

# Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: State Border Guard College

Study field: Internal Security and Civil Protection

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# **Summary of the Assessment of the Study Field and the Relevant Study Programmes**

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The study field of "Internal Security and Civil Protection" at the State Border Guard College (SBGC) plays a pivotal role in addressing Latvia's national security priorities, particularly regarding its strategic position as a member of the European Union. The programme is meticulously designed to provide a comprehensive and structured approach to training future border security officers and civil protection professionals. The aims of the programme "Border Guarding" are clearly defined, focusing on the preparation of specialists who can effectively ensure Latvia's internal security and meet EU border protection needs. This alignment with both national and European strategic objectives demonstrates the programme's commitment to addressing contemporary security challenges.

The educational framework of the programme encompasses a diverse array of subjects, including law enforcement, border management, civil protection, and emergency response. By integrating these topics, the curriculum ensures that students acquire both theoretical knowledge and practical skills essential for success in their future roles. This focus on practical applicability is crucial for preparing graduates to meet the specific demands of the border guard profession, allowing them to operate effectively within the complexities of national and international security operations.

A notable strength of the programme is its impressive employment rate, with over 90% of graduates securing relevant positions within the fields of border control, civil protection, and law enforcement. This high employment statistic underscores the programme's effectiveness in aligning educational outcomes with the needs of the job market, thus demonstrating its economic relevance and value to students. The successful integration of international collaborations, such as partnerships with FRONTEX and participation in the Erasmus+ programme, enhances the programme's global outlook. These partnerships not only provide students with valuable opportunities for international exposure and exchange but also facilitate the sharing of best practices and innovations in border security training. Moreover, the curriculum has undergone regular updates and revisions to ensure its continued relevance in light of the evolving security landscape in Latvia. This includes the integration of new trends such as cybersecurity, advanced surveillance technologies, and international cooperation strategies. By proactively addressing these developments, the programme ensures that graduates are well-equipped to tackle emerging challenges and respond to the dynamic nature of security threats.

However, despite notable strengths, there are areas that could benefit from further development. While the institution has invested in modern technological resources, supported by EU Structural Funds and other initiatives, there are still some areas where ongoing updates and improvements are needed to fully meet the demands of cutting-edge border security training. For example, some technical equipment may require enhancements to stay aligned with the latest developments in the field. Additionally, although the institution encourages international collaboration through programmes like Erasmus+ and Nordplus, the foreign language proficiency of the academic staff, particularly in English, remains an area with potential for growth. Strengthening language skills could further enhance the institution's capacity for international cooperation and broaden opportunities for research partnerships.

Another area for potential growth lies in the interdisciplinary focus of the programme. While it covers a wide range of security-related topics, expanding the curriculum to include other fields such as technology, international relations, environmental security, and crisis management could attract a more diverse student body. By embracing a broader interdisciplinary approach, the programme could better prepare students for a wider array of roles within the security sector, ensuring they are equipped to address complex and multifaceted security challenges.

Furthermore, although the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) system is formally established, it

appears to be underutilized. This underutilization suggests a need for enhanced awareness and communication regarding the RPL process among potential applicants and faculty. By increasing understanding of RPL, the programme could provide greater access to non-traditional students who possess relevant field experience but may lack formal educational qualifications. Expanding the recognition of prior professional experience could enhance the inclusivity of the programme and allow for a richer diversity of perspectives among students.

In terms of assessment practices, while the programme employs a variety of methods to evaluate student achievements, inconsistencies in assessment criteria across different faculty members may affect the fairness and reliability of grading. Standardizing assessment practices across all courses and teaching staff would enhance the overall integrity of the evaluation process, ensuring that all students are assessed against the same rigorous standards, regardless of the lecturer or course format. Implementing a systematic approach to harmonizing assessment methods will foster greater transparency and ensure that all students are held to the same academic expectations.

In conclusion, the "Internal Security and Civil Protection" study field at SBGC offers a well-structured and vital educational programme that effectively addresses Latvia's national security needs. Its alignment with national and European policies ensures that graduates are well-prepared for careers in security, border control, and law enforcement. Nevertheless, for the programme to maintain its relevance and adapt to international contexts and emerging global security challenges, it is essential to invest in modern technological resources, enhance language skills among faculty, and fully utilize the Recognition of Prior Learning system. By addressing these areas for improvement and embracing a more interdisciplinary approach, the programme can continue to meet the demands of national security while expanding its scope to encompass a comprehensive view of global security challenges. Ultimately, the ongoing commitment to quality assurance and continuous improvement will position the SBGC as a leader in security education within the region and beyond.

## **I - Assessment of the Study Field**

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#### **1.1 Management of the Study Field**

##### **Analysis**

1.1.1. The aims of the study field "Internal Security and Civil Protection" are clearly defined, focusing on the preparation of specialists capable of ensuring Latvia's internal security and meeting EU border protection needs. The strategic alignment with both national and European objectives are evident, with a strong focus on law enforcement and security procedures. The "Border Guarding" programme, as part of this study field, has a targeted scope, which is crucial for preparing students to meet the specific demands of the border guard profession. These aspects are described in Self Assessment report (hereinafter SAR) Section 2.1.1, which outlines the programme's objectives and the alignment with national priorities and EU regulations, and in Section 2.2.1 Study Programme Goals and Objectives, where it discusses the alignment of the "Internal Security and Civil Protection" programme with Latvia's national security needs and strategic objectives.

However, despite these clearly defined objectives, the programme could benefit from further expansion. Incorporating broader global security challenges, such as cybersecurity and international terrorism, would strengthen its adaptability to future trends and enhance the preparedness of graduates for a wider range of security threats. Expanding beyond a purely Latvian or EU perspective and integrating a global security dimension would better equip students for careers in international settings.

1.1.2. A comprehensive SWOT analysis has been conducted, demonstrating a solid understanding of both internal and external factors influencing the programme. Detailed analysis of the SWOT process can be found in SAR Section 2.1.2. This section provides a comprehensive breakdown of the

strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the programme, including aspects related to employer needs and international collaboration. Experts conclude that the SBGC has systematically identified its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) as part of its strategic planning framework described in detail in Section 2.1.2. Key strengths include the engagement of experienced professionals and a strong feedback loop from students and employers, which contribute to a robust and responsive curriculum. Conversely, weaknesses may arise from the need for ongoing updates and the potential for discrepancies between educational content and the rapidly evolving landscape of border security. Opportunities exist for integrating innovative pedagogical approaches and developing partnerships with other educational institutions, while external threats may include shifts in governmental regulations and global challenges that necessitate prompt adaptations to the curriculum.

Strengths identified also include the programme's alignment with national security needs and the high employability of graduates within the State Border Guard (SBG). Additionally, the inclusion of qualified teaching staff with practical experience in the field is a notable asset, enhancing the programme's relevance and effectiveness in preparing students for professional roles. Moreover, strengths, such as the alignment of the study field with both national security priorities and European Union (EU) regulations, ensuring that the programme is highly relevant to the needs of Latvia and the EU's external borders. Another significant strength is the close cooperation between SBGC and the SBG, which ensures that the curriculum remains responsive to the evolving demands of border control and law enforcement.

On the other hand, weaknesses were also identified, particularly in the areas of technological resources and language proficiency among staff. A lack of cutting-edge technology for training purposes could limit the development of students' practical skills in modern border control methods. Additionally, limited foreign language skills among faculty members may hinder their ability to engage in international cooperation and research, which is critical for expanding the programme's reach and reputation.

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In terms of opportunities, SBGC is well-positioned to take advantage of international partnerships, including those offered through its role as a Partner Agency of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX). The college also has opportunities to leverage EU funding for co-financed projects and develop stronger international networks through initiatives like Erasmus+ and Nordplus, which could further enhance student and staff mobility and broaden the institution's global outlook.

At the same time, several threats are noted, such as the demographic decline in Latvia, which is leading to a reduced pool of potential students, as well as increased competition with other law enforcement agencies and educational institutions for student recruitment. Additionally, the ageing of academic staff and challenges in attracting new, highly qualified personnel due to salary constraints pose risks to the long-term sustainability of the programme.

The threat of financial limitations, particularly budget dependency on the Ministry of Interior, poses risks to the programme's long-term sustainability. The lack of long-term financial planning could hinder necessary upgrades to infrastructure and teaching resources, which are essential for maintaining the programme's high standards.

The State Border Guard College (SBGC) employs a structured and systematic approach to the development and updating of its study programmes, ensuring that they remain relevant and aligned with the evolving needs of the border security sector. This process is governed by specific regulations, including the "Procedures for Planning, Organisation, Control and Analysis of the Study

Process” and the “Regulations on the procedure for Development and Updating of Formal Education Programmes at the State Border Guard College”. These guidelines not only facilitate compliance with national education standards but also promote a high-quality educational experience for students. A significant aspect of the SBGC’s development process is its annual review cycle, It typically takes place in May. This allows for a thorough examination of the study programmes, with the flexibility to implement updates as necessary in response to changes in regulatory requirements or advancements in border control methodologies and technology. Such adaptability is critical for maintaining the relevance and effectiveness of the curriculum. Collaboration plays a pivotal role in the programme development process. The SBGC Education Coordination Unit works closely with various departments within the college and with representatives from the State Border Guard (SBG), which serves as the primary employer for graduates. This collaborative effort ensures that the curriculum reflects the expectations and requirements of the SBG, thereby enhancing the employability of graduates. Draft study programmes are subject to evaluation by the SBG prior to final approval, fostering a strong link between academic training and practical application in the field. This collaborative process is outlined in Section 2.2.2 of the self-evaluation report, where it is noted that the development and updating of study programmes are conducted in cooperation with the SBG, with draft programmes being evaluated by the SBG before final approval by the SBGC Council.

Overall, experts conclude that the State Border Guard College has conducted a comprehensive SWOT analysis of the study field 'Internal Security and Civil Protection,' which plays a central role in its development planning.

The results of this SWOT analysis have been fully integrated into the development planning documents of SBGC. Measures to address the identified weaknesses and threats are included in the college’s strategic plans, such as improving the material and technical base of the institution, enhancing the foreign language and technological competencies of the teaching staff, and securing additional funding to modernize facilities. Furthermore, efforts to strengthen international cooperation and increase student mobility are part of the strategic priorities for the coming years.

These proactive steps, informed by the SWOT analysis, ensure that SBGC remains adaptable and continues to meet the needs of Latvia’s and the EU’s security environment.

1.1.3. The management structure within SBGC is well-defined and supports the development of the "Internal Security and Civil Protection" study field. This structure and administrative decision-making process is described in SAR Section 1.2, outlining roles and responsibilities. The leadership team, composed of the Director, Deputy Directors for Studies and Service Organisation, and the Education Coordination Unit (ECU), ensures that the programme operates smoothly. These roles are clearly delineated, and the decision-making process is efficient, with regular meetings and feedback mechanisms in place to address operational challenges.

However, there is room for improvement in the area of faculty development and training. While the structure supports the day-to-day running of the programme, more could be done to provide ongoing training for academic staff, particularly in modern security technologies such as artificial intelligence and cybersecurity. Enhancing the continuous professional development (CPD) of faculty would contribute to maintaining the programme's relevance in an evolving security landscape.

The technical and administrative support provided is satisfactory, ensuring that students have access to the general resources needed to succeed. However, certain technical tools may require further upgrades to align with the latest industry standards, as part of ongoing investments in staff training and resource development, which would solidify the programme’s long-term growth.

1.1.4. The State Border Guard College (SBGC) has established a well-structured and transparent admissions process, which aligns with the requirements of the border guard profession. Admission and recognition procedures are detailed in SAR Section 2.1.4, including methods for student assessment. Criteria for admission are clear and based on prior professional qualifications, such as the Level 4 Border Inspector certification, and relevant academic achievements. The admissions

system is fair and ensures that the best-suited candidates, with both academic potential and professional background, are selected.

The procedures for recognition of prior learning (RPL), both formal and non-formal, are in place and ensure that students who have acquired relevant knowledge or experience outside formal education are given credit for their achievements. This system supports lifelong learning and facilitates access for students with extensive professional experience in law enforcement or security.

However, the self-evaluation report indicates that the utilization of RPL has been minimal, with few cases of its application. This suggests that while the system exists, it may be underutilized, potentially due to a lack of awareness or understanding among applicants and faculty. Enhancing communication about the RPL process, both internally and externally, could help increase its use and provide greater access to individuals with relevant field experience but non-traditional educational backgrounds. Expanding the recognition of prior professional experience could further enhance the inclusivity of the programme.

The system for assessment of student achievements SAR (Section 2.1.5) is also clearly defined and logically structured. The college uses a combination of examinations, practical evaluations, and project-based assessments to evaluate student performance. This diversity in assessment methods ensures that students are assessed holistically, with both theoretical knowledge and practical skills being taken into account. However, more could be done to align these assessments with the needs of the modern security sector, particularly by integrating digital tools and more interactive, technology-driven assessments.

1.1.5. The evaluation of student achievements at the State Border Guard College is grounded in the principles outlined in the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 305, which sets forth standards for professional higher education, which is further detailed in the SBGC “Regulations on the Procedure for Study and Examinations at the State Border Guard College”. These principles emphasize the aggregation of positive achievements, the necessity of assessments, transparency and clarity of requirements, diversity in examination types, and the relevance of assessments. Importantly, these principles are consistently applied to both full-time and part-time students, fostering fairness and equality within the academic environment. The SBGC has developed comprehensive regulations that detail the assessment of study programme completion, covering various aspects such as the types and forms of examinations, assessment criteria, and procedures for improving marks. These regulations are crafted by the Education Coordination Unit in collaboration with SBGC departments and the Professional Education Service, ensuring thorough stakeholder involvement. The Supervisory Board reviews and approves these regulations, guaranteeing a participatory approach to the assessment framework. A diverse range of assessment methods is employed to evaluate student achievements, enabling students to demonstrate their analytical and creative abilities, as well as their acquired knowledge, skills, and competencies. Key assessment types include oral examinations, practical tests, and written tests. The emphasis on practical assessments is particularly significant, as it closely aligns with the competencies required for the Junior Officer role within the State Border Guard. This focus ensures that students are equipped with the relevant skills necessary for effective performance in their future positions. Incorporating modern technology into its assessment processes, the SBGC utilizes interactive online tools and platforms such as Kahoot, Quizizz, and Moodle. This approach not only enhances student engagement but also aligns evaluation methods with contemporary educational practices. Transparency is a priority; the SBGC communicates clearly about examination types, conditions for completion, and assessment criteria at the beginning of each course, setting explicit expectations for students. The college exhibits flexibility in updating its assessment methods to reflect changes in legal regulations, border control procedures, or the introduction of new information systems. This responsiveness ensures that the curriculum remains relevant and reflective of current professional standards. Additionally, the assessment procedures for traineeships and qualification examinations are well-defined, allowing students to prepare adequately for practical applications in real-world settings.

To maintain a continuous improvement approach, the SBGC actively solicits student feedback on the assessment process through surveys, informing the ongoing development of assessment methods. The systematic analysis of student evaluations and suggestions allows for adaptive changes to the assessment framework, ensuring alignment with student needs and industry standards. While the assessment system has notable strengths, there are areas for potential improvement. For instance, the consistency of assessment criteria across different departments and lecturers could be enhanced. The Self-Evaluation Report indicates some variability in how different instructors evaluate student work, which may lead to inconsistencies in grading. Standardizing assessment practices across all courses and faculty members would enhance the fairness and reliability of the evaluation process, ensuring that all students are assessed against the same standards, regardless of the lecturer or course. Furthermore, the alignment between assessment methods and the aims of the study programme is generally strong. For example, courses related to ID and passport management, surveillance systems, and the use of drones effectively prepare students for the technological challenges they will face in their professional roles. This alignment also brings the assessment process in line with modernization trends observed in other European educational institutions.

1.1.6. The SBGC has established strong principles of academic integrity, which are reinforced by clearly defined mechanisms and tools to promote honesty and combat plagiarism. The basic principles of academic integrity are laid down in the “Code of Ethics for Officials with Special Service Rank and Employees of the SBGC”, which aims to promote the honest performance of official duties by SBGC staff and to foster a culture of integrity, to reduce the possibility of conflicts of interest and lobbying situations. The details of academic integrity mechanisms are found in SAR Section 2.1.6, including the use of technology to detect plagiarism. The presence of plagiarism in research works of the students is checked, where possible, by the designated supervisors of qualification thesis and, where necessary, by the Informatics and Communications Unit of the SBGC using the open source Windows product WCopyfind. The institution has implemented a Code of Conduct for its students and staff, particularly for officers with special service ranks, which underscores the importance of maintaining ethical standards in both academic and professional work.

Effective anti-plagiarism tools are in place, including the use of plagiarism detection software WCopyfind integrated within the Moodle e-learning platform. This helps to ensure that academic work, mainly research and final-qualification work submitted by students is original and meets the required standards of integrity. However, the report does not explicitly mention the use of industry-standard plagiarism detection tools, which raises some concerns about whether the current mechanisms are robust enough to detect more sophisticated forms of academic dishonesty. To improve the mechanism for compliance with the principles of academic integrity, it is planned to introduce in 2024 a unified e-learning platform of the MoI colleges with a plagiarism control tool linked to the unified computerised plagiarism control system of the universities. The SBGC’s focus on building a culture of integrity within the institution is commendable, particularly given the sensitive and high-stakes nature of the field of internal security. Regular monitoring by training commanders and heads of departments ensures that both students and staff adhere to the ethical standards expected within the institution. However, there is room for further development in this area. Continuous reinforcement of these principles, along with ongoing training for faculty and students on the importance of academic integrity, would strengthen the internal culture even more. To conclude, while the academic integrity framework at SBGC is sound, incorporating more advanced plagiarism detection software and offering ongoing training on ethical practices could further enhance the institution’s efforts to maintain high standards in academic and professional conduct.

### Conclusions:

The management of the "Internal Security and Civil Protection" study field at the State Border Guard College (SBGC) demonstrates a strong alignment with Latvia's national security priorities and the European Union's border protection regulations. The aims of the study field are clearly defined and attainable, focusing on preparing specialists who can ensure Latvia's internal security while meeting EU border protection needs. The study field aligns closely with both national and European objectives, particularly through the "Border Guarding" programme, which has a well-targeted scope designed to meet the specific demands of the border guard profession.

The management structure supporting the study field is well-organized, fostering effective decision-making and development. The leadership team, comprising the Director, Deputy Directors for Studies and Service Organisation, and the Education Coordination Unit, plays a crucial role in coordinating efforts across departments and working closely with representatives from the State Border Guard (SBG). This collaboration ensures that the curriculum remains relevant to both current security challenges and employer needs, resulting in high employability for graduates. Furthermore, the structured system for the development and updating of the study programmes ensures that they remain responsive to evolving national and EU security demands, a process that involves active input from both academic staff and the SBG.

A comprehensive and logical system for assessing student achievements is in place, utilizing a balanced approach that includes a variety of evaluation methods, ranging from theoretical examinations to practical assessments. This ensures students are well-prepared for the practical demands of the border guard profession. Additionally, the principles of academic integrity are strongly enforced through mechanisms such as plagiarism detection tools and the SBGC's Code of Conduct, creating a culture of honesty and accountability within the institution.

Despite the solid foundation, there are areas within the management of the study field that require further attention to ensure continued effectiveness. While the programme is well-aligned with Latvia's and the EU's security needs, it currently lacks a broader global security perspective. Expanding the curriculum to incorporate emerging global security challenges, such as cybersecurity and international terrorism, would better prepare graduates to respond to a wider range of security threats and adapt to the rapidly changing international security landscape.

Additionally, the recognition of prior learning (RPL) system, though established, appears underutilized. This could limit access for individuals with extensive professional experience but without formal educational qualifications. Increasing awareness and utilization of the RPL system could enhance inclusivity, providing more opportunities for professionals to contribute to and benefit from the programme.

### Strengths:

1. The study field is well-aligned with Latvia's national security goals and the EU's border protection regulations, ensuring that the curriculum is relevant and effective in preparing graduates for roles in the State Border Guard (SBG) and other security-related professions.
2. The management structure is well-organized, with effective decision-making processes that ensure the smooth implementation of the programme. The leadership team, including the Director, Deputy Directors, and the Education Coordination Unit, ensures smooth coordination across departments and close collaboration with the SBG, which enhances the curriculum's relevance to the practical demands of the profession.
3. The institution has a comprehensive system for assessing student achievements, utilizing a range of evaluation methods that balance theoretical knowledge with practical application.
4. While academic honesty mechanisms are robust and supported by the institution's Code of Ethics, the lack of industry-standard plagiarism detection tools highlights an area for improvement. Efforts to introduce enhanced tools in 2024 will further bolster compliance with principles of academic integrity.



5. Close cooperation with the SBG ensures that the curriculum remains up-to-date with industry needs, and the involvement of employers in the feedback process further improves the relevance of the programme.

Weaknesses:

1. While the management of the study field 'Internal Security and Civil Protection' is well-aligned with Latvia's national security priorities and EU regulations, it lacks a strategic focus on anticipating and adapting to emerging global security challenges, such as cybersecurity and international terrorism. This could limit the study field's ability to evolve in step with rapidly shifting security demands, potentially impacting the preparedness of future graduates in addressing a broader spectrum of security threats.
2. The system for recognizing prior learning is in place but underutilized. This could limit access to the programme for individuals with extensive professional experience but without formal educational qualifications.

## **1.2. Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System**

### **Analysis**

1.2.1. The SBGC has established a quality policy - "SBGC Internal Quality Assurance System", which the expert group was able to access through Moodle platform with provided access by the College as well as the website, which can be accessed here: <https://www.vrk.rs.gov.lv/lv/media/1998/download?attachment>.

According to the SAR p.9, the main objective of the quality policy is to contribute to the achievement of high quality results and to ensure the quality of education at the highest level by continuously improving the study process, the educational environment and the management of the educational process of the SBGC. The system of quality assurance includes all major areas of study work: development and improvement of education programmes, learning, teaching and assessment, admission of applicants and selection of academic staff, provision of material and technical support of the study process and others.

As specified during an onsite visit meeting with the representatives of QA and stated in the SAR p.9, The Director of the SBGC is responsible for the implementation of the quality policy of the College. The Deputy Director for Studies of the SBGC is responsible for the implementation and quality monitoring of the study process. The Deputy Director for Studies of the SBGC organizes, monitors and evaluates the quality of the implementation of the study programme and ensures the continuous and comprehensive development and improvement of the study process. In regards to surveys and preparation of summaries of results, there is another person that administers on those matters. In addition to quality policy, there are various regulations and documents that SBGC follows such as Annual order of SBGC „Quality assurance action plan of the State Border Guard College”.

It can be stated that the system developed ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field and the relevant study programmes.

1.2.2. As specified in the SAR p.30, the development and updating of study programmes at the SBGC is carried out in accordance with the SBGC Regulation "Procedures for Planning, Organisation, Control and Analysis of the Study (Training) Process at the State Border Guard College" and the "Regulation on the Procedure for the Development and Updating of Formal Education Programmes at the SBGC". The study programme is updated once a year according to the deadlines set by the Director of the SBGC , but in certain cases when needed, it can be updated more frequently such as due to changes made in regulations. The development and updating of the content of the study programme implemented by the SBGC is carried out by the SBGC Education Coordination Unit in cooperation with the SBGC departments and the SBG, who is the central and main employer.

Changes to the programmes are approved by the SBGC Council.

Based on the information provided in the SAR p.31, in the period 2018-2023, the study programme was amended 14 times and the changes included transmission from CP to ECTS, implementation of new study courses as "Professional Ethics and Psychology" and others.

Based on the meetings with graduates, employers and students, it can be stated that the stakeholders are involved in the quality assurance mechanism and are a substantial part of the procedure of development of the study programme. There is a procedure established to evaluate the implementation and content of the study programme in a form of survey. The procedure is described in greater detail under analysis in 1.2.4.

1.2.3. The quality policy document of SGBC states that students can submit their proposals or complaints in writing in the form of a report or anonymously. As it was described to the expert group during onsite meeting with QA representatives, students can choose to submit complaints in 4 different ways: 1. Write on a paper and submit it; 2. They can state some problems during briefings at the beginning of the lecture or training. They can share their suggestions and inform the Chief of the Unit. Then he can inform his Chief; 3. Students can also visit the Director or Deputy; 4. They have a box and they can put the complaint/suggestion and submit that anonymously. The complaint box is located at the entrance of student dormitories that the expert group visited during onsite visit. Students during the onsite visit stated that they are aware where it is located and the purpose of the box. As specified during onsite visit by the QA representatives, the College is ensuring the complaint procedure anonymously but it is easier to find a solution to the specific problem, if the involved parties are specified and known.

During the onsite visit, many times different representatives mentioned the importance of following the Code of Ethics in various occasions, including cases of handling student complaints and sensitive matters of conflict. Based on the information provided in the SAR p.32, in cases of violation of the provisions of the Code of Ethics, students may lodge a complaint with the Chairperson of the SBGC Ethics Committee. A copy of the decision made by the SBGC Ethics Committee is sent to the complainant, as well as to the employee whose alleged violation was considered at the meeting of the SBGC Ethics Committee.

Additionally, in accordance with the "SBGC Rules on Document Management", written complaints and proposals are registered in the document management system "Namejs" and a response to the received complaint or proposal is provided within the specified time limit according to the SBGC "Rules on Document Management" in 10 working days from the date of registering the document in the SBGC Administrative Unit.

In cases of any questions and matters students also have a group elder who, in accordance with the functional duties assigned takes care of the students of the group, submits requests, demands and suggestions in the order of subordination (SBGC Order No.537 of 10.10.2016 "On Approval of the Functional Duties of the Position"). In addition to that, there is also a Student Council, one of whose main aims is to defend and represent the interests of students before the SBGC and other institutions. The Student Council operates in accordance with the "Statute of the Student Council of the SBGC" (approved by the SBGC Council Decision No 12 of 07.04.2016) as specified in the SAR pp.32-33.

Based on the meeting with students, the expert group received words of confidence that students feel free to express their opinion and views in case of dissatisfaction or wishes for improvements or changes in the study process. Students usually used the opportunity before or after the training or lecture to comment on what they felt required more or less focus and what they would prefer to do the next time.

1.2.4. There are several data collection mechanisms in place at SGBC to ensure collections and analysis of information related to specificity and regulations that regard the study programme and the study field. All of the established mechanisms have been described in detail in the SAR pp.34-36. The College ensures regular data collection and analysis on 1. Student exam and test results; 2.

Quarterly Department Report (results of scientific research work, analysis of the workload of teachers, measures to improve the qualification of academic staff; see the detailed requirements in SAR p.34); 3. Classroom observation reports once in 3 months; 4. The attendance and performance of students on a monthly basis - students' attendance, analysis of absenteeism and grades; 5. Monthly physical fitness tests for students; 6. Anonymous student surveys.

As stated in the SAR p.35 and was confirmed by the students during onsite visit, surveys are an important part of study process evaluation and improvement. Overall, a student survey is carried out once a year. The surveys are completed electronically online using Google Form and responses are anonymous. The results of each survey are afterwards analyzed. The expert group believes, it would be better to implement student surveys more regularly as once per semester so that the extensiveness of the surveys is divided throughout the study period more fragmentarily and also that once the study course ends, the students provide their immediate feedback.

The survey questionnaire after the second semester and before graduation includes five sections: 1. Organization of the study process; 2. Organization of the internship; 3. The functioning of the Library Department; 4. Living conditions at the SBGC; 5. The evaluation of the docents and the evaluation of the courses taken, which include criteria/questions for evaluation. For each criterion and question, students have the opportunity to express their opinion and the reasons for their assessment by writing a comment. At the end of the survey, students are given the opportunity to make suggestions and comments on the study process at the SBGC and how it could be improved. The pre-graduation student survey includes a section on the development of the qualification thesis and the qualification examination.

As stated in the SAR p.35, feedback to students on the results of the survey is given in joint meetings attended by the Director of the SBGC, the Deputy Director of the SBGC in Teaching Affairs, representatives of the SBGC departments (head of Department, teachers) and the relevant group of students. During the meeting there is an opportunity to clarify issues, listen to students' opinions, etc. In some cases, the results of the survey are presented to the students by the Commander of the Third Training Company of the Vocational Education Service.

As specified during onsite visit with QA representatives, the graduate survey is conducted 6 months after the service. No other surveys later on are being performed in a written form with graduates. However, time after time they come back to the College for courses and they monitor in that way how they are doing and what is happening in their lives. It would be more beneficial for further improvements to make sure graduates are monitored also after the 6 months of graduation. In regards to employers, there is close cooperation and communication on a regular basis as employer representatives are involved in provision of student internships, work placements and most of the lecturers are working as border guards themselves.

1.2.5. The information that is published on the College and the study programme implemented corresponds to the information that is available on VIIS and E-platforms. The information that is provided on the website of the College includes all the necessary information for students that wish to apply for their studies in Latvian as the implementation language of the study programme and can be accessed here: <https://www.vrk.rs.gov.lv/lv/profesionalas-talakizglitiba-programma-robezapsardze>. It includes information on admission requirements, study length, professional qualification level, qualification to be obtained after graduation and other relevant field specific details that can be of interest to the students.

## **Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses**

Conclusions :

The SBGC has established a comprehensive quality policy, which is accessible to stakeholders through its internal platform as well as website. Procedures for the development and review of study

programmes are well-defined and involve various stakeholders, including students, employers, and graduates. A well-structured mechanism is in place for students to submit complaints and suggestions through multiple channels. Students feel comfortable using this system, and feedback is provided. The College has an efficient system for collecting and analyzing statistical data related to study programmes, however, more frequent surveys are advisable as once per semester. Information regarding the study programmes on the College's website is consistent with official registers.

**Strengths:**

1. SBGC collects and analyzes data regularly, utilizing it to make informed decisions about the study process and programme enhancements.
2. The existence of several channels for students to voice concerns or suggestions, including anonymous options, fosters a culture of transparency.
3. The College actively involves students, employers, and graduates in the continuous development and evaluation of its programmes, ensuring that their needs and suggestions are addressed.

**Weaknesses:**

1. While graduate surveys are conducted six months after graduation, there is no long-term follow-up to assess ongoing career success or satisfaction, which could provide valuable feedback for further improvement.
2. Lack of monitoring of students through formal means such as student surveys.

**Assessment of the requirement [1]**

- 1 R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 2.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system:

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

SGBC ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system.

- 2 1.1 - The higher education institution/ college has established a policy and procedures for assuring the quality of higher education.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Policies and procedures for quality assurance in higher education at the SBGC are stipulated by:  
- Internal quality assurance system of the SBGC - Quality System Action Plan for the current year (approved annually by order of the SBGC).

- 3 1.2 - A mechanism for the development and internal approval of the study programmes of the higher education institution/ college, as well as the supervision of their performance and periodic inspection thereof has been developed.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The procedures and measures for the creation, approval, supervision and periodic inspection of study programmes are stipulated by: - SBGC Regulations on the procedure for developing and updating formal education programmes at the SBGC (see in Annex 2 Document No 10); - SBGC Regulations "Procedure for planning, organization, control and analysis of the study (training) process at the SBGC" (see in Annex 2 Document No 3).

- 4 1.3 - The criteria, conditions, and procedures for the evaluation of students' results, which enable reassurance of the achievement of the intended learning outcomes, have been developed and published.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The criteria, conditions and procedures for the evaluation of student results are stipulated by: 1. The study programme; 2. The description of the study course; 3. The final examinations of the study course; 4. Regulations on the study and examination procedures at the SBGC (see in Annex 2 Document No 5); 5. Methodological guidelines for the development and defense of a qualification thesis and report (see in Annex 2 Document No 14); 6. Regulation of the State Final Examination Board; - traineeship programme (see in Annex 25); 7. Procedure for the state final examination - qualification examination (see in Annex 2 Document No 24).

- 5 1.4 - Internal procedures and mechanisms for assuring the qualifications of the academic staff and the work quality have been developed.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Based on the State Border Guard internal regulations No 26 "Regulations on Qualification Improvement and Professional Training" of 30.10.2012 the SBGC provides opportunities for academic staff to improve their qualifications both in Latvia and abroad, including the opportunity to attend professional improvement programmes on innovations in the higher education system or university didactics once during their term of office. The training needs of academic staff are identified annually and the necessary professional development activities are planned in the annual work plans of the SBGC Departments and in the monthly work plans of the SBGC.

- 6 1.5 - The higher education institution/ college ensures the collection and analysis of the information on the study achievements of the students, employment of the graduates, satisfaction of the students with the study programme, efficiency of the work of the academic staff, the study funds available and the disbursements thereof, as well as the key performance indicators of the higher education institution/ college.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Student satisfaction with the study programme is measured by conducting student surveys, as well as implementation of various forms of submission of complaints and proposals. Information on the graduate employment was compiled every year, by submitting a report on the College activities in accordance with the Article 75 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions. Information on the work effectiveness of academic staff is compiled and analyzed by hospitations of classes performed by heads of Departments, in student and graduate surveys and other activities implemented in the College.

- 7 1.6 - The higher education institution/ college ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its quality assurance systems.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The continuous improvement, development and efficiency of the field of study are ensured through the implementation of quality assurance system measures and the compilation and evaluation of their results as analyzed under 1.2.4.

### 1.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field

#### Analysis

1.3.1. The goal of the SBGC strategy is to ensure effective planning and implementation of SBGC activities within the scope of the functions and tasks within the competence in the period from 2024 to 2028. Strategies implementation corresponds to the planned total amount of medium-term budget expenditures of the SBGC (SAR p.4).

SBGC funding consists of state budget grants from general revenues, own revenues from paid services and donations, as well as involvement in international projects. The state budget grant fully covers the costs of the educational process. The amount of the state budget grant is allocated and distributed based on the laws of the Republic of Latvia. This is fixed in the annual financing plan (Interview with SBGC director, interview with employers, SAR p. 35). The control of financial assets is carried out in accordance with the Ministry of the Interior of 19.11.2015. internal regulations No. 1-10/45 "Budget execution monitoring procedures" (SAR p.36). Long-term financial planning is not possible, incl. financial planning of development (dependency of the budget of the SBGC on the budget of the SBG). (SAR p.14).

There is no separate funding system for scientific and/or applied research. Funds are allocated to student self-government, library and science and research. Research planning and implementation is regulated by SBG 23.03.2017. internal regulations No. 9 "Procedure in which the State Border Guard orders studies" and SBGC 27.04.2020. order No. 194 "On research and methodical work". As a result, the relevance of the subjects and directions of the research carried out by the academic staff of the SBGC and the students is ensured, both to the needs of the employer (SBG) and to the purpose of the study direction (Interview with SBGC director, SAR p. 53).

1.3.2. SBGC has implemented and operates an internal quality assurance system that includes quality assurance aspects and procedures for all major areas of study work including material and technical provision of the study process, etc. (SAR p.8)

The place of the SBGC under the SBG area of responsibility means stable financing and material and technical support within the SBG. Funding for the necessary infrastructure resources and material and technical support is allocated both from the state budget, from additional own revenues, and from involvement in projects. SBGC has 8,945 ha of land in Rēzekne, Zavoloko street 8, where training administrative premises, a service hotel, utility buildings, a sports complex with a sports field, a training border control point and the Canine Center of the Cynology Service are located. There is a sufficient number of classrooms equipped with the necessary equipment and everything necessary for the learning and teaching process. If new equipment or technical support appears for the SBG, it is immediately assigned to the SBGC so that students can study on newer equipment. During all the interviews, none of the interviewees expressed dissatisfaction with anything related to infrastructure or material and technical provision (Interview with SBGC director, Interview with SBGC teachers and students, interview with graduates, interview with employers, SAR p. 14, 37.)

1.3.3. The SBGC library department ensures the implementation of study and learning processes and educational programmes with the necessary printed materials, electronic materials, as well as other information sources and carriers ( Interview with SBGC director, Interview with SBGC teachers and students, SAR p.6).

Funding is allocated for the purchase of literature and the publication of teaching materials: in 2023, 1,200 euros were allocated to replenish the library fund, and from now on, 1,200 euros will be planned per year. Students have at their disposal a computer reading room in the library (14 computers), as well as an independent work class in the service hotel (15 computers with Internet connection). Both in the service hotel and in the educational administration wireless Internet (WiFi) access points are provided in the housing. Library resources and databases are available to students and meet the needs of the study field. Processes are well thought out and well organized. (Interview with SBGC director, Interview with SBGC teachers and students SAR p.36).

Since a large amount of current information, books and publications are available in English, it is important to know English. After the interviews, there was no impression that the students and teachers knew English at the required level (Interview with SBGC director, Interview with members of the group responsible for the preparation of Self-Assessment report, Interview with SBGC teachers and students). It is recommended that the State Border Guard College (SBGC) enhance its language training initiatives to improve English proficiency among students and lecturers. This could be achieved through structured language courses, participation in English-centric international

programmes, and curriculum integration of English-based learning modules.

1.3.4. Information and communication technology solutions used by SBGC are appropriate and effective. SBGC lectures and studies are scheduled in person, despite this, the auditoriums are equipped with the necessary equipment, and the MOODLE system used is intended as a place for storing and sharing both lectures and informative materials. Wireless Internet (WiFi) access points are provided in the college buildings. The college is equipped and also provides its students with all the necessary modern technologies to successfully conduct classes. A unique programme of their own has also been developed, which provides an online reporting of internships (Interview with SBGC director, Interview with SBGC teachers and students, SAR p.39).

There is close cooperation with the National Defense Academy ((Interview with the SBGC director, Interview with the SBGC study field director). In relation to information and communication technology (ICT) solutions, experts can emphasize the role of this cooperation in enhancing training and technological advancements. The collaboration with the National Defense Academy (NDA) facilitates the mutual exchange of knowledge, especially in military and strategic defense topics, while integrating ICT in education.

The SBGC benefits from this cooperation by aligning their military training programmes with NDA standards, which includes practical applications such as the "Summer Field Camp" and digital innovations in their study process. This highlights how modern ICT solutions, like e-learning platforms and interactive simulations, are crucial for effective military training and border management education, fostering both theoretical understanding and practical skills through digitally-enhanced teaching methods

1.3.5. The teaching staff of the SBGC consists of officials with special service ranks who hold the positions of docents, lecturers, assistants, who have the specific knowledge and competences appropriate for the successful implementation of the study programme, as well as service experience in SBG. The teaching staff at SBGC is composed of 5 docents, 8 lecturers, and 9 assistants for the academic year 2023/2024. These staff members are officials with special service ranks, bringing specific knowledge and competencies necessary for the successful implementation of the study programme. Additionally, they have valuable service experience within the State Border Guard (SBG). The process for attracting qualified teaching staff is transparent, follows established procedures, and all relevant parties are informed about it (Interview with the SBGC director, Interview with the SBGC study field director, Internal Quality Assurance System, SAR p.46). A small number (two) of lecturers are guest lecturers. The implemented procedure for attracting qualified teaching staff is followed, it is open and the involved parties are informed about it (Interview with the SBGC director, Interview with the SBGC study field director, Internal quality assurance system, SAR p.46).

1.3.6. The strategic goal set in the SBGC operational strategy - "To improve the professional competence of the SBGC general and pedagogical staff (including digital) in the field of learning organization, methodological issues, foreign languages and information technology development (SAR p.48). SBGC teaching staff improve their qualifications in a planned and targeted manner. The necessary qualification assurance measures are included in the annual and monthly work plans of SBG and SBGC, work plans of SBGC departments, international cooperation plans of SBGC. Lecturers go to various courses, seminars and lectures, after which they fill out a special report and share what new they have learned with their colleagues. A well-thought-out procedure has been developed and is being followed. (Interview with members of the group responsible for the preparation of Self-Assessment report, interview with lecturers, SAR p. 48) .

1.3.7. The academic, research and administrative workload of the teaching staff is balanced and strictly regulated. The planning of the number of teaching staff, as well as the planning and accounting of the study (teaching) work, research and methodical work load of teaching staff, is carried out in accordance with the Ministry of Internal 13.02.2020. internal regulations no. 1-10/2 "Procedures for planning the workload of teachers and the number of teachers" and SBGC

02.09.2021. internal regulations No. 3 "Planning, execution of the workload of teachers of the State Border Guard College, accounting and control procedure". The working time records of SBGC officials with special service ranks who hold the positions of docents, lecturers, assistants and trainers are carried out in accordance with the procedures established by SBGC officials (employees) for the performance of service (work) duties and home duty time records. During the interviews, no one complained about the workload and overall they were very satisfied with their work in SBGC (Interview with SBGC director, Interview with members of the group responsible for the preparation of Self-Assessment report, interview with lecturers, SAR p. 47). The workload distribution at SBGC is effectively managed and does not overburden staff. The balance between academic duties, research, and administrative responsibilities is appropriate, ensuring that the quality of teaching and the well-being of staff are maintained. This contributes to a positive work environment, as reflected in the staff's overall satisfaction with their roles.

1.3.8. During their studies, all SBGC students, both full-time and part-time, are provided with support in learning the study programme, building a career, maintaining their psychological state, social guarantees in receiving, which is primarily provided and provided by the commander and instructor of the State Border Guard College, the academic staff of the SBGC, who regularly and daily follow for the timely and high-quality execution of the measures of the study process, as well as for the observance of mutual and service relations, ethics and behavioral norms (SAR p.52).

SBGC students are officers with special service ranks, thus they have access to the services of psychologists of the Psychological Support Department of the MOI Sports and Health Center to maintain and promote psychological health and stability and help maintain a long professional life. If necessary, students can attend individual consultations and groups of psychologists classes, psychological training, as well as seminars and lectures. Lecturers are available and provide consultations, regular information exchanges. The college has implemented a feedback procedure. There is also a system in place where you can anonymously drop your complaint or suggestion into a separate, specially designed box, which then goes to the college management (Interview with SBGC director, Interview with SBGC teachers and students, Interview with graduates, SAR p.52).

### **Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses**

#### **Conclusions :**

In general, the resources and provision of the study field are assessed as very good. By visiting the college in person and conducting interviews with all involved parties, the experts conclude that the material provision of the college is sufficient to achieve the set goals and prepare students according to the needs of the border guard. The college receives all the necessary and up-to-date equipment and technical means used in the border guard, but could be in a larger number of units. The infrastructure is extensive and well thought out. The classrooms are equipped with all the necessary things to carry out modern and high-quality training. During the visit to the college, experts were fully convinced that the described procedures work in real life, they are known by both the college management, students, and the head of the border guard.

#### **Strengths:**

1. The college has an appropriately arranged learning environment with all the necessary facilities.
2. SGBC is in a high-level digitization.
3. An internship monitoring and control App has been developed.
4. All current and modern technical solutions used by the border guard are immediately received by the college, which allows to prepare students with current knowledge.

#### **Weaknesses:**

1. Students and lecturers do not have sufficient knowledge of the English language, which makes it



difficult to get acquainted with information in English.

## **1.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation**

### **Analysis**

1.4.1. The vision of the SBGC defines that this educational institution promotes, coordinates and conducts research activities in the field of the state border security (Strategy of the State Border Guard College for 2024-2028).

One of the goals of the Strategic Priority No. 1 of the State Border Guard College is "To develop and promote research activities by motivating students and teachers to conduct research".

In accordance with the development plan for the study field "Internal Security and Civil Defence" for 2024-2030, the State Border Guard College has defined the following direction for the development of the research activities: "Promoting research activities in the SBGC, by motivating students and teachers to carry out research, as well as by ensuring feedback with the service".

In order to achieve these strategic and development goals, the following activities are implemented:

- Conducting practical research by SBGC teachers on relevant, topical and priority scientific areas corresponding to the relevant branch of science and activities of the SBG (SBGC) (ensured by determining the topics of the organized scientific and practical conferences).
- Conducting research work (qualification works) by the SBGC students on relevant, topical and priority topics relevant to the activities of SBG (SBGC) (ensured by developing and determining the topics of applied research in cooperation with the employer - the State Border Service).
- Involvement of the SBG officials (practitioners) in the development (consultation) and assessment of students' qualification works.
- Organization and implementation of the international scientific and practical conference "Border Security and Management" (held every two years, starting from 2005, when the name of the conference was "Innovations in Border Guards professional preparation", starting with 2018 the name was changed to "Border Security and Management").
- Organization and implementation of the scientific and practical conference of the officials of the SBG and SBGC, Rezekne Academy of Technologies (RTA), teachers and students of other state universities, publication of conference materials (held every two years, starting from 2011, with the exception of 2023, when the conference did not take place due to the emergency situation on the Latvian-Belarusian border).

In general, the planning and implementation of applied (practical) research in the SBGC is regulated by the SBG internal rules No. 9 "Procedure for ordering research by the State Border Service" of March 23, 2017. and the SBGC order No. 194 "On Research and Methodological Work" of April 27, 2020. (SAR, p. 55). In accordance with the Regulation No. 9 from the leading institution of the industry (State Border Guard), the research is a practical research work that ensures the study and analysis of the situation, the development of conceptual suggestions, assessing impact and the implementation of other tasks related to development planning in the area of competence of the State Border Guard – ensuring the inviolability of the state border and preventing illegal immigration;

At the State Border Guard College, there is a procedure that requires the heads of the departments to ensure that the research topics proposed for qualification papers to the SBGC Council for approval are relevant, current, and priority areas that align with the industry, the State Border Guard, and SBGC activities. On the other hand, when drawing up the annual work plan of a SBGC department, it is noted that the areas of research work of the SBGC teaching staff are relevant, topical and priority and align with the industry, the State Border Guard and the SBGC. Control over ensuring compliance of the areas of research work of the SBGC teaching staff and the relevance of applied research with the activities of the industry, the State Border Guard and the SBGC is assigned to the Deputy

Director of the SBGC (in training issues) (SBGC Order No. 194 dated "On Research and Methodological Work" of 27.04.2020).

As a result of the above, it is ensured that the topics of applied and scientific research of teachers are oriented towards the needs of the industry by the topics of the conferences organized, and the topics of students' qualification works are agreed with the State Border Guard, i.e. with industry, as a result of which the topics and directions of applied and scientific research conducted by the faculty of the State Border Guard and students are in line with both the needs of the employer (the State Border Guard) and the aims of the study field.

1.4.2. The connection of scientific and applied research of the study field with the study process is defined and the procedure for ensuring this connection is determined by the Director of the State Border Guard College in. Order No. 194 "On Research and Methodological Work" of 27.04.2020 (SAR p. 55).

It is determined that the heads of departments are obliged to evaluate the results of applied research and scientific research work (research, reports, articles, etc.) of their subordinated teaching staff and, in case of a positive conclusion, submit a report to the director of the SBGC indicating a request to support the direction of applied research and scientific research work for further use, i.e. for publication, public presentation (at conferences, seminars or other events) and for use in the educational process. The heads of departments must also promote the use of the results of applied research and scientific research work (research, reports, articles, etc.) in formal and informal education, in the activities of the State Border Guard and submission of publications to the Library Department of the SBGC (Order No. 194 "On Research and Methodological Work" of 27.04.2020 (SAR p. 55)). It should be noted that, based on the procedure established above, the results of applied research and scientific research are systematically and successfully integrated into the educational process. The following examples can be noted as the most typical ones:

1) The docents of the SBGC Department of Border and Immigration Services Subjects regularly carry out research work in the fields of activity of the SBG. As a result of the research work, innovative solutions are proposed to improve the efficiency and quality of the various functions and tasks of the SBG, as well as the implementation of the study courses to be taught. For example, a study was carried out: "Presence Sensing Systems - Utilisation Options, Best Practices". Taking into account that the SBGC is provided with various presence detection systems, which are used in the performance of SBG functions for border surveillance activities in SBG units, the results of the study are used to improve students' theoretical knowledge and practical skills within the study course "Technical Means and Engineering Equipment" in the relevant subjects (SAR p.58).

2) The docents of the SBGC Department of Military and Physical Training Subjects carry out research work related to the implementation of the taught courses and in the field of current activities of the State Border Guard. The research seeks innovative solutions to problematic situations in order to improve the efficiency and quality of the performance of the functions and tasks of the SBG. For example, a study on the integration of military radios in the SBG, "The Role of Military Communications and their Implementation in the State Border Guard", was carried out. The SBGC has received Harris Falcon III military radios, which are used for the practical training "Summer Field Camp" in the framework of the short cycle vocational higher education study programme "Border Guarding". The above-mentioned study examined the positive and negative aspects of the use of military radios and sought solutions for improving their operation and use in the SBG (SAR p.58).

3) The research process pays particular attention to the improvement of the digital education process for border guards. One SBGC lecturer has developed and defended his doctoral thesis "Development of e-learning process in a militarised educational institution" in the sub-discipline of pedagogy (military). E-learning is a type of online distance learning that uses the Internet and new digital technologies to enhance learning processes. This type of teaching lets learners train remotely at whatever time is convenient for them, with access to a huge variety of educational content on a 24/7 basis and from any location. As a result of the research, by studying the pedagogical

regularities of the development of the e-learning process, a theoretically based didactic model of the formation of digital competence of lecturers for the development of e-learning in a militarized educational institution was developed. The results of the research have been validated and are being used in practice for the development of the e-learning process in the SBGC, for example:

- development of guidelines for the preparation, design and implementation of e-learning courses;
- development of recommendations for teachers on the organization and delivery of online lectures, as well as organization of methodological seminars for further dissemination of examples of best practices in e-learning;
- organization of events to improve the digital competence of local and international teachers through the publication of research results (SAR p. 57).

The example of this dissertation shows the voluntary participation of the teaching staff in scientific research work. And the use of the results of this scientific research work in the development of the educational process.

1.4.3. The SBGC Strategy for 2024-2028 sets the goal of “Promoting international and domestic cooperation of the SBGC in the internationalization of training, vocational education and research” as one of the strategic goals of the SBGC Strategic Priority No. 1 “Developed high-quality, modern and sustainable education system and resources for border guards”. In order to identify the latest trends in scientific and applied research and collect the best experience in the development and implementation of innovative solutions in the field of border security and management, since 2005 the SBGC, in cooperation with the RTA, has been organizing and implementing an international scientific and practical conference “Border Security and Management” every two years (SAR p. 56, interview with SBGC employees). The conference participants usually include foreign cooperation partners from more than 12 countries, incl. Bulgarian, Estonian, Lithuanian, Polish, Romanian, Finnish, Moldovan educational institutions and structural units of the border guard (police), as well as representatives of the management of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), representatives of the European Joint Master's Programme "Strategic Border Management" and the EU-funded project "Border Management in Central Asia – BOMCA" participating countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan). SBGC students also participate in the conference as listeners who can receive information from international participants, establish contacts, and also ask questions of interest to them during panel discussions in order to improve the research part of their qualification work. The research papers submitted to the conferences are summarized and published jointly with RTA in the scientific journal of internal security and civil defence "Border Security and Management" (ISSN: 2592-8503, Print ISSN: 2592-849X).

2018 - <http://journals.ru.lv/index.php/BSM/issue/view/68>.

2020 - <http://journals.ru.lv/index.php/BSM/issue/view/147>

2022 - <http://journals.ru.lv/index.php/BSM/>,

In order to promote international cooperation of SBGC in the field of internationalisation of research activities, SBGC academic staff are also involved in research activities at educational institutions of related fields in other countries, including Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, as well as at research and scientific events organised by FRONTEX and CEPOL. The opportunities for internationalisation offered by the ERASMUS+ research project are also used. For example, in 2018-2020, the SBGC implemented the project “Main Activity 2 (KA2) of the EU Erasmus+ Programme” in the field of vocational education “Strategic partnership for the improvement of e-learning systems of border guards educational institutions” (2018-1-LV01-KA202-04A7003). Within the framework of the project, recommendations for the SBGC teachers for organizing online lectures, organized seminars for dissemination of the results, and methodological guidelines for the preparation, design and implementation of e-courses were developed (partner countries: Estonia, Lithuania, Finland) (SAR, pp. 56-57).

In order to ensure systemic international cooperation, including in the field of scientific and applied research, the SBGC concluded cooperation agreements with:

- Academy of Public Security of the M. Romeris University of the Republic of Lithuania;
- State Border Guard of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania;
- Specialized Training Center of the Border Guard of the Republic of Poland (in Lubań);
- Border Guard Training Center of the Republic of Poland (Ketrzyn)
- Academy of Security Sciences of the Republic of Estonia;
- Border and Coast Guard Academy of the Republic of Finland.
- European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex)

Based on the concluded agreements, detailed annual plans for cooperation activities are developed. The teaching staff of the study field and the students use the research results obtained in the course of research in the field of international cooperation and the research results provided by foreign border and coast guard institutions when carrying out their research, also qualification works, including statistical data and problems (SAR, p. 56, findings obtained during the visit).

The analysis of the above gives reason to believe that the activities of the college management ensure and purposefully develop a systematic approach to the planning and implementation of activities for international cooperation in the field of applied and scientific research.

1.4.4. Planning and implementation of the research work of teachers of the SBGC is carried out on the basis of the Internal Rules of the Ministry of Internal Affairs No. 1-10/2 "Procedure for planning the workload of teachers and the number of teachers" of 13.02.2020., order of the SBGC No. 194 "On Research and Methodological Work" of 27.04.2020., "Methodological Instructions for Conducting Research Work by the Academic Staff of the State Border Guard College" approved by the SBGC order No. 609 of 06.12.2022. and the "Methodological Instructions for the Development and Defence of a Qualification Thesis and Report" approved by SBGC Order No 30 of 18.01.2022 "On Methodological Instructions for the Development of a Qualification Thesis and Report".

The financial resources for ensuring research activities of the teaching staff are not provided, but according to the State Border Guard internal rules No. 9 "Procedure for the State Border Guard to Order Research" of 23.03.2027, the SBGC can receive funding for the implementation of research ordered by the State Border Guard (SAR, p. 37).

The main mechanism for facilitating the involvement of the teaching staff in applied research and scientific research in the educational institution is the system for determining the workload of the teaching staff, which stipulates that research work is one of the kinds of workload which must be performed by the teachers of the SBGC.

During the interview, the experts found out that when determining the proportions of the academic staff workload between contact hours and research work, the need to ensure educational work (lectures, classes) is primarily taken into account. It should be noted that this situation does not exempt the teaching staff from the obligation to ensure the minimum requirements imposed by the educational institution on research activities ("Regulations on the Election of the Teaching Staff of the State Border Guard College" - approved by the decision of the Council of the State Border Guard College dated 06.03.2024 No. 4).

Also, the following factors serve in the mechanism created by the State Border Guard College to involve and motivate the teaching staff in applied research and scientific research:

- Participation in the conferences organized by the SBGC and the publication of articles in conference publications are free of charge for SBGC teachers;
- in some cases, the participation of SBGC teachers in conferences organized by other institutions is paid within the limits of possibilities;
- monthly supplement for the academic degree of Doctor of Science for the teaching staff (as motivation for scientific research activities).
- career growth opportunities are one of the motivating factors for the teachers of the SBGC to participate in research work. According to the "Regulations on the Election of the Teaching Staff of

the State Border Guard College", the results of research work are one of the evaluation criteria for the re-election of the teaching staff or in cases where the teacher applies for a higher position. Experts believe that the lack of separate funding for applied research and scientific research in the budget of an educational institution likely does not contribute to the motivation of the teaching staff to carry out and develop research work beyond the minimum criteria established in the educational institution.

1.4.5. The methodology for conducting research work and instructions for students are determined by "Methodological Instructions for the Development and Defence of a Qualification Thesis and Report" approved by the SBGC order No. 30 "On Methodological Instructions for the Development of a Qualification Thesis and Report" of 18.01.2022.

The content and volume of obligatory research work of students of the SBGC during their studies are determined by the content of the study programme. As a part of the study process, students must prepare reports, and upon completion of their studies, they prepare and present a qualification thesis.

To encourage students to be involved in scientific research, the SBGC, in cooperation with the RTA, organizes local scientific and practical conferences every two years, where students have the opportunity to participate and share the results of research conducted during the development of a qualification thesis.

1.4.6. Having reviewed the attached documentation (SAR, p. 63-64) and information obtained during the visit, the experts believe that in ensuring and implementing the study process carried out by the State Border Guard College, sufficient attention is paid to the use of innovative solutions to successfully achieve the aims of the study field. The college team tries to find opportunities and implement innovative solutions both in the logistical support of the study field, in the implementation of the study process, and in the organizational sphere of the institution's activities.

The college positions the following aspects as innovative solutions that have a positive effect on the quality of the implementation of the study field:

- purchase of new, special and technical means used in border control and immigration control, as well as military equipment and equipment (SAR, p. 63);
- equipping classrooms with modern educational equipment, such as webcams for conferences, which was a particularly important solution when introducing distance learning or hybrid classes during the Covid-19 pandemic (SAR, p.63, inspection by experts);
- the setting up of specialized classrooms, for example, the setting up of the EUROSUR class, which was equipped with a multifunctional video projector system and 20 sets of workstations, which allow students to gain practical skills in working with the components of the EUROSUR system and the Border Monitoring and Control System (working with a digital map, information placing and ensuring circulation, etc.), as well as setting up a model of Operational management unit, equipped with appropriate technical means and information systems, which allows the development of students' practical skills in performing the tasks of an operational management structural unit, organizing and carrying out information circulation, decision-making, in various border control and immigration control situations, control of the operation of technical means and the processing the obtained information obtained, using information systems, managing assignments, making decisions (SAR, p.63, inspection by experts);
- development and approval of the electronic practice recording system (PruS) (SAR, p.47, 63);
- modernization of the e-learning system, as a result of which, since 2019, the SBGC e-learning system has been supplemented with the H5P interactive learning module. With the help of this module, SBGC lecturers develop interactive learning tools that provide the students with immediate feedback opportunities (SAR, p.64, inspection by experts);
- introduction and completion of the positions of heads of academic departments (administrative management) (interview with staff);
- attraction of consultants from the State Border Guard (practitioners, experts) to the process of

developing students' qualification thesis (SAR, p.97);

- attraction of practitioners from the industry (border guards-specialists from the border) for the implementation of the study process (in specific issues) (SAR, p.102-103,interview with staff);
- since 2021, teachers who, in the cases stipulated by the Law on Higher Education Institutions, start working in an academic position without previous teaching experience and education, are provided with initial training for pedagogical work under the guidance of an experienced docent - curator in accordance with the "Docent Orientation Programme for Pedagogical Work at the SBGC" approved by the Director of the SBGC (the programme was completed by 2 teachers in 2021, 3 teachers in 2022, 2 teachers in 2023) (SAR, p.50);
- introduction of individual monthly pay supplements for the scientific degree of doctor for academic staff (interview with staff);
- modernization and intensive use of the Moodle platform (available study course descriptions, study materials, tests, etc./ regulatory framework related to the study process/ E-library) (SAR, pp. 45-46).

### **Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses**

Conclusions:

The directions of applied research of the study field meet the development goals of the college and correspond to the study field and industry. The requirements for this are determined by the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia, regulatory acts of the State Border Guard and the State Border Guard College. Based on them, within the framework of the study programme, students develop qualification papers in the field of border control, immigration control and asylum, and other relevant areas. The topics of scientific research of teachers are focused on the needs of the industry by the topics of the organized conferences, and the topics of qualification thesis are agreed with the State Border Guard, that is, with the industry, as a result the relevance of the topics and directions of research conducted by the teaching staff of the SBGC and students is ensured, both to the needs of the employer (SGB) and the aims of the study field. Productive cooperation is carried out with employers to ensure that the topics of research work carried out in the field of scientific research correspond to current events in the industry and the field of scientific research. Mechanisms have also been created to control the definition of research topics and their compliance with the requirements of regulatory acts, industry and field of research.

The connection of applied and scientific research in the specialty with the study process is determined and the procedure for ensuring this connection is determined in the documents regulating the activities of the SBGC. The procedure and persons (heads of departments) responsible for the integration of research results into the educational process are determined.

The college plans and implements international cooperation activities in the field of applied research, and teachers and students use the research results obtained within the framework of the college's international cooperation in their research. A systematic approach to planning and implementing international cooperation activities in the field of applied research is ensured.

Mechanisms have been created to facilitate the involvement of faculty and students in applied and scientific research.

The procedure for research work is defined in the regulatory documents of the SBGC, as well as in the content of the educational programme, which determines the requirements for the development of student essays and qualification papers. Faculty and students are also given the opportunity to take part in practical and scientific research conferences in order to test the results of research.

When providing and implementing the study process, the State Border Guard College pays sufficient attention to the use of innovative solutions for the successful achievement of the aim of the study field. Innovative approaches and solutions are sought and implemented both in the field of material and technical support of the study field, and in the field of administrative and organizational work,

and in the implementation of the study process.

Strengths:

1. Clear and detailed regulation of research work in the regulatory documents of the State Border Guard and the college.
  - Cooperation with employers to ensure that the topics of research work carried out in the field of research correspond to current events in the industry and the field of research.
2. A systematic approach to planning and implementing international cooperation activities in the field of applied research is ensured.
3. There is obvious tendency among the management and staff of the SBGC to search for and implement innovative approaches and solutions.

Weaknesses:

1. There is no separate mechanism for funding applied and scientific research.

## Assessment of the requirement [2]

- 1 R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The level of organization of the applied research field in the SBGC is good. The areas of applied research correspond to the College development aims and are related to the topicalities of the operational field and the field of study, as well as applied research and its results are integrated into the study process. International cooperation in the field of applied research within the field of study and the correspondent study programme is ensured and developed in a well-targeted manner. The SBGC has developed mechanisms for involving docents and students in the research work. Scientific research at the SBGC is a matter of free choice for the academic staff (which is motivated by the management of the SBGC). Colleges in the Republic of Latvia, (including the SBGC) are neither obliged nor delegated by the state ( "Law on Higher Education Institutions", "Regulations of the State Border Guard College") to carry out scientific activities, but only applied research. The conduct of scientific research is the responsibility of universities and scientific institutes.

## 1.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

### Analysis

1.5.1. The SGBC actively has established a rich network of collaborations both at educational and operational level. Of course, it should be underlined the participation and implementation of common actions under the auspices of FRONTEX, as it has been explicitly declared by the director of the study programme, during our meeting with him. In terms of conclusion, there have been concluded 13 agreements, as it is prescribed in the relative document - list of cooperation agreements, including the agreements providing internship, in several areas of research, such as security, exchange of experience in teaching methods and organising joint conferences. From the 13 agreements, 4 refer to institutions in Latvia, such as Rezekne Academy of Technologies and National Police College and College of Fire Safety and Civil Protection while the other 9 refer to institutions abroad, such as FRONTEX and Estonian Academy of Security Sciences.

This multifaceted cooperation (both at educational and operational field, such as in the field of information technology, security, management and state border simulation actions - the latter action

is mainly accomplished in cooperation with FRONTEX) is integral to the Internal Security and Civil Protection as it enhances the educational experience and fosters the attainment of the programmes aims and learning outcomes.

By partnering with various stakeholders, the institution ensures that the curriculum remains relevant and aligned with the practical needs of the field. The selection of cooperation partners who are mentioned above is carried out with careful consideration of the unique characteristics of the study field and the specific objectives of the relevant study programmes. This tailored approach ensures that the partnerships are not only beneficial but also strategically aligned with the educational goals of producing competent and effective state border guards (see in details the official site <https://www.edugainoverseas.com/state-border-guard-college/> regarding the current scheme of partnerships. As far the future plans, those are presented through the meeting with the SGBC management). In that sense, the major partners and/or supporters of the study programme are the Ministry of Interior of Latvia and State Border Guard.

Since the technology accelerates rapidly and transforms the challenges in the field of external policies, it is recommended, in the area of internal cooperations, the establishment of cooperation with local associations/companies dealing with AI and technology. In such a manner, it would be more efficient to anticipate challenges such as hybrid risks. The aforementioned recommendation is in alignment with the statements in the section Management of the study field where it is indicated the need to promote the access to advanced training tools in order to anticipate challenges related to today's technologically-driven security environment.

1.5.2. SGBC actively engages in international collaboration with various entities. Especially, as it is appeared at the official site of the SGBC it has signed Erasmus+ institutional agreements with M. Romeris University in Lithuania, Academy of Security Sciences in Estonia, Police Academy in Szczytno, Poland, Police Academy Alexandru Ioan Cuza in Bucharest, Romania and Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Sofia, Bulgaria. Furthermore, the SGBC is a member of the Nordplus international cooperation programme, created by the Nordic Council of Ministers. In addition, during our meeting with the HEI management, it was stated that it is intended to establish cooperation with institutions from Hungary and Norway as well as with Moldova and Georgia in the area of border guards. Finally, they intend to develop specific actions in the framework of Erasmus projects. These collaboration is structured in two axes: in institutional-operational level where the major partner is FRONTEX as well as in purely academic level where there have been concluded agreements with other academic institutions for the elaboration of Erasmus projects and actions. In total number, until now, there have been established 5 Erasmus+ institutional agreements while there is also the close cooperation with FRONTEX as it is indicated at the official site <https://www.frontex.europa.eu/our-partners/national-authorities/> and has been underlined during our meetings with SBGC management and the director of the study programme. Moreover, there are planned 4 institutional agreements with Hungary, Norway, Moldova and Georgia in the area of security and state border education. Moreover, it is in the academic planning the conclusion of agreements with more academic institutions, as it is stated above. Especially, the cooperation with FRONTEX enriches the curriculum by providing diverse educational practices and insights into global border security challenges. As it is mentioned above (1.5.1) the total number of agreements corresponds to 13 agreements.

However, to maximize these benefits and to obtain a holistic approach of the study programme it is recommended the expansion of academic agreements with more HEI from central Europe.

1.5.3. The SBGC has developed a system and procedures for the attraction of the teaching staff and students from abroad within the study field which is incorporated in the Regulations on the election of academic staff of the State Border Guard College. The relative document is approved by the decision No.4 of the Council of the State Border Guard College of 06.03.2024. The system described is effective due to the reasons of transparency and institutional hierarchy, since there is the participation of a Document Evaluation Commission, appointed by the SBGC Director, which strongly



cooperates with the Head of the Department. Moreover, as it has been stated during Expert meetings with students and employees, recommendations for potential improvements are taken into account and are submitted periodically. For all those reasons the actual system can be considered effective.

Teaching staff and students participate in both outgoing and incoming mobility, which provides added value to the implementation of the study process and the quality of studies. That is proven by the Erasmus+ agreements which have been established and presented at the official site. <https://www.edugainoverseas.com/state-border-guard-college/>. At this point, it should be underlined that based on the Cooperation Action Plans for 2023, the SBGC docents were involved in 5 events (excluding international projects), 11 in 2022, 4 in 2021, 3 in 2020, 7 in 2019 and 10 in 2018. SBGC students participated in the international training module "Cooperation in Border Management and Civil Crisis Management Module", organized by the Border and Coast Guard Academy of Finland (2019), professional sports competitions for border guards of the three Baltic States Border Guard Training Institutions (2022, Lithuania, 2019, Latvia), as well as visits of foreign representatives to the SGBC study programme events, e.g. SBG Border Guard Assignment Competition (2022, 2019, 2018), lectures given by visiting docents in the framework of international conference "Border Security and Management", organized by the SGBC (2022, 2018).

All those aforementioned actions testify a specific and strong oriented plan for the establishment of a powerful strategy towards the international cooperation.

While the mobility programme as it is described through the Section Transfer Students at the official site <https://www.edugainoverseas.com/transfer-students/> intends to offer valuable international engagement opportunities, a critical evaluation indicates that there is a place for more marketing efforts in order to maximize participation.

In particular, the weakness in the SGBC's marketing strategies concerning social media lies in the insufficient utilization of these platforms to engage and inform potential participants about mobility opportunities. Currently, the college does not appear to have a comprehensive social media strategy that effectively highlights the benefits of international exchanges or showcases the experiences of past participants. This lack of engagement on platforms where students and faculty are most active limits the institution's ability to reach a wider audience. Without targeted content, such as success stories, informative posts, and interactive campaigns, the college may fail to create an appealing narrative that could inspire interest and participation in its mobility programmes. Additionally, the absence of regular updates and engagement with followers can lead to a disconnect with the academic community, reducing the overall visibility and perceived value of the mobility opportunities available. To enhance its outreach, the SGBC must develop a more dynamic and engaging social media presence that actively promotes its international programmes and fosters a sense of community among current and prospective participants.

In that sense, the College should develop a comprehensive strategy for the whole academic community - teaching staff and potential students- that includes targeted campaigns utilizing digital platforms, social media, and informational webinars to inform potential participants about the benefits of mobility programmes. Additionally, leveraging students and teaching staff's experiences through testimonials can powerfully illustrate the advantages of engaging in international exchanges. It is recommended that the SBGC develop and implement a comprehensive social media strategy aimed at promoting mobility programmes. This strategy should include creating engaging content that highlights the benefits of international exchanges, student testimonials, and partnerships. Additionally, collaborating with influencers or stakeholders in the field of border security and education could broaden outreach and increase participation.

Furthermore, creating partnerships with international institutions for co-promotion can expand the visibility of these opportunities, while engaging alumni as ambassadors can enhance credibility and encourage new participants. It is also essential to provide clear and accessible information regarding application processes, funding options, and available support services. Streamlining this information

can reduce barriers to entry and motivate more students and faculty to participate in international mobility. By focusing on these marketing strategies, the institution can significantly increase participation in its mobility programmes, enriching the study programme for state border guards and cultivating a more globally informed educational environment.

### **Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses**

#### **Conclusions:**

The college is intensively pursuing to broaden its cooperations as well as to enhance its international nature. At first level, it is evident from the above analysis that it has established a large number of cooperations at national institutional level, such as with local municipality, employers' association, the Ministry of Interior of Latvia. It should also be underlined the powerful partnership of the College with FRONTEX since not only it provides education to border guards but also its members participate in several common projects and actions with the European Agency. At international level, the SGBC has already signed Erasmus+ institutional agreements that allow the exchange of experience and training mobility of academic and general staff within the Erasmus+ programme, as it is indicated in its official page. Moreover, it is predicted to conclude agreements with institutions of Georgia and Moldova in the area of border guards and develop more common actions in the framework of Erasmus projects. However, there is marked a specific output or action resulted from the Erasmus agreements already concluded and/or the agreements of SBGC.

Regarding the mechanisms which are implemented to promote the mutual cooperation of teaching staff in the implementation of the study programme there is an ongoing effort to achieve it through the structure of courses. More specifically, there are some topics combined, e.g. border check, procedural issues, which demand a multiple education. Additionally, there are courses for English and law where teachers can cooperate. Finally, roleplay is often used as a tool of simulation in their educational methodology.

Therefore, following a holistic approach, the SGBC policy in the area of international cooperation is considered widely satisfactory while there is a strong recommendation to give special focus on the deployment of a powerful and attractive social media strategy.

#### **Strengths:**

1. The SGBC is actively enhancing its international partnerships, particularly with institutions in Ukraine, Norway, Moldova, and Georgia. This effort broadens the college's global reach and fosters collaboration in border guard education, ensuring that the curriculum remains relevant to international standards and contemporary security challenges.
2. The SGBC has established significant agreements with national authorities, including the Ministry of Interior of Latvia and local military forces. These partnerships provide a solid foundation for the educational framework, aligning training with national security needs and facilitating resource sharing and practical training opportunities.
3. The college has successfully engaged in Erasmus projects, signing multiple institutional agreements that promote student and staff mobility across Europe. This participation enriches the educational experience by enabling knowledge exchange and the integration of diverse perspectives, enhancing the relevance and quality of SGBC's programmes.
4. The SGBC has developed robust mechanisms to promote collaboration among teaching staff, characterized by transparent regulations and the involvement of a Document Evaluation Commission. This structure ensures efficient recruitment processes and encourages interdisciplinary teaching, fostering a culture of teamwork and shared objectives among faculty members.

#### **Weaknesses:**

1. The college's current marketing strategies for promoting mobility opportunities are insufficient. There is a lack of a comprehensive social media strategy to engage potential participants and highlight the benefits of international exchanges. This hampers the institution's ability to reach a wider audience and diminish the perceived value of available mobility programmes. Enhancing the social media presence is essential for improving outreach and fostering a sense of community among current and prospective participants.

### **Assessment of the requirement [3]**

- 1 R3 - The cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field.

#### **Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study programme provides full education regarding the pursued field. It ideally combines theory and practice in all fields. In theory, the course gains an internationalization and external nature thanks to the increasing contacts and agreements across Europe. Moreover, it is achieved an exchange of information and best practices, as it has been explicitly declared by graduate students during experts meeting with them. Moreover, this is testified by the employees in practice during experts relative meeting. However, it is strongly recommended to promote in practice and enact that international cooperation.

### **1.6. Implementation of the Recommendations Received During the Previous Assessment Procedures**

#### **Analysis**

In response to the previous assessment of the study field “Internal Security and Civil Protection” and its related study programmes, the State Border Guard College (SBGC) has successfully implemented most of the recommendations, demonstrating a proactive commitment to improvement and quality enhancement. SBGC's approach to integrating these recommendations shows thoughtful adaptation to the specific needs of its programmes. The College's adjustments focus on maintaining accreditation standards while strengthening programme transparency, academic rigor, and collaboration with partner institutions.

A significant recommendation from prior assessments involved ensuring transparent knowledge assessment criteria. SBGC has responded by implementing clear rules that facilitate a well-structured and fair evaluation process, helping students understand the specific requirements for academic success. Another key recommendation emphasized the importance of scientific rigor in final qualification papers. SBGC addressed this by adhering to a scientific framework for qualification papers, enhancing academic consistency and supporting methodological integrity in evaluations.

Additionally, SBGC has taken measures to foster innovation and credibility within the programme by incorporating students and academic researchers from partner institutions into research initiatives. These collaborative efforts, bolstered by SBGC's partnerships, contribute to a diverse and enriched learning environment, supporting the programme's alignment with current scientific and geopolitical needs. Notably, several of these initiatives were implemented following recommendations in June 2012, as documented in Annex 33. These repeated recommendations have since been refined to reflect the evolving scientific landscape and the programme's dynamic objectives.

To continue elevating programme standards, it is advisable for SBGC to incorporate additional foreign professors into the curriculum, as recommended in previous assessments. The presence of international faculty would not only broaden students' perspectives on global border security issues but also contribute to a more holistic view of contemporary challenges and strategies. Additionally,

involving practical specialists in relevant subjects ensures that the curriculum remains aligned with real-world applications, making the programme more relevant to the dynamic field of border security.

SBGC has effectively implemented the majority of recommendations, creating a strong foundation for both student success and future programme accreditation. Establishing an alumni network could further benefit graduates and current students, providing mentorship, career advice, and networking opportunities to support a seamless transition into professional roles in border security.

The previous assessment also contained specific recommendations which have not been fully implemented, including:

Recommendation 2: Publish the programme's specific teaching objectives on an online platform for accessible reference.

Recommendation 4: Enhance the College's internet resources and upgrade computer equipment to support current academic demands.

Recommendation 7: Implement a more robust support system for graduates entering the workforce (partially addressed but not explicitly noted in previous evaluations).

SBGC has made notable progress on these recommendations, although aspects of Recommendations 2, 4, and 7 remain areas where further enhancement could improve the programme's adaptability to both current student needs and evolving industry standards. SBGC has placed particular emphasis on Recommendation 13, which advocates for improving student research work. Specific measures taken include refining the Methodological Guidelines for the Development and Defence of a Qualification Thesis and Report, facilitating higher quality and consistency in student research output. SBGC has also introduced preliminary defenses for qualification papers, providing structured feedback to students and encouraging active student participation in research conferences. SBGC collaborates with State Border Guard experts and partners, such as the Rēzekne Academy of Technologies (RTA), to host local scientific and practical conferences. These initiatives have increased student engagement with research and enhanced the programme's academic rigor.

## **Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses**

### **Conclusions:**

The assessment procedures of the study field "Internal Security and Civil Protection" reflect SBGC's commitment to upholding rigorous academic standards and continuously improving programme quality. By implementing transparent knowledge assessment criteria and adhering to scientific standards in qualification papers, SBGC demonstrates a robust approach to fostering academic integrity. The inclusion of students and academic staff from partner institutions contributes valuable perspectives, strengthening the programme's overall credibility and innovation.

The full integration of prior recommendations concerning accreditation further highlights SBGC's adherence to best practices, ensuring that graduates are effectively prepared for careers in the field. Additionally, by actively encouraging student involvement in research and refining methodologies for qualification papers, SBGC fosters a dynamic learning environment where students gain both theoretical and practical skills relevant to modern border security challenges.

Through these initiatives, SBGC underscores its dedication to ongoing improvement and responsiveness to previous recommendations, promoting a more effective and forward-looking educational setting for future state border guards.

### **Strengths:**

1. **Clear and Transparent Knowledge Assessment:** SBGC has established transparent rules for knowledge assessment, providing students with clear criteria for success, thereby fostering a structured academic environment.
2. **Academic Rigor in Qualification Papers:** The college has reinforced academic rigor through

updated Methodological Guidelines for Qualification Theses and Reports, improving the quality and consistency of student research.

3. Collaborative Learning Environment: SBGC actively collaborates with partner institutions, integrating students and academic staff into the research process. Involving State Border Guard experts as consultants and encouraging student participation in conferences further enriches the educational experience.

4. Increased Student Engagement in Research: By introducing preliminary defenses and actively promoting participation in research conferences, SBGC demonstrates a commitment to fostering academic engagement and practical application of knowledge.

5. Diverse Faculty and Curriculum Perspectives: The inclusion of foreign professors and practical specialists diversifies the curriculum, providing students with insights into global border security issues and promoting critical thinking.

6. Developing a Strong Alumni Network: Establishing an alumni network strengthens support for current students, offering mentorship, networking, and professional development opportunities critical to career success in border security.

#### Weaknesses:

1. Limited Involvement of Practical Specialists from Abroad: While SBGC benefits from foreign professors, the programme would greatly improve by involving more practical specialists. This engagement would enhance the relevance of coursework to current industry standards and practices.

2. Insufficient Alumni Engagement: Although SBGC has initiated an alumni network, active engagement is limited. Strengthening connections with alumni could offer students enhanced mentorship, career advice, and access to job opportunities, creating a supportive professional community.

### Assessment of the requirement [4]

- 1 R4 - Elimination of deficiencies and shortcomings identified in the previous assessment of the study field, if any, or implementation of the recommendations provided.

#### **Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The State Border Guard College (SBGC) has thoroughly implemented prior recommendations, effectively enhancing programme transparency, academic rigor, and industry relevance. The establishment of clear assessment criteria has improved evaluation transparency and provided students with a solid understanding of performance expectations. To meet scientific standards, SBGC has updated its guidelines for qualification papers, thereby reinforcing consistency and quality in student research. Additionally, initiatives such as preliminary defenses, conference participation, and collaboration with State Border Guard experts have enriched students' practical learning experiences, bridging academic theory with real-world applications. The recent establishment of an alumni network further supports graduates' transitions into the workforce, offering mentorship and professional connections. Through these targeted improvements, SBGC demonstrates a strong commitment to quality advancement and alignment with accreditation standards, affirming its fully compliant status.

### 1.7. Recommendations for the Study Field

#### Short-term recommendations

Implement biannual student surveys to gather feedback on the educational experience. More frequent assessments will enable the institution to respond promptly to student needs and improve overall satisfaction with the programme.

Develop a structured approach to maintain communication with alumni, reaching out to them every 1-2 years. This initiative will facilitate networking opportunities, gather valuable insights into graduates' professional paths, and reinforce the college's connection with its former students.

Actively recruit and involve foreign professors in the teaching process. This will enrich the academic environment by incorporating diverse perspectives and enhancing the curriculum with global best practices in border security and civil protection.

## Long-term recommendations

**Establish Collaborative Partnerships with Central European Universities:** Form strategic alliances with universities in Central Europe to promote joint research initiatives, faculty and student exchanges, and collaborative training programmes. Such partnerships will broaden the college's academic reach and enrich the educational offerings.

**Develop International Joint Programmes:** Create joint programmes with international institutions such as FRONTEX and other EU border security agencies. These collaborations will offer students unique opportunities to gain international insights, diversify the curriculum, and integrate best practices from different countries.

**Encourage Research and Innovation Participation:** Foster a culture of research by encouraging faculty and students to engage in projects related to border security, crisis management, and technological advancements. Increased involvement in research will strengthen the connection between theoretical knowledge and practical application, enhancing the institution's standing within the academic community.

**Allocate Funding for Applied Research:** Establish dedicated funding for applied research projects and create mechanisms for their effective implementation. This initiative will motivate researchers to actively contribute to innovative solutions in border security and internal protection, thereby enhancing the institution's reputation for academic excellence.

## II - "Border guarding" ASSESSMENT

### II - "Border guarding" ASSESSMENT

#### 2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

##### Analysis

2.1.1. The study programme "Border Guarding" is well-aligned with the national priorities of Latvia, particularly in the areas of law enforcement and civil protection. This programme directly supports the Latvian government's strategic goals for national security, internal stability, and the preparedness of public institutions to respond to emergencies and crises (State Border Guard College Self-Evaluation Report, SAR Section 2.1). Additionally, the programme adheres to the EU's policies and directives, such as the Schengen Border Code, ensuring that the educational content remains relevant in a broader European context (EU Schengen Border Code Regulations).

The structure and content of the programme are in compliance with the academic and professional standards set forth by national educational regulations. This ensures that the programme not only

aligns with the academic discipline of internal security but also responds to the professional demands of the field. For example, the integration of practical training in border guarding, law enforcement techniques, and crisis management within the curriculum reflects the programme's clear focus on providing hands-on experience and applicable skills to future professionals. The programme also includes courses on relevant legal frameworks, civil protection, and cross-border cooperation, ensuring comprehensive coverage of key study field components.

While the "Border Guarding" programme effectively aligns with the overarching objectives of the study field, it is imperative for the curriculum to continuously adapt to emerging trends in internal security. The incorporation of advanced topics such as cybersecurity, digital forensics, and technology-driven security measures would not only enhance the programme's relevance but also ensure that graduates are adequately prepared to address the complexities of contemporary security challenges. Aligning these curriculum updates with established academic standards and scientific criteria will further strengthen the educational framework and outcomes of the programme. Moreover, fostering collaboration with industry experts and leveraging insights from current research can facilitate the integration of innovative pedagogical approaches. This proactive adaptation will ensure that the programme remains responsive to national priorities and global security dynamics, thereby enhancing its effectiveness in preparing students for successful careers in internal security and civil protection.

2.1.2. The duration and scope of the study programme, including its implementation options and language, are reasonable and justified. The programme's title, "Border Guarding" appropriately reflects its focus on border security and emergency management, and the study code ensures compliance with the Latvian professional qualification framework. Objective of Programme implementation is to train junior officers of the State Border Guard (profession classification code - 3351 09) for quality performance of official duties in the State Border Guard, capable of independently and responsibly ensuring border checks, border surveillance and immigration control, as well as return and asylum procedures for the performance of the functions and tasks of the State Border Guard. The qualification of a junior officer of the State Border Guard, is well-aligned with the programme's objectives, learning outcomes, and professional qualification SAR (Section 3.1.2.).

The programme spans 120 ECTS credits in a 2-year full-time duration and 120 ECTS credits in a 2,5 - year part- time duration, adhering to Latvian standards for educational programmes for border guards comply with Level 5 of the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF).

Admission requirements, which include criteria for academic performance ensure that students entering the programme can meet its rigorous demands. These requirements are consistent with the qualification awarded upon completion directly prepares graduates for roles such as border inspectors and civil protection officers, aligning with the professional demands of the Internal Security and Civil Protection. The programme's learning outcomes are meticulously structured to equip students with both theoretical knowledge and practical skills essential for professional security environments, specifically in contexts such as border security, public safety, and emergency management. Training encompasses key areas including law enforcement, emergency response, crisis management, and international security cooperation, thereby ensuring alignment with both national standards, such as the National Security Law of Latvia, and international standards, including the ISO 22301 for Business Continuity Management and the UN Security Council Resolutions on counter-terrorism. The professional qualification awarded at the programme's conclusion is tailored to meet the academic requirements established by the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF), as defined in the Regulations on the Classification of Latvian Education, as well as the Sectoral Qualifications Framework for Border Guarding developed by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), the Common Core Curriculum for Border and Coast Guard Mid-Level Management Training in the EU and the SBG Junior Officer Qualification Requirements.

In the context of the "Border Guarding" programme, while its title and objectives are suitably aligned with its content, there is potential for improvement by broadening the admission criteria. Currently,

the programme primarily focuses on candidates with backgrounds in border guarding. However, it is worth considering the possibility of attracting students from other fields, such as technology or international relations, which could enhance the programme's interdisciplinary approach and better prepare graduates for the evolving demands of the field.

Integrating students with technological backgrounds into the programme could bring new perspectives and skills that are crucial in light of contemporary challenges in the security sector. Technology plays a significant role in areas like cybersecurity, data analysis, and modern crisis management systems. Such educational intervention could contribute to better equipping graduates to tackle challenges such as cyber threats and complex crisis situations that require advanced analytical skills. Moreover, attracting students from the field of international relations could strengthen the development of competencies related to global security and international cooperation. Graduates with such educational backgrounds would be better suited for roles in international organizations and agencies, which is particularly relevant in the context of global threats such as terrorism and human trafficking. Incorporating this interdisciplinary approach into the education could not only increase the programme's attractiveness but also prepare students for work in diverse professional environments. It is recommended that the programme implement changes to its admission criteria to include candidates with educational backgrounds in technology and international relations. Such actions could significantly enrich the "Border Guarding" programme and ensure that graduates are better equipped to meet contemporary challenges in the field of security. Analyzing these aspects and implementing recommendations could lead to increased flexibility and relevance of the programme in the face of the dynamically changing landscape of internal security.

2.1.3. The programme has undergone regular updates and revisions to ensure compliance with evolving security needs and academic benchmarks. These updates are in line with the Rules of the Ministry, including Regulation No. 305, which governs higher education in Latvia. The programme not only meets these national standards but also reflects broader international security developments, incorporating best practices from academia and stakeholder feedback. Inputs from industry experts and law enforcement agencies have driven modifications in course content, learning outcomes, assessment methods, and even admission criteria. These revisions aim to prepare students for emerging challenges in cybersecurity, crisis management, and international cooperation. Such changes underscore the programme's proactive approach to maintaining educational relevance and quality, ensuring that graduates possess the skills needed to address contemporary security issues.

The Deputy Director for Studies is responsible for managing the study process, ensuring that the programme is continuously updated and remains relevant to national and international trends. This role includes overseeing the implementation of cutting-edge teaching methodologies, managing research activities, and fostering international partnerships. Additionally, the Deputy Director ensures that teaching staff receive ongoing support and opportunities for professional development, crucial for maintaining the high-quality standards expected of the programme.

The Education Coordination Unit (ECU) plays an integral role in managing the study process, ensuring the proper implementation of the programme, and coordinating research activities. The ECU also facilitates collaboration with external partners such as FRONTEX and other national and international institutions, ensuring that the programme aligns with both European and global standards in border security education.

Recent assessments of the study field led to a comprehensive evaluation of the programme's parameters, resulting in significant updates to maintain its relevance. According to the SAR, modifications have been introduced to integrate technological advancements and emerging security trends, such as cybersecurity and advanced surveillance technologies. The programme's periodic reviews, incorporating feedback from employers and students, have led to meaningful curriculum adjustments. Notably, training in digital security and international cooperation has been



strengthened, reflecting current global security trends and ensuring that the curriculum remains aligned with professional demands.

One significant modification followed the approval of a new professional standard for border security officers in Latvia. The qualification awarded upon completion of the programme, Junior Officer of the State Border Guard, now fully aligns with the updated professional standards. This adjustment ensures that graduates are equipped with advanced competencies in law enforcement, emergency management, and crisis response, as stipulated by the new standard (SAR 3.2.1). These changes are essential to ensuring that the curriculum meets the current demands of the internal security sector. Departments within SBGC deliver courses that are relevant to the programme, ensuring both practical and theoretical instruction aligns with current security challenges. In 2023, the creation of Department Heads further enhanced the programme's organization, ensuring more effective management of each area of study. These heads are responsible for ensuring that course content remains up-to-date and consistent with the needs of the State Border Guard and international security standards.

Support units such as the Library, Armament and Engineering Equipment Service, and the Professional and Tactical Training Centre contribute to the effective implementation of the study process by providing resources and technical support. The Third Training Company plays a crucial role in supporting students by addressing their daily needs, organizing educational activities, and ensuring that their living conditions are suitable for study.

Feedback from stakeholders—including employers, alumni, and law enforcement agencies—has been vital in shaping these updates. For instance, evaluations have highlighted the need for strengthening training in European security policies, crisis management strategies, and the incorporation of modern security technologies such as drone surveillance and border management software. Adjustments were also made to reflect shifts in national security policies and integrate insights gained from international crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic.

The programme's updates are underpinned by a robust framework that ensures alignment with both internal and external recommendations. While these changes have been well-justified, the SAR could benefit from a more thorough analysis of the long-term impact of these updates on the programme's parameters. Specifically, more attention could be paid to how the integration of emerging technologies influences educational outcomes and the professional competencies of graduates in the field of security and protection services.

In terms of programme management, the structure allows for effective and timely problem-solving. The Supervisory Board, a collegial body consisting of representatives from the student body, academic staff, and external stakeholders, meets regularly to discuss key issues and monitor the development of the programme. The daily operational efficiency of the programme is also enhanced by regular meetings between the Director, Deputy Directors, and Heads of Departments, ensuring that issues are identified early and solutions implemented quickly.

2.1.4. The "Border Guarding" programme plays a critical role in meeting Latvia's national security demands, especially considering the country's strategic position as an EU member state with external borders. The programme's relevance is underscored by the high employment rate of graduates, with over 90% working in security-related sectors (Fig.3.1.3.1. in SAR). This confirms the programme's strong economic significance, particularly in preparing professionals for roles in border security, emergency response, and public safety—areas that have become increasingly important in light of recent geopolitical tensions and the ongoing migration crisis.

Despite its relevance, the programme is currently facing challenges in student recruitment, as evidenced by a slight decline in the number of applicants in recent years, as highlighted in the SWOT analysis. This trend mirrors broader demographic shifts in Latvia, characterized by a decreasing population of young individuals, which complicates efforts to maintain robust enrolment numbers. In response to these challenges, the institution has implemented targeted outreach initiatives, including partnerships with high schools, aimed at enhancing the programme's visibility

and attracting a diverse array of students. Furthermore, collaboration with national institutions is instrumental in addressing these recruitment challenges. By engaging with governmental agencies and relevant professional organizations, the programme seeks to align its educational offerings with the current labor market demands, thus increasing its attractiveness to potential students. These strategic partnerships facilitate the exchange of information regarding employment opportunities in the field, providing students with valuable insights into prospective career paths and the essential skills needed in the evolving landscape of internal security. These proactive outreach and cooperative efforts are crucial not only for sustaining enrolment numbers but also for ensuring that the programme remains responsive to national security priorities and contemporary trends. Such alignment is vital for the programme's long-term relevance and sustainability within the field of internal security and civil protection.

From an economic and social perspective, the programme is strongly justified. Latvia's location at the European Union's external border signifies its position at the interface between EU member states and non-EU countries, which generates a sustained demand for a skilled workforce in internal security and civil protection. This geographical significance highlights the importance of having well-trained professionals capable of addressing the diverse security challenges that arise in this critical area. The continuous need for effective border management, counter-terrorism initiatives, and emergency response strategies further underscores the relevance of this study programme in equipping graduates to meet these essential demands. The programme effectively addresses this by preparing professionals for critical sectors, including law enforcement, border protection, and emergency response, thereby contributing to both national security and regional stability.

The self-evaluation report highlights a stable employment rate for graduates, with selected securing positions in national and EU border control agencies, as well as civil protection and private security firms (Section 2.1.2 in SAR). This demonstrates the programme's broad applicability and its alignment with current market needs. However, the programme faces two significant challenges: a declining number of students due to demographic trends and increased competition from similar security programmes in Europe.

To address these challenges, the programme could benefit from intensified promotional efforts and a focus on interdisciplinary studies, such as incorporating elements of technology or international relations into the curriculum. This could attract a larger and more diverse student cohort, ensuring the programme remains competitive and relevant in an evolving global security landscape.

2.1.5. Although the "Internal Security and Civil Protection" programme is not currently offered as a joint study programme, there is significant potential for future development in this area. The State Border Guard College (SBGC) has already expressed interest in forming international partnerships to enhance the quality and breadth of the study process. Notably, the Erasmus+ programme and NordPlus programmes have been successfully implemented, facilitating both student and staff mobility, which strengthens the programme's international focus and fosters a global perspective on internal security.

Opportunities for collaboration with key European institutions, such as FRONTEX, and other EU organizations could serve as a foundation for establishing a joint programme in the future. This would allow the programme to integrate multinational perspectives on border protection and internal security, enriching the educational experience for students. Such a partnership would provide learners with broader insights into international security policies and operations, giving them valuable exposure to the challenges and best practices across different European borders.

The development of a joint programme would significantly enhance the academic quality of the study process by incorporating diverse teaching methods, expertise, and security approaches from various countries. Furthermore, such an initiative would not only increase the employability of graduates in international and EU-based security roles but also raise the profile and competitiveness of the programme on a European scale.

## Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

### Conclusions:

The "Border Guarding" programme at the State Border Guard College (SBGC) demonstrates a robust alignment with Latvia's national security priorities and the broader European Union (EU) regulatory framework. As Latvia holds a strategic position as an EU member with external borders, the programme plays a critical role in safeguarding national and EU security, particularly through its strong adherence to the Schengen Border Code and other European directives on border management and internal security. This compliance with both national and EU-level requirements ensures that the programme not only meets domestic needs but also integrates best practices in border security from across Europe.

Regular updates and revisions to the programme, informed by feedback from stakeholders such as law enforcement agencies, industry experts, and academic evaluations, demonstrate a proactive approach to maintaining academic rigor and relevance in a rapidly evolving security landscape. These updates have ensured the inclusion of emerging security trends such as cybersecurity, digital forensics, and advanced surveillance technologies, which are now indispensable in modern security environments. The programme's capacity to adapt to new security challenges, such as those posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, has been critical in ensuring that students are prepared to handle real-world crises.

From a management perspective, the programme benefits from a clear and effective governance structure that supports its continuous development. The Deputy Director for Studies, along with the Education Coordination Unit, plays a vital role in overseeing the implementation of the programme, ensuring that it remains aligned with both national priorities and international security standards. This structure facilitates efficient decision-making, timely updates to the curriculum, and regular engagement with external stakeholders, such as employers and international partners like FRONTEX.

Despite its strong alignment with current professional and academic standards, the programme faces some challenges. These include declining student enrolment, driven by broader demographic trends in Latvia, and increased competition from other security-related programmes in Europe. The programme's ability to attract and retain students is critical for its long-term sustainability. Moreover, while the curriculum incorporates contemporary security topics, there is room for further expansion into interdisciplinary areas, particularly by broadening admission criteria to attract students from fields like technology and international relations. This would enhance the diversity of the student body and better prepare graduates for the multifaceted challenges of modern security, which increasingly require technological literacy and international cooperation.

In summary, the "Border Guarding" programme is well-positioned to continue playing a key role in Latvia's and the EU's internal security landscape. Its alignment with national and international standards, combined with its emphasis on practical skills and evolving security trends, ensures that graduates are prepared for the demands of modern security professions. Nevertheless, addressing the identified challenges, particularly in terms of student recruitment and interdisciplinary expansion, will be essential for the programme's continued relevance and growth. A strategic focus on increasing the diversity of student backgrounds, enhancing technological components of the curriculum, and securing additional funding for research could further strengthen the programme and ensure that it remains at the forefront of internal security education in Latvia and Europe.

### Strengths

1. The programme aligns with Latvia's national security priorities and complies with EU directives like the Schengen Border Code, ensuring relevance on both national and international level.
2. The inclusion of hands-on training in border surveillance, law enforcement techniques, and crisis management provides students with essential skills for professional success.

3. The programme has incorporated emerging trends such as cybersecurity and digital security, ensuring that graduates are equipped to handle contemporary security threats.
4. Over 90% of graduates secure employment in security-related sectors, demonstrating the programme's strong alignment with job market demands.
5. Feedback from employers, law enforcement agencies, and industry experts drives ongoing improvements, ensuring that the curriculum remains relevant and effective.

#### Weaknesses

1. The programme faces challenges in student recruitment due to broader demographic trends in Latvia, such as a decreasing young population.
2. The programme sets a specific number of admission criteria which are not addressed to prospective students from other disciplines, such as technology or international relations. Therefore, this narrowly targeted policy may deprive the curriculum of new perspectives and skills.
3. Although the programme is fully funded by the state, there are no specific financial resources allocated for the research activities of academic staff, limiting opportunities for innovation.
4. The programme faces competition from similar security-related programmes in Europe, which may affect its ability to attract international students.
5. Lack of progress in the cybersecurity domain while the current status of digital environment demands the incorporation of advanced technological subjects such as data analysis and modern crisis management systems.

## 2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

### Analysis

2.2.1. The study programme "Border Guarding" (41861) complies with the requirements of the "Education Law", the "Vocational Education Law" and the "Law on Higher Education Institutions" of the Republic of Latvia, the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers "Rules on the State Standards of Vocational Higher Education" and the "Professional Qualification Requirements of a Junior Officer of the SBG" (<https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/2017/PS-269.pdf>).

The strategic aims of the study programme, obligatory content, basic principles and assessment procedure fully comply with the requirements established by the national standard of professional higher education (the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers "Rules on the State Standards of Vocational Higher Education"), which is reflected in detail in Appendix 20. While analysing the descriptions of the study courses (Appendix 22) in conjunction with Appendix 21 (compliance of the qualification obtained under the study programme with the professional standard), it was concluded that the content of the study courses and practical training correspond to the competence and scope of professional knowledge specified in the "Professional Qualification Requirements of a Junior Officer of the SBG". The objectives set in the study courses, the learning/study outcomes and the content included therein are interrelated (Appendix 23). The achievement of learning outcomes is ensured by the Study Programme Plan (Appendix 24), which provides for a logical sequence of acquisition of theoretical and practical knowledge, continuity and interrelation of the curriculum and practice. The content of the curriculum also ensures continuity of continuing education in higher education programmes that meet the needs of the industry. The current needs of employers for graduate competence are met by regularly (at least once a year) updating the content of the study programme and study courses, which is carried out by assessing not only the changes and development trends in the work environment and industry, but also proposals from employers and graduates received as a result of feedback (surveys) (SAR, p.30-32, 91-92).

2.2.3. The programme's curriculum is designed to equip students with both theoretical knowledge and practical skills essential for effective border management, crisis response, and civil protection. Its emphasis on practical training, such as hands-on border surveillance, law enforcement

techniques, and emergency management, directly reflects the operational needs of the State Border Guard and other internal security institutions. By including components such as legal frameworks and cross-border cooperation, the programme ensures that graduates are well-prepared for a wide range of security challenges, both nationally and internationally. In implementing the study programme, the SBGC uses a wide range of both classical and innovative theoretical and practical classes. Particularly noteworthy is the diverse set of practical training methods and logistical support, which, when preparing students for practical work, provides an opportunity to master practical work methods, including studying the principles and conditions for the use of special means and technical means of border protection, as well as the latest modern technologies in the field of border control (SAR, p. 92-93.).

The principles of student-centred education are observed in the study process:

- students participate in the development and improvement of the study process and curriculum;
- when choosing teaching methods and objectives, teachers try to take into account the different learning styles of students;
- in addition to lecture materials, teachers create and use various types of visual teaching aids;
- promotes constant reflection of students in the learning process - both during lessons, when teachers ask students to analyze the results of their learning in a particular lesson;
- during classes discussions are often held, during which students share their experience of practical service with both their group mates and teachers;
- if necessary, the student has the opportunity to attend individual consultations with the teacher (SAR p. 94).

The forms and methods of training used contribute to the acquisition of theoretical knowledge necessary for the profession, the formation of practical skills and abilities, develop the ability to analyze and summarize information, promote creative activity, the cognitive process, and independence in learning. The principles of student-centred education are observed in the study process.

2.2.4. The study programme includes two internships. The procedure for organizing internships is determined by the SBG order, which approves the rules for internship developed by the SBGC and assigns students to internship locations. The internship takes place in real border conditions – in structural units of the SBG territorial boards. Internship supervisors are appointed by orders both in the SBGC and the SBG territorial boards.

Regulations of Internship determine:

- aims and objectives of the internship
- scope, duration, organization and management of the internship
- responsibilities of the internship supervisor and the intern
- internship programme (knowledge and skills to be acquired)
- evaluation procedure (Appendix 25).

The tasks of internships are related to the learning outcomes to be achieved in the study programme and allow students to apply theoretical knowledge acquired during their studies in the SBGC, to develop and improve skills in the field of personnel management, in planning the activities of the unit and the organization of the service, in the organization and implementation of the training process of the unit personnel, as well as in the organization and implementation of cooperation with other MoI institutions (State Police, Fire and Rescue Service) in accordance with the competence of a junior officer. During the internship, students are provided with access to the regulatory enactments, statistical and analytical data and other documents necessary for successful completion of the internship programme, preparation of the internship report, and elaboration of the qualification thesis (SAR, p.96).

The procedure for organizing internships, as well as the assignments offered to students, are reviewed annually, taking into account the specifics of border and immigration control procedures and the regulatory framework, as well as comments and suggestions made in reports of persons

who check the implementation of internship and student surveys (SAR, p. 96). Internships tasks and organization are fully in line with the aims and objectives of the study programme.

2.2.6. Students select and research the topics of the qualification works in accordance with the procedure and conditions established in the “Methodological Guidelines of the SBGC for the development and presentation of the qualification thesis and report”, which ensure the selection of topics for research that are relevant to the border industry and / or study programme. The student selects the topic of the qualification work (from the list of sample topics of the qualification work approved by the Council of the SBGC) in accordance with their interests and having provided themselves with as much scientific literature and other sources of information as possible (“Methodological Guidelines of the SBGC for the development and presentation of the qualification thesis and report”).

The topic should be as closely related to the future professional activity of the student as possible. After choosing the topic of the qualification thesis, a supervisor of the qualification thesis is assigned to the student and, if necessary, a consultant - a practicing specialist is involved (SAR p. 97, information obtained during the interview).

After evaluating the topics of 204 students' qualification works submitted by the college (developed in 2018-2023, Appendix 26), the experts found that all topics of students' final theses are relevant to the field and correspond to the study programme.

## **Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses**

### **Conclusions:**

The structure and content of the "Border Guarding" study programme are closely aligned with its objectives, balancing theoretical knowledge with practical application to equip students with the technical, analytical, and soft skills required in the security and protection field. Graduates are well-prepared for professional roles through a curriculum that combines national priorities with European standards, including FRONTEX guidelines. The curriculum reflects Latvia's national and regional needs and is regularly updated to incorporate the latest trends in external policy and international security standards.

Students and stakeholders value the programme's relevance, opportunities for involvement, and close industry ties. Guest lectures from international experts, including courses in English terminology, broaden students' perspectives and reinforce SBGC's commitment to a dynamic and adaptable educational approach. Additionally, the programme benefits from EU funding, FRONTEX support, and strong partnerships with employers, enhancing its alignment with professional expectations.

The programme's strong integration of internships, a structured approach to qualification theses, and a wide array of instructional methods further contribute to its effectiveness, creating a cohesive educational experience that meets industry standards and supports lifelong learning.

### **Strengths:**

1. An effective balance of theory and practice, validated by feedback from graduates and industry professionals, ensures that students develop essential technical, analytical, and soft skills.
2. Curriculum designed to meet national and regional needs while aligning with European standards and FRONTEX guidelines, adaptable to changing geopolitical situations.
3. Active student participation in shaping the study programme, fostering engagement and a sense of ownership, and enhancing learning experiences.
4. Diverse learning environment enriched by guest lectures from foreign experts and courses that include English terminology, broadening students' international perspective.
5. Close cooperation between the SBGC and the State Border Guard in developing and updating the

study programme, strengthening its relevance and practical alignment.

6. Diverse range and well-supported provision of teaching methods and forms, contributing to effective knowledge dissemination.

7. Detailed procedures in student practice and the development of qualification papers ensure strong connections between internships, qualification thesis topics, and practical service needs, aligning with current service challenges.

Weaknesses:

1. Limited Support for Students with Weaker English Proficiency: There is a concern that the current structure and volume of the English language course may not adequately support students with weaker preliminary knowledge of English. This gap could hinder their ability to achieve the necessary language proficiency required by the professional standards and study programme, potentially impacting their future employability in an increasingly international context.

### **Assessment of the requirement [5] (applicable only to master's or doctoral study programmes)**

- 1 R5 - The study programme for obtaining a master's or doctoral degree is based on the achievements and findings of the respective field of science or field of artistic creation.

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

## **2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme**

### **Analysis**

2.3.1. The study programme "Border Guarding" provision of studies is assessed as high in general, this is confirmed by the available documents and described procedures, as well as interviews with all involved parties (SAR). The scientific provision, taking into account the specific sector of the programme, is satisfactory, The number of scientific publications is decreasing, within the limits of possibilities, more attention should be paid to scientific research (Interview with members of the group responsible for the preparation of Self-Assessment report, interview with lecturers, SAR p. 59). The SBGC information provision includes a wide range of available printed materials and digital databases in the library, as well as available teaching materials and lecture presentations in the MOODLE system (Interview with the SBGC director, Interview with the SBGC study field director, visit to the library, interview with the responsible IT representative). Material and technical support and financial support correspond to specific features and conditions of the study programme implementation, because SBGC is located in the direct area of responsibility of SBG and is provided with all current equipment and technical means, as well as, if necessary, additional funding is attracted both from SBG and from various projects (Interview with the SBGC director, Interview with employers). The infrastructure of the college is wide and thoughtful, the college is able to train not only students, but also conducts additional training for border guard officials. Cooperates very extensively with FRONTEX. All of this in general creates all the necessary prerequisites for achieving study results and indicates the possibility of ensuring a high-quality study process (Interview with the SBGC director, Interview with the SBGC study field director, Interview with students and lecturers, a tour of the college premises ). Graduates of the study programme have the opportunity to continue their education in order to obtain a professional bachelor's degree in border guard and SBG senior officer qualification. SBGC has been cooperating with RTA since 2011 and jointly ensures the implementation of the first-cycle professional higher education bachelor's study programme "Border Guarding" (SAR p. 86). The funding of SBGC consists of state budget grants from general revenue, own revenue from fee-based services, and donations. The state budget subsidy covers the

full cost of the education process, with the amount allocated and distributed based on the laws and regulations of the Republic of Latvia as specified in the annual financing plan (SBGC Financial Report, Section on Funding Structure). It is important to note that the funding allocated to the SBGC for the calendar year is not broken down by study programme; rather, the implementation of study programmes is financed from the total funding allocated to the SBGC. While no financial resources are specifically foreseen for research (creative) activities of academic staff, the SBGC can receive funding for studies requested by the State Border Guard, as outlined in the SBG Internal Regulation No 9 of 23.03.2017 "Procedure for the State Border Guard to Order Research." In return, funding is provided for the purchase of literature and the publication of teaching materials, with EUR 1,200 allocated in 2023 for the replenishment of the Library's collection, and a similar amount planned for subsequent years (SBGC Financial Report, Library Budget Section). Own revenue is planned and included in the overall annual financing plan, while donations have specific purposes and are utilized accordingly (SBGC Financial Report, Section on Revenue Sources). Financial control is implemented in accordance with the Mol Internal Regulation No 1-10/45 of 19.11.2015 "Procedure for Monitoring Budget Implementation," ensuring responsible management of financial resources (Mol Internal Regulation No 1-10/45).

2.3.3. SBGC is a college under the direct jurisdiction of the Border Guard and its funding is mainly from the state budget, as well as various international projects and self-earned services (Interview with the SBGC director, SAR p.37). The funding available for the study programme, the use of funding ensures the full implementation of the study process. The number of students is determined by the need of the Border Guard, so the profitability of the number of students has not been identified (Interview with the SBGC director, Interview with employers) . The profitability of the study programme is justified by the fact that there is no other study programme in Latvia that would provide short-cycle professional higher education in such a specific and somewhat narrow field, thus ensuring national security and the organization of relevant events, which are directly carried out by the youngest officers of the State Border Guard. (SAR p.100) The existing funding and support from the State Border Guard and FRONTEX is sufficient for the college to be able to provide adequate education for the needs of the industry (Interview with the SBGC director, Interview with the SBGC study field director, SAR p.37 ). The basic cost of a study place in full-time studies - 1746.14 EUR, in part-time studies - 1309.61 EUR. The number of students in the study programme is determined by the "Professional education development action plan for officials of the Ministry of the Interior system with special service ranks for 2022-2025" (approved by the order of the Ministry of the Interior of 28.10.2022 No. 1-2/1450 "On the action plan for the development of professional education for 2022-2025") in Appendix 2. According to the aforementioned normative act, in the period from 2022 to 2025, it is planned to enroll 20 people in the study programme in full-time studies and 20 people in part-time studies (SAR p.100).

## **Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses**

### **Conclusions:**

The financial structure of the programme is stable, with the Latvian state budget fully covering the costs of education. However, the lack of dedicated funding for research activities limits opportunities for academic staff to engage in research, innovation, and the development of cutting-edge teaching materials. To address this gap, it would be beneficial to explore additional funding mechanisms, such as partnerships with security agencies or EU-funded research grants, which could enhance the research output of both staff and students. The resources and provision of the study programme are of a high standard. All necessary and up-to-date equipment and technical support are available for SBGC the study programme, which allows preparing students after graduating to work for the border. All relevant equipment, knowledge and technical means are transferred to the college for the implementation of the programme, according to what is on site in the border guard. The



financing of the programme is provided from the state budget. Industry professionals are involved in the learning process. Up-to-date information is available both in the library and in electronic databases. The classrooms intended for the implementation of the study programme are equipped with all the necessary inventory to qualitatively implement the study programme.

Strengths:

1. Operational receipt of newer equipment and technical solutions for conducting the training process from the State Border Guard.
2. Digitization solutions are widely used, both the MOODEL system, and an application for student internship management has been created.
3. The regulatory documents of the study programme coincide with the processes occurring in life.

Weaknesses:

1. Was not detected.

## **Assessment of the requirement [6]**

- 1 R6 - Compliance of the study provision, science provision (if applicable), informative provision (including library), material and technical provision and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Study provision, science provision, informational provision, material and technical provision and financial provision comply with the conditions for ensuring the implementation of the study programme and the achievement of learning results.

## **2.4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

2.4.1. The qualifications of teaching staff in higher education, particularly in the field of state border security, align with specific criteria set by regulatory bodies (See detailed Regulations on the election of academic staff of the State Border Guard College APPROVED by the decision No.4 of the Council of the State Border Guard College of 06.03.2024).

This includes possessing appropriate degrees, certifications, and professional experience. The criteria are thoroughly presented in the relative section entitled Criteria for assessing the suitability and professional qualifications of a candidate for an academic staff position of the State Border Guard, of the document of Regulations on the election of academic staff of the State Border Guard College (approved by the decision No.4 of the Council of the SBGC if 06.03.2024.), p.5. In addition to meeting these compliance requirements, the teaching staff members have substantial subject matter expertise, enabling them to effectively convey complex concepts. Strong pedagogical skills are also essential, allowing faculty to create engaging learning experiences tailored to diverse student needs, such as simulation of state border and courses regarding discipline rules, as mentioned through our meetings with the director of the programme and the students. Continuous professional development and involvement in research further enhance their knowledge and the curriculum, ensuring that students receive current and relevant information. The continuous professional development is performed all year round, according to the official statement of the Director of the Programme and the SBGC management, as declared in our meetings. Furthermore, in the interviews, it was mentioned that teaching staff fill out reports when they return from various conferences and seminars. The mentioned reports are prepared based on the requirements set up by the State Border Guard and follow the definite template. There are three main kinds of the

reports: report on the participation in international activity (taking place both abroad or in the College), report on the participation in Frontex activity, and report on the participation in national training activity. The aforementioned elements are strongly depicted to the personalities of the teaching staff personnel.

Moreover, the teaching staff encourages the adoption of several skills and competences, such as technical, analytical and soft skills which are vital for achieving educational goals. Courses such as psychology, language, law promote the development of soft skills while there is a strong obligation to cooperate with colleagues in courses due to their nature, such as border check, cultivating team work, leadership, management issues and roleplay. In order to implement the aforementioned courses, collaboration with colleagues from various disciplines enriches the educational environment by incorporating diverse perspectives on border security issues. A commitment to student success is paramount, with faculty providing mentorship and support throughout the academic journey. To maintain high educational standards, the qualifications and effectiveness of teaching staff are regularly evaluated through student feedback and administration's evaluation, fostering a culture of continuous improvement that adapts to evolving educational demands. In fact, as it is indicated in the document regarding the Regulations on the election of academic staff of the SBGC, the results of the College student surveys for the last three years, are included among the criteria for the academic evaluation of the teaching staff. See indicatively section 5.3 of the document mentioned.

But it should be noted that after the SWOT analysis and interviews, there was an impression that some of the teachers do not have sufficient knowledge of English at a sufficiently high level, which can negatively affect their competence in the application of innovations and the latest technologies (SAR, p.15, SWOT analysis, personnel interviews).

2.4.2. The SBGC prioritizes maintaining the quality of its study programme despite changes in teaching staff which might refer to the employment of new members. To achieve this, the SBGC employs strategic recruitment practices to ensure new faculty members are qualified and aligned with educational goals. But information was obtained from the SAR report and the interview with the management of SBGC that the salaries of the teaching staff are lower compared to similar positions in other structural units of the SBG, so it is difficult to attract candidates with practical experience to academic positions (SAR, p.15, 17, SWOT analysis, personnel interviews).

See the relative document of Regulations on the election of academic staff of SBGC. Ongoing professional development as it has mentioned previously and refer to the reports demanded from the teaching staff when they return from various conferences and seminars ensures all faculty remain updated on pedagogical techniques and subject matter. Regular evaluations, including student feedback, help identify areas for improvement and uphold teaching standards. Moreover, the prior consulting from employers's organizations as well as with other agencies, such as the FRONTEX, contributes significantly to the achievement of the pursued goal.

2.4.4. As the programme is vocational in nature, the professional experience of the teaching staff is a critical component. The teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements for professional qualifications set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and the Regulations on the Election of Academic Staff of the State Border Guard College (approved by the decision No.4 of the Council of the SBGC on 06.03.2024). This includes at least five years of relevant professional experience in the field of border security, or the equivalent in scholarly publications or artistic achievements, where applicable.

The qualifications of the teaching staff meet these requirements, and the majority of faculty members have substantial professional experience in the field of border security. This experience allows them to effectively deliver complex, practical knowledge to students. Furthermore, teaching staff members continuously enhance their skills through professional development activities, including participation in conferences, seminars, and workshops. The reports of such activities are submitted according to the official reporting system (e.g., reports on participation in international activities, Frontex activities, and national training events), which are prepared following a set

template, as indicated in the Regulations on the Election of Academic Staff of the State Border Guard College.

While there is a lack of publications in high-impact international peer-reviewed journals, the programme's focus on professional experience ensures that the teaching staff can impart real-world, applied knowledge. To further strengthen the academic profile of the teaching staff, it is recommended that the College encourage increased collaboration with international institutions such as Frontex and attract faculty members with more international operational experience.

2.4.5. The State Border Guard College has established clear mechanisms for cooperation among its teaching staff, particularly in the delivery of multidisciplinary courses such as border checks, security, and management. These courses require the collaboration of faculty from various disciplines, including law, IT, and security management, which ensures that students receive a comprehensive, well-rounded education. The interdisciplinary approach enables faculty to provide integrated teaching that covers both theoretical and practical aspects of border security.

The collaboration is facilitated by a variety of teaching methods, including roleplay, which promotes teamwork, leadership, and management skills, as well as the application of theory to practice. The approach ensures that the curriculum remains relevant and dynamic, adapting to the changing needs of the border security sector. In this context, courses such as border check, IT systems, and procedural law are taught in close cooperation, allowing for a seamless integration of different perspectives.

Regarding the expert analyses, it should be noted that the SBGC has implemented an internal system for mutual cooperation and feedback. Faculty members contribute to the development of teaching materials and participate in joint assessments of course delivery. After each event, faculty submit reports on their participation, which are then analyzed by the College's management as part of the quality assurance system. These reports help to assess the effectiveness of course delivery and identify areas for improvement. It is recommended that the College formalize and clarify the expert feedback process, ensuring that findings are consistently documented and used to refine the teaching methodology.

The continued cooperation with industry stakeholders, such as Frontex, and the involvement of faculty from various departments contribute significantly to the success of the study programme. These mechanisms ensure that the programme's delivery remains effective, and that courses are interconnected in a way that supports the overall goals of the study programme.

## **Conclusions on this set of criteria, by indicating strengths and weaknesses**

### **Conclusions:**

The professional experience of the teaching staff is vital to ensuring that the study programme maintains its vocational focus. The faculty meets the regulatory requirements for professional experience, with many staff members possessing substantial practical experience in the field of border security. Continuous professional development activities, such as participation in international conferences, contribute to keeping the teaching staff informed of the latest developments in the field.

The interdisciplinary teaching methodology employed at the SBGC fosters collaboration across various departments, ensuring that students receive a well-rounded education. However, there is a need for more clarity in the expert analysis regarding the implementation and effectiveness of these cooperation mechanisms. Future evaluations should focus on improving the integration of expert feedback into the programme's development.

### **Strengths:**

1. **Qualified and Experienced Teaching Staff:** The faculty possess strong professional experience in state border security and related fields, enhancing the practical relevance of the programme. Their qualifications align with regulatory standards and ensure a solid foundation for achieving the programme's objectives.
2. **Interdisciplinary Approach:** The collaboration across various disciplines strengthens the curriculum, enabling a holistic understanding of complex topics like border security, law enforcement, and management. This multidisciplinary approach is supported by role-playing and practical exercises.
3. **Ongoing Professional Development:** Continuous participation in international conferences and training keeps the teaching staff updated on new trends and challenges in the field, ensuring that the programme remains relevant and of high quality.

**Weaknesses:**

1. **Lack of Formalized Cooperation Mechanisms:** While interdisciplinary collaboration is a strength, the absence of clear, formalized mechanisms to evaluate its effectiveness makes it difficult to assess the impact of this cooperation on student outcomes.
2. **Inconsistent Presentation of Findings:** Some sections of the report provide conflicting conclusions or lack clarity, especially regarding the professional experience of the teaching staff and the evaluation of cooperation mechanisms.
3. **Limited Focus on Professional Experience in Key Sections:** While the professional experience of the teaching staff is discussed in Section 2.4.4, it is not sufficiently emphasized in other relevant subsections, missing an opportunity to highlight its significance to the professional nature of the programme.

## **Assessment of the requirement [7]**

- 1 R7 - Compliance of the qualification of the academic staff and visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The qualifications of the teaching staff at the State Border Guard College (SBGC) fully comply with the regulatory requirements for implementing the "Border Guarding" study programme, as faculty members possess the necessary degrees, certifications, and professional experience. Continuous professional development and interdisciplinary cooperation enhance their teaching effectiveness and engagement with students. However, challenges such as low salary competitiveness hinder the attraction of candidates with significant practical experience, and some faculty members lack sufficient English language proficiency, which may affect their ability to stay updated with global advancements. Overall, the SBGC demonstrates a strong commitment to maintaining high educational standards and adapting to evolving demands in border security education.

## **2.5. Assessment of the Compliance**

### **Requirements**

- 1 1 - The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Annex 20.Pielikums SP atbilstība valsts izglītības standartam\_ENG.doc provides confirmation that

the study programme complies with the State Education Standard pursuant to Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 305 of 13.06.2023 "Regulations on the State Standard of Vocational Higher Education".

- 2 2 - The study programme complies with a valid professional standard or the requirements for the professional qualification (if there is no professional standard required for the relevant occupation) provided if the completion of the study programme leads to a professional qualification (if applicable)

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the profession standard of the Vocational Qualification "Junior Officer of the State Border Guard" (approved on 09.08.2023), which can be accessed here: <https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/2017/PS-269.pdf> based on the Annex 21. Pielikums SP atbilstība profesionālās kvalifikācijas Valsts robežsardzes jaunākais virsnieks prasībām.docx

- 3 3 - The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 561 , Paragraph two and Section 562 , Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study course descriptions are prepared in Latvian that can be accessed under 22.Pielikums Studiju kursu apraksti.docx comply with regulations set forth in Law on Higher Education Institutions.

- 4 4 - The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the procedure according to which state recognised documents of higher education are issued.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The provided Diploma sample in the annex 17.Pielikums Diploma-ENG.pdf complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued according to Cabinet Regulation No. 202 "Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību.

- 5 5 - The academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the requirements set forth in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

- 6 6 - Academic study programmes provided for less than 250 full-time students may be implemented and less than five professors and associated professors of the higher education institution may be involved in the implementation of the mandatory and limited elective part of these study programmes provided that the relevant opinion of the Council for Higher Education has been received in accordance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

- 7 7 - At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of an academic doctoral study programme, at least three of which are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the respective field of science. At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a professional doctoral study programme in arts (if applicable).

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

- 8 8 - The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language in accordance with the regulations on the level of the official language knowledge and the procedures for testing official language proficiency for performing professional duties and office duties.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

This is identified in the annex 29.Pielikums Apliecinājums par valsts valodas zināšanām\_ENG.docx. It can be concluded that the state language proficiency is compliant with Cabinet Regulation Nr. 733 " Regulations Regarding the Extent of the Knowledge of the Official Language, the Procedures for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language and the State Fee for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language".

- 9 9 - The teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language, if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language (if applicable).

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

- 10 10 - The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Sample of attached study agreement 4.Pielikums Līgums par pilna laika studijām\_ENG.doc complies with Cabinet Regulation. Nr. 70 "Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi".

- 11 11 - The higher education institution / college has provided confirmation that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education in another study programme or another higher education institution or college (agreement with another accredited higher education institution or college) if the implementation of the study programme is terminated.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The College has provided confirmation that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education in another higher education institution if the implementation of the study programme is terminated.

The agreements are specified in the 28.Pielikums Sadarbības līgums VRK RTA\_ENG.doc.

It is specified that in case of discontinuation of this study programme, students are to be able to continue their studies at Rēzekne Academy of Technologies.

- 12 12 - The higher education institution / college has provided confirmation that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the study programme's license is revoked due to the actions (actions or omissions) of the higher education institution or college and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The College has provided confirmation that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the study programme's license is revoked. It is ensured by the document certifying it - 27.Pielikums Apliecinājums zaudējumu kompensācija\_ENG.docx. The documents provided are pursuant to paragraph 13.4 of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 795 "Regulations Regarding Licensing of Study Programmes"

- 13 13 - The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 55.(1), Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (if applicable)

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

- 14 14 - Compliance with the requirements specified in other regulatory enactments that apply to the study programme being assessed (if applicable)

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the regulatory enactments that apply specifically to the study programme being assessed. See Annex 32.pielikums Studiju programmas atbilstība atbilstošās nozares specifiskajam normatīvajam regulējumam\_ENG.docx

The specific regulatory acts are 1. Law on the Course of Service of Officials with Special Service Ranks Working in Institutions of the System of the Ministry of the Interior and the Prison Administration; 2. Regulation (EU) 2016/399 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on a Union Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders (Schengen Borders Code) and others.

**Assessment of the requirement [8]**

- 1 R8 - Compliance of the study programme with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The submitted documents for evaluation of the study programme that were reviewed by the expert group are concluded to be in compliance with the requirements set in the Law on Higher Education Institutions as well as relevant specified regulatory enactments that are relevant for the study programme.

**General conclusions about the study programme, indicating the most important strengths and weaknesses of the study programme**

The “Border Guarding” study programme at the State Border Guard College (SBGC) successfully meets the strategic goals of Latvia's internal security and national priorities. The programme aligns with both national and European Union frameworks, ensuring that it responds to the specific needs of border control, law enforcement, and civil protection sectors. It prepares professionals with the necessary competencies to work in various security-related fields, particularly focusing on Latvia's geopolitical role as an EU border country.

The programme complies with Latvian professional higher education standards and ensures that students acquire both theoretical and practical skills relevant to the modern security environment. The curriculum is regularly updated to address evolving security challenges, including digital transformation, and international security cooperation. It is evident that the programme supports high graduate employability, with over 90% of graduates securing jobs in relevant sectors.

No major deficiencies have been identified that would prevent the accreditation of the programme for the full period. However, the assessment indicates that there are areas where improvements are necessary, particularly regarding technological integration, interdisciplinary studies, and the recruitment of a diverse student body. Additionally, while the programme benefits from international partnerships, the lack of joint study programmes with European institutions represents a broader weakness in the study field, limiting students' exposure to diverse international security practices. The programme can be implemented in its current full-time intramural format and Latvian language, and its potential expansion into additional languages or forms of delivery would require strategic planning and resource allocation.

Strengths:

1. Alignment with National and European Priorities: The programme's objectives are closely aligned with Latvia's national security strategies and European Union regulations, particularly in the areas of border control and civil protection.
2. High Graduate Employability: Over 90% of graduates are employed in security-related roles, particularly within Latvian and EU institutions such as border control, civil protection, and law enforcement agencies.
3. Practical Orientation: The programme emphasises practical training, including real-world crisis management scenarios, law enforcement techniques, and border security operations.
4. International Collaboration Opportunities: Partnerships with FRONTEX and Erasmus+ programmes enhance the international perspective and offer mobility opportunities for students and staff.
5. Experienced Teaching Staff: The programme is delivered by practitioners with significant experience in the field, ensuring high-quality, practice-based education.
6. Regular Updates and Curriculum Revisions: The programme is regularly reviewed and updated based on feedback from employers and stakeholders, ensuring that it remains responsive to modern security trends, including cybersecurity and advanced surveillance technologies.
7. National Security Integration: The curriculum is integrated with national security policies and ensures that students are well-prepared to meet the needs of state and public sector roles.
8. Strong Learning Outcomes: The programme's learning outcomes are well-structured and focus on developing both practical skills and theoretical knowledge that are essential for the security and protection sectors.

#### Weaknesses:

1. Limited Technological Advancements: While updates have been made, there is a need for greater integration of emerging technologies, such as AI, drone surveillance, and advanced cybersecurity measures, to enhance students' technical skills.
2. Declining Enrolment Trends: The demographic decline in Latvia has contributed to a reduction in student numbers. Stronger promotional efforts and outreach to high schools and vocational institutions could help address this issue.
3. Interdisciplinary Integration: There is room for improvement in terms of integrating interdisciplinary subjects, such as technology, international law, and public administration, to better equip students for the complexity of modern security challenges.

### Evaluation of the study programme "Border guarding"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Excellent

### 2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Border guarding"

#### Short-term recommendations

Strengthen Technological Integration: Incorporate emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and surveillance systems more directly into the specific study programme. This will ensure that students in the programme are well-equipped with up-to-date technical skills, directly aligned with the operational needs of the State Border Guard and broader security industry.



**Tailor Admission Criteria to Programme Goals:** Broaden admission criteria for the Border Guard study programme to attract a more diverse student body with interdisciplinary backgrounds. Candidates with prior knowledge in technology, international relations, or public administration can add value and bring different perspectives, enriching the programme's relevance in internal security.

**Upgrade Digital Learning Infrastructure for the Programme:** Invest in improving digital learning resources, particularly for courses directly related to cybersecurity and digital border management. Enhancing digital tools and platforms will support the specific learning objectives of the programme and ensure it remains aligned with the latest technological trends in the security sector

**Enhance Research Integration in Programme Teaching:** Establish structured opportunities for faculty members to engage in research specifically related to internal security and the programme's curriculum. Incorporating research findings into the teaching process will ensure students are exposed to current challenges and advancements in the field, enhancing the practical value of the programme.

**Improve English Language Support:** Enhance the English language curriculum to provide additional resources and support for students with weaker foundational knowledge. This could include tailored language workshops, tutoring sessions, or supplementary online materials to ensure all students can achieve the required proficiency level for their professional roles.

**Update the study programme's learning outcomes to include a stronger focus on cybersecurity, advanced surveillance technologies, and digital security.** This adjustment will ensure that students are equipped with relevant skills for contemporary challenges in border security and internal protection.

## Long-term recommendations

**Develop Joint International Programmes specific to Border Guarding:** Create partnerships with international agencies such as FRONTEX to develop joint programmes that expand the scope of learning within the Border Guard programme. This will offer students cross-border insights and enhance their global understanding of internal security.

**Increase Interdisciplinary Content Specific to Programme Needs:** Expand the content of the Border Guard programme to include relevant interdisciplinary topics such as international law, crisis management, and public administration. This will better prepare graduates to face complex and evolving challenges in the field of internal security and border management.

**Focus on Continuous Faculty Development for Programme-Specific Topics:** Ensure ongoing professional development of faculty members in areas such as cybersecurity and international crisis management, specifically tailored to the needs of the Border Guard study programme. This will ensure the programme remains competitive and up to date with modern security demands.

## III - Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field and the Relevant Study Programmes

### III - Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field and the Relevant Study Programmes

#### Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation	Comment
R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 2.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system:	Fully compliant	SGBC ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system.
R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)	Fully compliant	The level of organization of the applied research field in the SBGC is good. The areas of applied research correspond to the College development aims and are related to the topicalities of the operational field and the field of study, as well as applied research and its results are integrated into the study process. International cooperation in the field of applied research within the field of study and the correspondent study programme is ensured and developed in a well-targeted manner. The SBGC has developed mechanisms for involving docents and students in the research work. Scientific research at the SBGC is a matter of free choice for the academic staff (which is motivated by the management of the SBGC). Colleges in the Republic of Latvia, (including the SBGC) are neither obliged nor delegated by the state ( "Law on Higher Education Institutions", "Regulations of the State Border Guard College") to carry out scientific activities, but only applied research. The conduct of scientific research is the responsibility of universities and scientific institutes.

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation	Comment
R3 - The cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field.	Fully compliant	The study programme provides full education regarding the pursued field. It ideally combines theory and practice in all fields. In theory, the course gains an internationalization and external nature thanks to the increasing contacts and agreements across Europe. Moreover, it is achieved an exchange of information and best practices, as it has been explicitly declared by graduate students during experts meeting with them. Moreover, this is testified by the employees in practice during experts relative meeting. However, it is strongly recommended to promote in practice and enact that international cooperation.
R4 - Elimination of deficiencies and shortcomings identified in the previous assessment of the study field, if any, or implementation of the recommendations provided.	Fully compliant	The State Border Guard College (SBGC) has thoroughly implemented prior recommendations, effectively enhancing programme transparency, academic rigor, and industry relevance. The establishment of clear assessment criteria has improved evaluation transparency and provided students with a solid understanding of performance expectations. To meet scientific standards, SBGC has updated its guidelines for qualification papers, thereby reinforcing consistency and quality in student research. Additionally, initiatives such as preliminary defenses, conference participation, and collaboration with State Border Guard experts have enriched students' practical learning experiences, bridging academic theory with real-world applications. The recent establishment of an alumni network further supports graduates' transitions into the workforce, offering mentorship and professional connections. Through these targeted improvements, SBGC demonstrates a strong commitment to quality advancement and alignment with accreditation standards, affirming its fully compliant status.

#### Assessment of the Requirements for the Relevant Study Programmes of the Study Field

<b>No.</b>	<b>Study programme</b>	<b>R5</b>	<b>R6</b>	<b>R7</b>	<b>R8</b>	<b>Evaluation of the study programme (excellent, good, average, poor)</b>
1	Border guarding (41861)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Excellent

### **The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts**