of the Slovak border police:

- 1. Central level:** Bureau of Border and Foreign Police of the Presidium of the Police Force (ÚHCP P PZ)
- 2. Regional level:** Directorates of Border and Foreign Police (RHCP)
- 3. Local (executive) level:** Border Control Departments (OHK)

In terms of material scope, the system covers processes at both land and air borders, which directly reflects the expert role of the Slovak team, which was responsible precisely for developing the methodology for air borders within the project. An important specific feature of the current phase is that foreign police departments (OCP) are currently excluded from this mechanism, thereby concentrating attention exclusively on the specific processes of integrated border management (IBM).

The current state of implementation as of May 2026 confirms the system's readiness to transition into the practical phase. By the end of May, specialized training for national evaluators, which took place in Bratislava and Sobrance, was successfully completed. This has resulted in 32 fully trained experts from the ranks of the border police and academia.

This personnel base will be crucial for the upcoming testing phase of self-assessment, which will be conducted in the field during the summer months. The collected data and partial results will undergo in-depth analysis in the autumn of 2026 and will subsequently be submitted to the Hungarian partner for supervisory assessment and validation. This timeline targets the expected full-scale launch of the Slovak quality control mechanism in the fourth quarter of 2026. Following supervisory validation by the Hungarian-accredited inspection body, the Slovak model is expected to provide empirical evidence of the applicability of the supervised governance approach in real operational conditions. The comparison of the Hungarian and Slovak models demonstrates that credible national quality assurance mechanisms may be achieved through different institutional arrangements, provided that methodological consistency, independent evaluation, and internationally recognized quality assurance principles are maintained.

Summary

The development and operation of the complex quality management approach presented in this study is a significant professional and related scientific achievement in its own right; however, it pales in comparison with the potential inherent in the future

development of the mechanism. The national quality control mechanism of integrated border management must eventually extend to all actors involved in integrated border management. Through the gradual involvement of all relevant organizations, a more comprehensive system can be established that leverages sector-specific experience on a broader scale. Such gradual expansion would strengthen organizational learning, improve institutional coherence, and support evidence-based border governance across the national IBM system.

The accredited status of the Inspection Body also represents the certified conformity of the applied methodology, paving the way for its adoption by other Member States. For Member States that opt to implement the supervised quality control mechanism, the necessary quality guarantees would likewise be attainable through supervisory inspections. This, in turn, would lead to the expansion of inter-Member State cooperation in the field of quality control.

Slovakia's participation in the HSQA project is a direct embodiment of this synergy and represents the first real-world implementation of the supervised model in practice. It demonstrates how a partner state can effectively adopt a proven methodology and adapt it to its own institutional structures without the need to undergo a duplicate and administratively demanding accreditation process.

The connection between the academic environment and the executive units of the border police on the Slovak side confirms that an objective, institutionally independent self-assessment system is flexible and sustainable in the long term. The Hungarian and Slovak experiences with full accreditation demonstrate a new level of bilateral cooperation and serve as a universal, pragmatic benchmark for enhancing security and mutual trust throughout the Schengen area. Future research should assess the long-term operational effectiveness of both models and examine their applicability in other institutional and administrative contexts in the Schengen area. For other Member States considering these frameworks, no single model represents a universal solution; each has specific advantages depending on the national context. States seeking a formal, standardized structure may find the accredited model more suitable, whereas those looking for a more flexible and administratively less demanding approach should consider the supervised model. Ultimately, Member States should select and adapt the model that best aligns with their existing institutional capacities and operational needs.

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