

Hungarian

CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION

Studies

A Scientific and Professional Journal of the
Professional Association of Hungarian Criminal Investigation Officers

Since: 2010

Volume XVII. Special issue: 1

2026/1.

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**A Scientific and Professional Journal of the
Professional Association of Hungarian Criminal Investigation Officers**

Published: occasionally

Published electronically: <https://bunuldozo-press.hu/hungarian-criminal-investigation-studies/>

- Publisher:** Professional Association of Hungarian Criminal Investigation Officers
- Responsible publisher:** György Jakab, Vice-President General
- Edited by:** The Editorial Board
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Article submission: press.bunuldozo@gmail.com
- Registration number:** 163/0474/2/2010
HU ISSN 2062-1078 (online)

TERMS OF PUBLICATION

The journal publishes papers primarily addressing issues within the field of law enforcement, as well as legislative matters that influence this professional domain. The articles analyse and evaluate social deviance and issues related to law enforcement from the perspectives of criminalistics, criminology, criminal sociology, criminal law, and policing, and—reflecting an interdisciplinary approach—from the standpoint of state and legal studies.

The journal faithfully publishes the professional opinions of the authors; the authors bear full responsibility for the content of their work. Consequently, the views and conclusions expressed in the published studies do not necessarily reflect those of the founding body of the journal.

While preserving the substantive content of the manuscripts, the editorial board reserves the right to edit, correct, and typographically format submissions.

The editorial office is unable to retain or return submitted manuscripts.

As a general rule, the editorial office does not undertake the republication of previously published works.

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Editorial Reflections

Alex Pongrácz

Lectori salutem!

With distinguished respect, I extend my greetings to the readers of the first issue of *Magyar Bűnüldöző* published entirely in English.

The journal *Magyar Bűnüldöző* was first published in 2010 by the Professional Association of Hungarian Criminal Investigation Officers. Beyond addressing the perspectives of criminalistics, criminology, criminal law, and law enforcement, the journal also publishes professional and scholarly contributions from the broader fields of law and political sciences.

Nine years ago, I followed in the footsteps of Dr. János Lakatos and Dr. Gyula Kovács when I undertook the responsibility of carrying out the duties of Editor-in-Chief.

When the journal made its debut in 2010, it did so with the explicit intention of creating a forum that would provide an opportunity to raise professional issues related to criminal investigation, to become acquainted with one another's views and ideas, and at the same time to share practical experiences gained in the course of law enforcement activities. Taking stock of our achievements, it can be concluded that these aspirations have been successfully fulfilled at the national level; the time has therefore come for us to engage in the international discourse as well.

Allow me, as an expression of my editorial credo, to share with the Esteemed Reader the thoughts of Henrik Vámos. According to him: "We are well aware that no one is in possession of eternal truths; therefore, we have no dogmas. Yet we are not so self-assured, so obstinate, or so reckless as to believe that by possessing a single sentence or a single word we have solved the riddle of life. We do not claim to be infallible, but neither do we allow ourselves to be deceived. We welcome it when people question our truths and do not acknowledge our authority. We welcome it when they do not believe us, for this shows that they are thinking; and when they prove our errors, we rejoice in it, because in this we see the fruits of the progress of science and the growing strength and labour of the human intellect. We are

convinced that we need knowledge because, by possessing it, we can better adapt to the demands of life and development, and more effectively overcome those harmful factors that hinder healthy social cooperation. Science is a social force and a power whose integrity is in the interest of us all; whoever falsifies it violates the common interests of society.”¹

In the spirit of these reflections, I hereby present the current issue of Hungarian Criminal Investigation Studies to the readership.

¹ Henrik Vámos: Szabadgondolat. In *Szabadgondolat*, Vol. 1., Issue 1. (1911), 2.

A Brief Retrospective on the Past Twenty Years

In the period following the 1990s, when the Hungarian legislative environment exerted a favourable influence on the development of democratic institutions, a wide range of associations and foundations – civil organisations (NGOs) – began to emerge and proliferate rapidly.

As governmental bodies and political decision-makers found it increasingly difficult to disregard the views of these civil organisations, it became necessary to recognise that failing to utilise this democratic form of professional advocacy would be a serious mistake. While civil organisations cover numerous areas of public life, in the field of law enforcement – as a specialised domain of legal application – no comparable civil initiative has yet emerged that seeks to represent professional interests and values while striving for improvement.

Recognising this need, and following thorough preparatory work, the **Professional Association of Hungarian Criminal Investigation Officers** held its inaugural General Assembly on 1 December 2004.

The aim of the Association is to contribute, through its own means, to the modernisation of domestic law enforcement and its legal framework; to advance research in the field of criminal sciences; to support the work of law enforcement professionals; and to promote the effectiveness of law enforcement and crime prevention – with particular regard to the protection of children and young people– and, through these efforts, to enhance the efficiency of public order.¹

We firmly believe that professional work can be made truly effective, efficient, and rational primarily by those who practise it and earn their livelihood from it: investigators, prosecutors, and judges. Our Association primarily seeks to bring together criminal investigators, to consolidate their professionally and scientifically grounded views into a coherent form, and to place these directly before the legislator.

Although we are aware that legislators consult numerous official bodies and academic institutions before enacting legislation, we are convinced that the profession must also make its voice heard through this channel, taking advantage of the opportunities afforded by civil organisations.

¹ As specified in the Association's Articles of Association (2004)

Regrettably, the strength of a civil organisation and its impact on society are often judged by outsiders primarily on the basis of the size of its membership and its growth, rather than on the professional work it performs or the scholarly merit of its opinions.

The position of our Association is somewhat unique: if we succeed in achieving progress, for example in the field of legislation that defines our day-to-day professional activities, the benefits of our work are not confined to our own members but are enjoyed by all colleagues across the country engaged in law enforcement. Accordingly, the true measure of our Association should not be the size of its membership, but the impact of the changes we initiate.

Nevertheless, membership remains important to us, as it is reassuring to know that we stand alongside colleagues who are committed to taking action, who contribute valuable ideas and concepts, and whose work meets rigorous scholarly standards. Even a single viable proposal from such individuals represents a far greater contribution to the profession than that of those who remain mere onlookers. The principal tasks of our Association are as follows:²

- to continuously monitor the legislation governing the activities of law enforcement agencies; to collect related experience from as broad a professional circle as possible; to examine the possibilities for amending such legislation; to develop and substantiate proposed amendments on a professional basis; and to represent these proposals before the competent legislative bodies;
- to assess and review the circumstances that adversely affect the work of law enforcement authorities; to examine their causes; and to provide assistance aimed at improving these conditions.
- to define research priorities in the field of criminal sciences, primarily in forensic science, criminalistics, and criminology; to examine and explore new methods for measuring the effectiveness of investigative authorities; to identify approaches to quality assurance in law enforcement; and to develop tools to improve the evidential effectiveness of specific types of crime, while striving to promote interdisciplinary cooperation;

² As specified in the Association's Articles of Association (2004)

- to establish and maintain contacts with domestic and international law enforcement and crime prevention bodies; to gain insight into their working methods; to assess the possibilities for adopting certain practices; and to explore opportunities for closer cooperation, with the aim of attaining a higher and more efficient level of operation in law enforcement, crime prevention, and public safety;
- to provide forums for the discussion of professional experiences and results at both national and international levels.

This latter objective is also served by “*MAGYAR BŰNÜLDÖZŐ*”,³ a professional and scientific journal founded and published by our Association in 2010.

Dr. János Lakatos, the founding Editor-in-Chief of our publication and a late member of our Association’s Executive Board, expressed the following in his introductory remarks:⁴

“The journal would provide an opportunity to raise various professional issues that concern us, to become acquainted with one another’s views and ideas, to share experiences that may be put to practical use — and perhaps also to reach those who possess the competence to resolve certain problems.

We were not concerned about a lack of topics, as for quite some time numerous factors have complicated the work of legal practitioners in the field of law enforcement. Rather, what gave us pause for thought was what form would be most suitable, so that, in line with our intentions, we could provide space for scholarly studies, professional articles addressing daily challenges and/or results, as well as for questions and proposals — even extending to ‘ordinary’ contributions; and, importantly, all this while preserving our independence.

*Under current conditions, professional literature is largely confined to academic publications and teaching materials. Within the limits of our modest means, we seek to bring about some change in this regard. And, if we may speak of principles: **in our view, there is no such thing as a rebellious idea that is not worth considering** —⁵ since it is precisely through such ideas that (new to us) arguments, concepts, motivations, and impulses may come to light; we may encounter unique*

³ In English: Hungarian Criminal Investigation Studies (HCIS)

⁴ Published in the first issue of the HCIS (Issue I. 2010/1)

⁵ The motto of our scientific journal (HCIS)

yet unavoidable situations; and ultimately, this is how we can avoid following — one-sidedly — only our own line of thinking.”

Our colleagues, who fight crime day after day, are worthy of the highest respect. Their dedication, courage, and professional expertise have made it possible to build a strong and cohesive community, capable of confronting the ever-growing challenges of our time and achieving the best possible results together. We dare to believe that, over the past twenty years, the Professional Association of Hungarian Criminal Investigation Officers has, in its own modest way, been able to contribute to all of this.

Over the past two decades, both globally and within Hungary, numerous changes have taken place that have posed significant challenges to civil organisations. The political, economic, and social environment has been in constant flux, and the forms and methods of crime have likewise evolved. Even though these circumstances have often made our work more difficult, the continued operation and resilience of the Professional Association of Hungarian Criminal Investigation Officers represent a considerable achievement. The Association has been able to adapt to changing conditions, develop new strategies, and respond to emerging challenges with innovative solutions. This continuous development and adaptability have not only ensured our survival but have also created opportunities for us to advance all those endeavours aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of law enforcement.

During this twenty-year period, the Association has not only fostered cooperation among professionals working in the field of law enforcement but has also contributed—albeit modestly—to the establishment of law enforcement sciences in Hungary. We have been steadfast in our efforts to promote the practice of criminalistics, to share professional knowledge, and to disseminate the latest research findings. In pursuit of these objectives, we established the *Dr. János Dobos-Award* in 2010, and the *Dr. János Dobos Commemorative Medal* in 2013, both intended to recognise outstanding professional achievement and dedication to the profession. The creation of our scientific and professional journal, “*Magyar Bűnüldöző*”, as mentioned earlier, also forms an integral part of these efforts; since 2010, it has provided a forum for professionals in the field of law enforcement to share their experiences, ideas, and latest research results. These initiatives not only serve the advancement of the profession but also strengthen our community and contribute to shaping the future of law enforcement.

In the years ahead, our Association will continue its work with the aim of responding even more robustly and effectively to the emerging forms of crime. To achieve this, it is not sufficient to possess knowledge within a narrow scope; a broader perspective is equally essential. Efforts must be made to establish and maintain international relations, as crime does not stop at national borders. It is important to understand and be familiar with the tools and methods employed by our colleagues abroad in combating crime. While such cooperation naturally exists between law enforcement agencies, our Association must also strive to develop these connections, as we believe this to be one of the keys to our continued development.

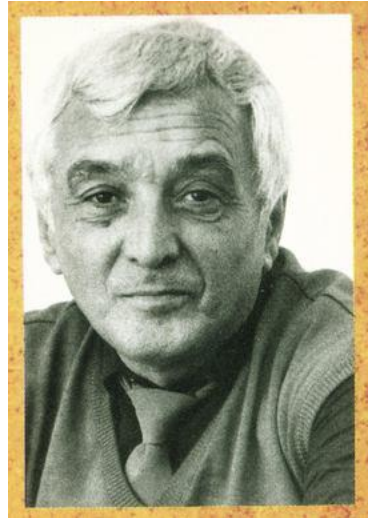
An excellent means of achieving this is the publication of the English-language special edition of our scientific and professional journal, which we intend to issue on a regular basis in the future.

Dr. Gyula Kovács

***The police officer who was already a legend in his lifetime
would have turned ninety this year***

REMEMBERING POLICE COLONEL DR. JÁNOS DOBOS¹

On 30 May 2025, the Professional Association of Hungarian Criminal Investigation Officers unveiled a commemorative plaque on the façade of the building at 12 Eleonóra Street in Budapest's 14th district, marking the 90th anniversary of the birth of Dr János Dobos. The plaque, erected by the association, indicates the residence of János Dobos, who served as Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Criminal Investigation and Criminal Psychology of the former Police Officer's College (RTF). He was also an expert contributor to the contemporary television programme "Kékfény" and one of the most prominent figures in twentieth-century Hungarian criminalistics.



The commemorative address and remembrance were delivered by Zsolt Hóbor, President of the association. Following the speech, he unveiled the plaque together with Police colonel (ret) Tibor Bárdy, and a former colleague and friend of János Dobos, accompanied by the theme music from the popular crime television series "Derrick". The ceremonial guard of honour at the event was provided by members of the Police Heritage Guard Company.

The closing words of the commemorative address were as follows: *"We trust that the plaque unveiled today will help preserve the memory of Dr János Dobos. When a future generation –one for whom even the twentieth century will already belong to history– glances at this plaque, they too will know who once wore down the steps of this building. Perhaps they will feel inspired to retrieve, from the depths of the Internet, the memory of the once legendary cop of Budapest.*

¹ This article is an edited version of a study published in issue 2025/1-2 of the Hungarian Criminal Investigations Studies.

If that happens, we shall have achieved our purpose.”

Dr János Dobos was born on 27 May 1935 in “Angyalföld”, a district of Budapest. He began his education in “Józsefváros” at the primary school on Práter Street, and later continued his studies in “Erzsébetváros”² at the Barcsay Secondary School (today the Madách Imre Secondary Grammar School).

He was sixteen years old when his father died. Following his school-leaving examination, and on the advice of both his stepfather and his headmaster, he joined the professional ranks of the Police. His first posting was at the 9th District Police Headquarters of the Budapest Police (BRFK), where from 1 August 1953 he served as a detective with the rank of Police Sergeant.

A few weeks later, in September 1953, he was assigned to an officers’ training course. He completed his studies with distinction in December 1954 at the “Ottó Korvin Criminal Investigation Training School”³, where he was commissioned as a Police Second Lieutenant with first-class honours. He was subsequently transferred to the Budapest Police Headquarters, where he served in the Burglary Subdivision of the Criminal Investigation Department until 1 January 1960. During this period he was promoted to Police Lieutenant in October 1955 and to Police First Lieutenant in February 1959.

From 1 January 1960 Dobos was assigned to a preparatory Russian language course, after which, from 1 September, he continued his studies at the Law College of the Ministry of Public Order of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. His diploma was officially recognised in Hungary in 1964, when he was awarded a doctorate in law and political sciences at the Faculty of Law of Eötvös Loránd Science University. In the meantime, in 1963, he had been promoted to the rank of Police Captain.

Following the completion of his studies, he continued his career within the Budapest Police Headquarters. From 1 July 1965 he was appointed Head of Subdivision at the Property Protection and Burglary Department of the II/II Directorate of the Second Main Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior⁴. From 1 May 1977 he served as Head of the Property Protection Subdivision of the Criminal

² “Angyalföld”: Name of 13th district of Budapest, “Józsefváros”: Name of 8th district of Budapest, “Erzsébetváros”: Name of 7th district of Budapest.

³ The Korvin Ottó Criminal Investigation School operated between 1953 and 1954 as the successor to the Police Academy [RAK (1948–1949)] within the framework of the Police Officer Training School. Géza Finszter: From the Police Academy to the University. Hungarian Law Enforcement, 2021 (special issue), pp. 101–103. The vocational school was in the building of the BRFK Traffic Police Department at 1146 Budapest, Hungária krt. 149.

⁴ Essentially, this organization was the National Police Headquarters (ORFK) at the time.

Investigation Department of the National Police Headquarters (ORFK). In February 1984 he was assigned to an advanced senior leadership training course at the Academy of the Ministry of the Interior of the Soviet Union. During this period, he was promoted to Police Major in 1968 and later to Police Lieutenant Colonel in 1975.

From 1 January 1987 he began passing on his theoretical knowledge and extensive practical experience to future police officers at the Department of Criminal Investigation and Criminal Psychology of the Police Officer's College (RTF). Initially he served as a lecturer; from 1 January 1988 he was appointed senior lecturer, and from 1 February 1988 he assumed the position of Head of Department. On 1 September 1988 he was appointed Associate Professor of the college.

Following the political transition, the profession effectively "reclaimed" him: from 1 January 1990 he was appointed Head of the Criminal Investigation Department of the National Police Headquarters, simultaneously promoted to the rank of Police Colonel. From 16 June 1990 he served as Deputy Head of Department. By this time, however, he had already exceeded the official upper age limit for active professional service, which was then set at fifty-five.

His outstanding professional work was recognised by his superiors with numerous decorations, commendations and awards. Nevertheless, without particular justification, he was relieved of his post on 31 March 1991 and placed on retirement. Although he wished to continue his service, his request for an extension was rejected by the Minister of the Interior. At that time, he had just entered his fifty-sixth year.

Alongside his years of teaching at the Police College, Dr János Dobos published regularly from 1963 onwards. The experience he had gained in criminal investigation was shared through professional and academic journals as well as in numerous books. More than sixty of his studies appeared in "*Belügyi Szemle*"⁵ alone. His scholarly and professional authorship is still in the process of being systematically documented; even today, articles occasionally come to light that had originally been classified "For Internal Use Only!" and were therefore not publicly available at the time they were written.

⁵ Academic Journal of Internal Affairs - the scientific journal of the Ministry of the Interior

In addition to his work as an expert on the television programme “*Kékfény*”⁶, he was also an active participant in various mass media broadcasts dealing with security technology and crime prevention.

A few words about “*Kékfény*”: the programme was broadcast once a month from 1965 onwards, although a similar programme had existed earlier under the title *07. “Kékfény”* remained on air until the political transition, producing approximately one hundred and thirty broadcasts. Of these, around one hundred and ten episodes can currently be found in the archives of Hungarian Television (MTV). It is worth noting that in Chicago in 1961 there had been a somewhat similar crime-related programme entitled “*Lend Your Eyes and Ears to the Police So That They May Better Protect You.*” According to popular rumour, this programme was soon discontinued, allegedly with the “kind assistance” of the „Mafia”.

However, returning to “*Kékfény*”. In its early years the programme primarily broadcast what might be described as traditional reports on the work of police officers, firefighters and border guards. Gradually, however, crime and criminal investigation became increasingly popular themes. At first the programme dealt exclusively with the analysis of closed criminal cases, featuring interviews with convicted offenders or, occasionally, detained suspects.

Later, the idea emerged to request the assistance of viewers in helping to solve ongoing investigations. At that point the “*Kékfény*” telephone number and postal address were made public. The first such call-in broadcast took place on 17 April 1969. The programme proved to be an enormous success among viewers. From its inception until the political transition, it was hosted by Dr László Szabó⁷, while Dr János Dobos served as the programme’s permanent expert contributor.⁸

Through his professional work, as well as through his teaching and scholarly activities, Dr János Dobos made a significant contribution—among other things—to the establishment and development of the foundations of modern criminal investigation and to the advancement of contemporary police education. His books, studies and professional articles remain forward-looking even today, offering valuable material for further research and development. His dedication to work and exceptional capacity for sustained effort should serve as an example to all

⁶ “*Kékfény*” in English: “Bluelight” – referring to the blue light used on police vehicles

⁷ lawyer, journalist, television editor, presenter, reporter, founder and editor-in-chief of “*Kékfény*”

⁸ Source: http://comment.blog.hu/2007/05/20/hogyan_kepzodott_a_kekfeny (31 May 2025). Gyula KOVÁCS: The police officer who was already a legend during his lifetime. In: Sándor SZOMOR, (ed.): Jubilee Memorial Album in honor of the Budapest Detective Corps, founded 125 years ago. Budapest, National Police Headquarters, 2011, pp. 211–212.

generations. His forthrightness and uncompromising honesty, however, would likely find few admirers today (and indeed did not always find them during his lifetime).

Police Colonel (ret.) Dr János Dobos –already something of a legend during his lifetime—has sadly not been with us for many years. He passed away unexpectedly on 17 December 2003: after an early morning walk with his dog, he suffered a fatal heart attack in front of the entrance door of the apartment building where he lived. He is deeply missed by his family, his friends and acquaintances, and not least by the profession to which he devoted his life.⁹

⁹ We can read about the events in Dr. János Dobos's life in Szántó's interview. SZÁNTÓ, Gábor: Jamesz – Interview with the author. In: DOBOS János – KOVÁCS, Gyula (eds.): *Crime stories, cop stories, and other tales*. Budapest, Dr. Gyula Kovács [KGyul@]TM, pp. 139–147.

The Highest Distinctions of the Professional Association of Hungarian Criminal Investigation Officers

Our Association is firmly convinced that no greater honour exists for a practitioner of any profession, vocation, or academic discipline than recognition bestowed by one's own peers. Such acknowledgement represents a form of distinction established by members of the profession themselves, whereby, on the basis of criteria they have collectively defined, they recognise the achievements of their colleagues. This process is inherently free from political intent and devoid of any so-called "higher interests".

In my view, every civil organisation (NGO), professional association, or learned society that has instituted awards or distinctions within its own field may readily identify with these principles.

THE "DR DOBOS JÁNOS AWARD"

In 2009, the leadership of our Association identified the need to establish a professional distinction whose framework of requirements and conditions of conferment would be defined autonomously by the Association itself, thereby recognising the outstanding achievements of our own colleagues. This initiative, however, also required the selection of an appropriate namesake: an individual whose professional stature would render him worthy of lending his name to such an award, and whose legacy would inspire pride in its recipients.

To this end, we conducted an extensive opinion survey that extended well beyond the Association's membership, seeking to identify the professional predecessor whose name the prospective award should bear. A considerable number of proposals were received and, to our genuine surprise, more than 90% of respondents nominated **Dr. János Dobos**.

Following a period of research and preparatory work, the General Assembly of our Association, convened on 26 March 2010, formally resolved to establish the „Dr Dobos János Award”. The decision was taken in commemoration of the 75th anniversary of Police Colonel (ret) Dr. János Dobos's birth, and the distinction was designated as the highest honour of the Professional Association of Hungarian Criminal Investigation Officers. The inaugural award ceremony took place in 2011.

Over the past fifteen years, the “Dr Dobos János Award” has become a well-known – and, I am convinced, a highly respected – distinction. Our intention was to recognise, through this award, the life achievements and highest individual contributions of those exceptional professionals who, having served for at least fifteen years in the fields of criminal investigation and criminalistics, have produced work of enduring value.



We believe that our objectives and aspirations have been realised. It serves as a meaningful form of positive feedback that each year (and biennially from 2020 onwards) criminal investigation leaders vested with nomination rights submit their recommendations and closely follow the outcomes of the award process. Since 2017, the award has been conferred on the candidate receiving the highest number of votes, as determined by the aggregated ballots of a board of trustees comprising 35 members and representing the entire country.

The Dobos-Award plaque is a solid bronze medallion, 6 mm in thickness and 90 mm in diameter. The obverse bears a relief portrait of Dr Dobos János alongside the inscription “Dr Dobos János-díj”. The reverse is divided into two raised sections: the upper field displays the inscription “Magyar Bűnüldözők Szakmai Egyesülete” (Professional Association of Hungarian Criminal Investigation Officers) together with

the Association's embossed emblem, while the lower field is left smooth, engraved with the year of conferment and the name of the recipient.

The plaque was designed by *Ferenc Farkas*, recipient of the Munkácsy Mihály Prize.

The award constitutes a moral distinction and is not accompanied by any monetary remuneration.

Since its establishment, the Association has conferred the Dobos Award upon 13 deserving colleagues.

THE „DR DOBOS JÁNOS COMMEMORATIVE MEDAL”

In 2013, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of Dobos's passing, our Association established the Dr Dobos János Commemorative Medal, which represents a high-level distinction ranking immediately after the Dobos Award within the hierarchy of honours conferred by the Association. The first presentation took place in the year of its establishment.

In the past, the notion occasionally arose that the Commemorative Medal constituted a lower grade of the Dobos Award and might therefore be granted to anyone. This, however, is a misconception. The Award and the Commemorative Medal are linked solely through their namesake and, naturally, through their professional orientation. In all other respects, they differ substantially: the criteria are distinct, the nomination procedures are different, and the rules governing conferment are not the same.

The conferment of the Dr Dobos János Commemorative Medal is subject to particularly stringent conditions and demanding standards. The Medal comprises three distinct classes –gold, silver, and bronze – allowing for nuanced recognition. This structure enables, for example, the differentiation between sustained excellence in scientific and professional activity, long-term and distinguished service in advancing the Association's objectives, the attainment of an achievement of outstanding professional or academic significance, or the demonstration of exceptional professional merit over many years.

Beyond the rigorous evaluation of these criteria, the Association preserves the value and dignity of the Commemorative Medal by conferring it only in strictly limited numbers each year. Indeed, there have been years in which certain distinctions were not awarded at all.

Decisions regarding the conferment of the Dr Dobos János Commemorative Medal are taken by the Presidency of the Association.



The Commemorative Medal is a struck, double-sided, relief medal of 40 mm in diameter, produced in metal (gold class: sterling silver of 925‰ fineness with 18-carat gold plating; silver class: sterling silver of 925‰ fineness; bronze class: antiqued bronze). The obverse features the portrait of Dr János Dobos, encircled by the inscription “Dr Dobos János Emlékérem”, while the reverse bears the official emblem of the „Magyar Bűnüldözők Szakmai Egyesülete” (Professional Association of Hungarian Criminal Investigation Officers). The Medal is presented in a ceremonial case whose colour varies by class (gold: red; silver: royal blue; bronze: green).

The Medal was designed by *András Csontos*, Managing Director of LLC. „Vésnök”.

The distinction is not accompanied by any monetary award.

From its establishment to the date of publication of this article, a total of 8 gold, 26 silver (including one shared award), and 58 bronze Medals have been conferred.

Zsolt Hóbor

Forensic training methods in a completely different environment

This year's forensic exhibition in London¹ was different from what we have been used to in recent years. It was held at a new venue but had to be shared with an exhibition by other emergency services. The new venue created an authentic atmosphere, but the forensic field was significantly underrepresented compared to previous years.

In the limited space available, my attention was drawn to a small stand with a few brochures and two friendly and knowledgeable ladies in uniform who had come from Durham to present their specialised professional training.



Ms. Beth Cummins and Ms. Suzi Cutler, Durham Constabulary (Policing TV)

The forensic training programme of the **Durham Constabulary** (United Kingdom, England, County of Durham Police, hereinafter: Durham / Durham Police) provides an insight into how professionals are trained, what responsibilities and requirements they work with, and what tools and infrastructure are available.

¹ Based on information obtained during a visit to the Forensics Europe Expo 2025 – London trade exhibition

In this dissertation, I present this local training and attempt to compare the forensic training programme of the Durham Police with criminology-related studies of the undergraduate program conducted at **the Faculty of Law Enforcement Sciences of the National University of Public Service** (hereinafter: NKE / NKE-RTK) – naturally without claiming completeness. The comparison itself cannot be comprehensive, as it concerns two educational methods based on entirely different foundations and serving different objectives. For the sake of clarity, I have opted for a more visual comparison in table form rather than a continuous text description.



First, I will present the local training provided by the Durham Police.

GENERAL FRAMEWORK AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of forensic training is to provide technical and theoretical competencies to those working in crime scene investigation (CSI), fingerprint analysis, digital forensics and other specialised areas of investigation.

An important component is quality assurance (e.g. application of ISO standards, simplified or validated methodologies) and the acquisition of certifications.

The training often combines theoretical learning, practical training, field work, and examinations/professional assessment.

Role	Main tasks/specialisation	Requirements, training components
Complex crime scene investigator (M-F volume CSI)	On-site investigation of complex crimes; collection and documentation of evidence; maintenance of quality and safety.	GCSE (English basic level exam) in English and mathematics; previous experience; continuous skills development; annual training exams/skills assessments; compliance with ISO 17020 standards is required.
Digital forensics expert/technician	On-site or laboratory processing of digital evidence, data recovery (e.g. mobile	User and basic digital skills; professional courses, e.g. enCase, Cellebrite, XRY,

	phones, computers), preparation of reports and witness statements for court proceedings.	mobile forensics, data recovery and analysis; competence must be demonstrated at all levels, especially when obtaining investigative and relevant certifications
Criminal accident scene investigator	Forensic investigation of accident scenes, mechanical investigations, accident reconstructions, preparation of expert reports, testimony in court proceedings	Professional training, including physics and mathematics at A-level; courses (external) in accident investigation; practical training in the field and in expert report writing.
Fire scene investigation cooperation	Joint training of CSI specialists and fire brigade personnel to recognise the factors contributing to the outbreak of fire, signs of arson, and to learn how to collect evidence at fire scenes	

TEACHING AND TRAINING METHODOLOGY

Classroom training: basic theory, legal background, methodology, evidence handling, certifications, ethical and operational rules.

Practical training: in the laboratory, on-site exercises, reconstructions, case studies, use of equipment.

On-the-job learning: mentoring, collaboration with experienced professionals, practical procedures, court testimony.

Skill assessments/evaluations: continuous competence checks, examinations/certificates, performance measurement.

Compliance with standards: e.g. ISO 17025 (laboratory testing), ISO 17020 (site investigation activities) are required for evidence handling and examination.



INFRASTRUCTURE AND SUPPORTERS

- **Investigative Hub:** The Durham Investigative Hub, a modern facility that includes holding cells, interview rooms, CSI facilities, evidence storage, virtual courtrooms, medical examination rooms, CCTV systems, and

forensic examination rooms, was opened in 2024. This improves evidence handling, fieldwork support, and overall operational capacity.

- **Academic partnerships:** with Northumbria University, within the framework of the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA) programme², in which students acquire partly theoretical university knowledge and partly practical forensic experience. This training includes criminal sciences, information technology, interview techniques, crime scene practices, etc.
- **Certifications and external courses:** certain roles require mandatory training, such as EnCase, Cellebrite, XRY, SANS courses, and digital data recovery/analytics certifications.

CRITICAL CHALLENGES

- **Emotional strain:** especially for digital forensic specialists who work with child sexual abuse material (CSAM) or violent content. Psychological support and counselling are part of this role.
- **Time and costs:** training requires modern tools, expert courses and standards, which demand significant resources.
- **Rapidly changing technology:** the examination of digital evidence requires continuous technical development and the handling of new tools, software, methods and NTK techniques (e.g. mobile data, cloud, IoT³).
- **Quality and compliance with standards:** legal problems arise in the absence of ISO standards, evidence management and certifications; training must guarantee the reliability of procedures.

The Durham Police forensic training programme is well structured, professionally sound and strives to ensure that both practical and theoretical elements are of a high standard. The modern infrastructure, university partnerships and various specialisations (digital, scene of crime, accident, etc.) all indicate that this is a versatile training model.

² <https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/business-services/education-and-training/case-studies-and-insights/durham-constabulary-and-pcda/>

³ The Internet of Things (IoT) refers to a variety of clearly identifiable electronic devices that are capable of recognising certain essential information and communicating it to another device via an Internet-based network. The term can also refer to networked 'smart' devices that are capable of collecting data thanks to built-in sensors and detectors.

DETECTIVE TRAINING, WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON THE APPLICATION OF INVESTIGATIVE, CRIMINOLOGICAL AND TACTICAL KNOWLEDGE

Durham Police rely on the general training methods and methodology already described for its detective training. It uses the guidelines of the British College of Policing and is based on the principles of modern investigative practices.



(Forensic Training Durham Constabulary Information Guide - Durham Constabulary HQ, Durham, UK [D26-24])

Detective training programmes are structured training pathways for candidates preparing for a career in investigation, combining workplace experience with formal learning to develop investigative skills. The most important elements of the programmes are a combination of on-the-job training, workshops and assessments, with the ultimate goal of enabling candidates to specialise in areas such as serious crime investigation after completing the initial programme. The investigative skills instructor is a central element of the programme, and successful candidates often spend a significant part of their initial training in investigation teams.⁴

⁴ <https://www.durham.police.uk/police-forces/durham-constabulary/areas/careers/join-us/police-officers/entry-routes/degree-holder-entry-programmes/>

TRAINING OBJECTIVES AND COMPETENCIES

The aim of investigator training is to enable candidates to:

- conduct criminal investigations independently and lawfully (fact-finding, evidence handling, suspect/witness handling)
- apply criminological and tactical theories in gathering information and building a chain of evidence leading to suspicion,
- carry out operations in a safe and ethical manner (e.g. interrogation, surveillance, evidence analysis),
- ***prepare objective, court-admissible case files and provide testimony.***

The Durham programme offers the opportunity to receive detective training for those who feel an affinity for it. It consists of three levels:

1. Graduate police investigator entry level: a two-year part-time study programme combined with practical work, leading to a degree from Northumbria University.
2. Further training at work: further development of theory and practice within the Professional Investigation Programme
3. Specialisations: internal courses allow specialisation in areas such as serious crime (homicide), sexual offences and digital forensics. The courses also draw on the expertise of external specialists and highly experienced detectives as mentors.

THE ROLE OF CRIMINAL TACTICS KNOWLEDGE

Criminal tactics refer to the entirety of criminological/operational tools used in investigations: offender profiling, modus operandi analysis, geographical profiling, routine activity theory, scene tactics, situational crime prevention, criminal intelligence and behaviour-based analysis. These are applied in practice as follows:

1. **Information gathering and priorities**
 - Criminological theories help with targeted data collection: for example, if a suspected series of crimes shows a characteristic modus operandi, theoretical knowledge helps to identify related patterns of crime and potential targets.

- Intelligence-led approach (information assessment, use of intelligence data) — based on the Durham and PIP principles, close integration of intelligence and investigation is of paramount importance.
2. **Scene tactics and evidence handling**
- Forensic (CSI) methods — recording evidence at the scene, establishing the chain of evidence, identifying risk factors;
 - Tactical decisions (when to close the scene, which forensic experts to call) are often based on criminal tactical considerations — e.g. based on probable modes of operation.
3. **Searching for suspects and profiling**
- Perpetrator profiling and modus operandi analysis (linking behavioural/professional characteristics to other cases) — not always a 'psychological profile', but rather a structured, data-driven risk and correlation analysis.
 - Geographical profiling: calculating the perpetrator's place of residence/activity patterns based on the geographical distribution of the locations (if relevant).
4. **Interrogation tactics**
- Application of the PEACE model (Preparation and Planning, Engage and Explain, Account, Closure, Evaluate)⁵ — this is the accepted, lawful and ethical interrogation method in the United Kingdom; knowledge of criminal tactics helps in planning questions, applying cognitive interrogation and interpreting the behaviour of suspects/witnesses.
5. **Tactical planning and cooperation**
- In complex investigations (e.g. homicide, sexual offences), tactical decisions are made on the basis of a tailored strategy (tactical profile, analysis, operational operations, witness protection), often in cooperation with other organisations (health, local council, fire brigade). Durham, for example, is introducing specialised sexual offence training to develop such tactics.

⁵ A model of preparation, planning, involvement, explanation, reporting, closure and evaluation used by the United Kingdom in all criminal investigations.

Effective investigator training combines theoretical knowledge (criminological theories, PIP/APP guidelines) with practical experience (crime scene investigation, interviews, operational activities) in the Durham model. Criminal tactics knowledge is not merely theoretical profiling: it becomes an operational tool in decision-making, setting priorities, and tactical planning for cooperation with other agencies — provided that it is based on relevant data and applied in an ethical and legally sound manner.

In addition to criminology and criminal tactics training, forensic science training is an important element of the Durham Police project. Let us examine how crime scene investigation and the training of forensic experts (6) are developing in Durham.

The aim of **CSI training** is to enable students to:

- **identify, record and handle** all relevant traces and material residues **in a professional manner**,
- **maintain the chain of evidence** and ensure its admissibility in court,
- **apply forensic principles and tools** (photogrammetry, DNA and fingerprint analysis, examination of traces and evidence),
- **make independent decisions in tactical situations at the scene**, follow **quality management and safety protocols** (ISO 17020 / Forensic Science Regulator Code of Practice).

Level	Description	Main activity	Certificate
Level 1: Crime Scene Investigator	Burglaries, thefts, vandalism	Basic forensic recording (photographs, dust prints, bloodstains, elementary fibres, DNA)	Internal certification (Durham CSI accreditation)
Level 2: Crime scene investigator for serious crimes	Homicide, sexual assault, grievous bodily harm	Complex sampling, multidisciplinary teamwork, coordination	ISO 17020 / FSR compliance
Level 3: Senior crime scene investigator	Multi-site / national, high-profile cases	Scene coordination, tactical decision-making, quality assurance	Accreditation of National Police Forensic Leaders

The training is **modular** at all levels and is supplemented by mentoring during practical work.

⁶ Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) / Forensic Practitioner (FA)

Module	Content	Competence
1. Fundamentals of Forensics	Criminal investigation theory, Locard's principle ⁷ , contamination, chain of evidence	Basic knowledge of ISO 17020
2. On-site photography/recording	Digital photography, 3D laser scanner, report writing	Data accuracy, documentation discipline
3. Fingerprint development	Various surfaces, powdering techniques, ninhydrin/DFO	Chemical and physical fingerprint development
4. Biological material residues and DNA	DNA sampling, storage, laboratory transfer	Biological risk management
5. Trace preservation, recording	Microtraces, fibres, paints, glass residues	Preparation for microscopic analysis
6. Footwear and tool marks	Mould making, photogrammetry, digital cataloguing	Reproducible trace recording
7. Bloodstain analysis	Bloodstain dynamics, determination of origin	BPA core competency
8. Scene management and reporting	Scene log, certification, court preparation	Scene Manager skills
9. Forensic quality assurance	ISO requirements, internal audit, evidence storage	FSR compliance
10. Collaborations	Collaboration with doctors, firefighters, HAZMAT ⁸ , investigators	Teamwork and tactical integration

In Durham, the Scientific Support Unit is a member of the North East Regional Forensics Group, making it a regional training and audited assessment centre.

APPLICATION OF FORENSIC SCIENCE KNOWLEDGE IN TRAINING

Forensic science knowledge is integrated into all stages of training — not only in the form of technical operations, but also in decision-making principles and analytical thinking.

⁷ The best-known principle of pioneering French criminologist Edmond Locard is the so-called "Locard principle", which states that "every contact leaves a trace". This concept means that when two objects come into contact, they leave traces on each other.

⁸ The term "hazmat" is an abbreviation of HAZardous MATerials and refers to protective clothing or chemical protection suits. This term is most commonly used to refer to special protective clothing worn when working with hazardous materials or in the event of accidents.

➤ **Forensic science theory**

Taught in introductory modules:

- **Locard's principle of exchange:** every contact leaves a trace → tactical decisions at the scene (when and where to enter, in what order).
- **Types of physical and chemical traces:** DNA, fingerprints, fibres, paints, glass, blood, soil, material residues, gunpowder, etc.
- **Evidence value chain:** the value of a trace ≠ its quantity; rather, it is circumstantial evidence.
- **Contamination and false positives:** risk analysis and control sampling.

➤ **Forensic decision-making (tactical approach)**

Students learn at simulated crime scenes:

- **Setting priorities:** which traces should be recorded first (e.g. time-sensitive DNA vs. permanent fingerprints).
- **Scene zoning:** outer ring, inner ring, centre zone separation, sterile entry route.
- **Division of labour:** communication chain between CSI, investigators and forensic laboratory.
- **Tactical documentation:** recording decisions in the *Scene Management Log*⁹.

➤ **Evidence collection and recording**

Tools used during the exercises:

- digital SLR photogrammetry, 3D laser scanning (e.g. Leica/Trimble systems),
- blood pattern analysis,
- print recording techniques (soot powder, cyanoacrylate fuming, magnetic metal powder),
- micro-evidence collection (odour preservation, use of vacuum cleaner),
- biological sampling (sterile swabs, DNA kits),
- packaging of traces/evidence (sterile, heat-resistant, sealable bags, QR labelling).

⁹ The scene management log is a critical document used by law enforcement and emergency services to keep track of everyone who enters or remains in a secure area, such as a crime scene.

Forensic principles: All operations are based on validated protocols: during training, strict adherence to Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)¹⁰ is examined.

TEACHING METHODS AND ASSESSMENT

- **Simulation of real-life situations:** realistic crime scenes (house, vehicle, open space) – all subtasks (photography, sampling, reporting).
- **Mentored deployments:** new CSIs are accompanied by a certified Scene Manager for 6–9 months.
- **Competence portfolio:** each student keeps a *case study log* (documentation, photos, SOP references).
- **Annual recertification:** ISO audit + practical reassessment (sample identification, documentation, contamination risk).
- **Additional CPD training:** digital imaging, microscopic examination, trace evidence development.

Quality assurance and ethical framework

Durham CSI training strictly follows the **UK Forensic Science Regulator Code of Practice** and **ISO 17020:2012** requirements:

- all methods are taught as validated procedures,
- all students undergo competency testing (sampling accuracy, documentation error rate),
- evidence is stored and transported in a closed, audited system (Durham Evidence Store).

Basic ethical issues:

- *integrity and impartiality,*
- *data security* (encryption of image material, evidence management under GDPR),
- *contamination control* (PPE, packaging procedure, entry protocol).

¹⁰ A standard operating procedure (SOP) is a document that outlines the step-by-step execution of a routine task, ensuring that it is performed consistently, efficiently and safely. They serve as a guide, detailing what to do, how to do it, when to do it and what tools are needed, regardless of who is performing the task.

DEVELOPMENT DIRECTIONS AND NEW TRENDS IN THE DURHAM EDUCATION SYSTEM

- **Digital on-site recording (3D Scene Scanning)** – real-time modelling and cloud-based evidence storage.
- **AI-based image recognition** – support for fingerprint and bloodstain analysis.
- **Environmental DNA (eDNA) sampling** – detection of highly sensitive biological traces.
- **VR training** – practising on-site decision-making in a virtual environment.

SUMMARY OF DURHAM POLICE'S CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION TRAINING

- A complex, **quality-assured (ISO-compatible)** system
- which integrates **forensic theories and tools** directly into on-site decision-making,
- supported **by tactical, legal and ethical frameworks,**
- and which represents **one of the most professional, modularly developable** subsystems of **modern criminal investigation** within the United Kingdom.



In the following comparison, I seek to highlight the similarities and differences between the crime scene investigation / forensic / CSI training of **Durham Police** and the teaching of criminalistics and forensic science at undergraduate (BSc) level at the **Faculty of Law Enforcement of the Budapest-based National University of Public Service (NKE)**. The aim is to place the Durham methodology into context, thereby allowing us to identify the strengths and limitations of the two different

educational approaches, with particular emphasis on the teaching and application of forensic science knowledge.”

Characteristics	Durham Police CSI/Forensic training	NKE Faculty of Law Enforcement, Criminalistics/Forensic Science
Aim of training	Preparation for operational police/investigative tasks: collecting evidence at the scene, handling evidence, certification, court testimony, and the use of special technical methods (photography, fingerprinting, DNA sampling, trace evidence).	An undergraduate programme preparing students for criminal officer and junior leadership roles, focusing on detection, investigation, evidence gathering, and criminal analysis, with the targeted application of specialised criminalistics and criminal service knowledge depending on the chosen specialisation.
Level / access / entry criteria	Often within the police force, operational training; entry positions (crime scene investigator/basic, serious crime scene investigator, etc.), practical requirements, internal tests, mentoring.	Full-time undergraduate (BSc) programme in Criminal Studies (8 semesters) providing officer-level training; admission requires a secondary school leaving certificate and successful completion of aptitude and suitability assessments. The part-time (correspondence) BSc programme, offered across several specialisations, is available exclusively to members of the professional service; a minimum of three years of service and the support of the applicant's commanding officer are required.
Balance between theory and practice	Strong emphasis on practical training: field work, real case studies, laboratory work, use of practical evidence collection techniques. Trainees must demonstrate that they can perform technical procedures	The programme is built on a strong foundation in law, criminal procedure, criminology, and criminalistics, complemented by skills-development and methodological courses.

Characteristics	Durham Police CSI/Forensic training	NKE Faculty of Law Enforcement, Criminalistics/Forensic Science
	correctly and that their decisions in the field are well-founded.	The learning outcomes of the specialisations are competence-centred (detection, investigation, evidence, analysis) rather than focused exclusively on technical crime scene processing. Practical training is typically conducted in university laboratories and simulation rooms, while opportunities to gain real-world crime scene experience are provided during the 14-week professional placement.
Use of special technical methodologies/modern tools	Integration of advanced digital recording techniques (photography, photogrammetry, 3D mapping), fingerprinting techniques, DNA sampling, trace evidence collection, and tactical decision-making skills (prioritisation, scene zoning).	University laboratories, simulation rooms, demonstrations, and guest lectures / professional workshops are utilised; opportunities for operational application (e.g. the examination of real crime scenes) are provided during the professional placement.
Quality assurance / legal / ethical framework	Compliance with standards (e.g. ISO 17020/17025), chain of custody, lawful interrogations/interrogation protocols, certification; internal audits and professional reviews.	Teaching of legal and scientific foundations (theory of evidence, evaluation of expert opinions), as well as ethics and law courses, ensuring compliance with MAB/ESG standards; however, operational certification is limited, as the undergraduate programme does not substitute for the police authority's operational accreditation.
Operational experience and fieldwork	On a large scale: practical field situations, mentoring, participation in real on-site investigations for students or newly appointed officers.	Although NKE offers a professional/practical week and the curriculum includes laboratories, practical exercises, and case

Characteristics	Durham CSI/Forensic training	NKE Faculty of Law Enforcement, Criminalistics/Forensic Science
		studies, access to real crime scene investigations is more limited, as reflected in the duration of the mandatory professional placement.

This chart is based on the course programmes of the Department of Forensic Science, which traditionally teaches criminalistics, and the Department of Criminal Tactics and Methodology at the Faculty of Law Enforcement, NUPS. However, due to professional specialisations, other departments also have points of overlap with the subjects taught. Both the Department of Cybercrime and the Department of Criminal and Economic Protection include such overlaps in their professional focus. Considering—as stated at the beginning of this study—that the aim is not a complete and itemised comparison but merely to place the Durham training in context, a detailed presentation of these specifications has been omitted.

HIGHLIGHTING THE POSITIVES (INTENSITIES)

Although these are two very different types of training, it may be worth examining the intensities of the two educational formats.

DURHAM'S INTENSITIES

- Direct involvement in operational practical challenges: real locations, different types of crimes, the operation of special units;
- Technical and instrumental advancement, incorporation of modern methods: e.g. advanced photogrammetry, 3D mapping, high-end laboratory;
- Strict quality control and compliance with standards, with certification;
- Mentoring system, internal skills assessment (on-the-job training, continuous competence assessment).

NKE-RTK STRENGTHS

- Particularly strong legal theory background: theory of evidence, interpretation and analysis of expert opinions, criminology, examination of tactical/strategic elements – all based on solid scientific foundations;
- Teaching of the latest tools and methods—including photogrammetric procedures and 3D technologies—with an increasing emphasis on the application of artificial intelligence, ensuring that students become familiar with the most recent advancements in scientific and technological development.
- Situational rooms that allow the simulation of any crime scene, providing an opportunity to practise recording evidence and material remains at the scene without compromising evidence at a real crime scene (the process can be stopped and repeated at any time);
- Flexible training options: full-time, part-time; master's degree; possibility to continue while on active duty, thus allowing the theory to be put into practice.

QUALITY ASSURANCE DIFFERENCES

Compliance with strict quality assurance requirements was mentioned several times during the Durham training. This is an important element of the comparison, even though we are looking at training that operates in a completely different legal environment and uses different methodologies.

ISO standards (in particular **ISO/IEC 17020:2012** and **17025:2017**) apply in the United Kingdom to organisations that **officially carry out tests, sampling and evidence analysis**, for example:

- **police forensic laboratories,**
- **crime scene investigation units,**
- **independent forensic laboratories.**

The Durham Police Scientific Support Unit, for example, is:

- **a forensic service provider accredited by the UK Accreditation Service (UKAS)**

- is required to follow the **ISO 17020 / Forensic Science Regulator's Code of Practice** (e.g. chain of custody, validation, auditing, internal certification, certified procedures).

Therefore, at Durham, quality assurance is **an operational professional guarantee**.

NKE is an educational and research institution, not an official or expert laboratory, and therefore does not fall under the scope of forensic ISO standards, but applies a different type of **academic quality assurance system**:

Institutional quality assurance (educational type)

- The entire NKE system complies with the provisions of **the Higher Education Act** and the quality assurance standards and guidelines of **the Hungarian Higher Education Accreditation Committee (MAB)** and the **European Higher Education Area (ESG)**.
- Educational and research processes are evaluated on the basis of **an internal quality assurance manual** (NKE Quality Management System, MIR).
- This system integrates the elements of the **MSZ EN ISO 9001:2015** standard into university processes (education, student satisfaction, curriculum development, examination system, research management).
- NKE is officially **ISO 9001:2015 certified**, but this certification **does not apply to forensic operations**, only **to university management and educational processes**.

Comparative summary:

Criterion	Durham Constabulary (UK)	NKE, Faculty of Law Enforcement (HU)
ISO type	ISO 17020 / 17025 (forensic investigation & testing)	ISO 9001:2015 (education and institutional quality management)
Focus	Evidence gathering, analysis, auditing of forensic procedures	Education, research, curriculum development, teaching quality
Auditing organisation	UKAS (United Kingdom Accreditation Service)	Hungarian Higher Education Accreditation Committee (MAB)
Objective	Operational credibility (admissibility of evidence in court)	Educational excellence and student learning outcomes

Criterion	Durham Constabulary (UK)	NKE, Faculty of Law Enforcement (HU)
Obligation	Mandatory under legislation (Forensic Science Regulator)	Voluntary but legally established requirement (Higher Education Act)

SUMMARY

Durham provides training in a practical and quality-assured forensic system, while NKE operates on a scientific and legal theory basis within an educational quality assurance framework.

Thus, while Durham represents **tactical and operational precision**, NKE represents **scientific and theoretical depth**.

At NKE, upon successful completion of the undergraduate programme, students have the opportunity to pursue a university master's degree (MSc). To complete the picture, we should also mention **the Police Education and Training Centre (ROKK)**, which provides in-service training

opportunities for those already serving in the police force. One example is the criminal technician training programme, which is similar in its objectives and methodology to the Durham CSI training programme.

The aim of my brief comparative analysis was not to provide an in-depth scientific examination, but rather to offer a visual comparison. The eternal dilemma is "comparing apples and pears", i.e. interpreting the material. The aim of both training programmes is to improve the processing of crime scenes for the purposes of investigation and provability, as well as to learn about criminal tactics theory and put it into practice. However, we had to compare training programmes operating in completely different legal environments, with completely different professional hierarchies and different approaches (theory/practice). Perhaps, in addition to learning about the Durham Police training system, we also managed to meet the



challenge posed by the differences and draw a kind of parallel between the two training systems.

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Dr. Bence Mészáros

The Méndez Principles and their critique

INTRODUCTION

Well into the first quarter of the 21st century, a new concept of interrogation appears to be emerging in criminal cases, focusing on an interrogation method which is absolutely free from any form of coercion and deception. This approach is referred to in the literature as “investigative interviewing,¹ and is most comprehensively summarized by the so-called Méndez Principles, published in 2021. In my paper, I present the history of the development of these principles and their essential content, and I also subject them to critical analysis.

1. BIRTH OF THE MÉNDEZ PRINCIPLES

Juan E. Méndez, an Argentine law professor, served as the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment from 2010 to 2016. Professor Méndez was no stranger to the concept of torture; during the 1970s, under the military dictatorship that ruled his country, he himself suffered it at the hands of the regime’s enforcers. At that time, people in Argentina who were considered opponents of the regime were being intimidated, imprisoned, tortured, or even killed on a massive scale. As a young lawyer, Méndez worked as a defense attorney for people arrested for political reasons, striving in his work to reduce the length of their detention – and thus their exposure to torture – but on August 26, 1975, plainclothes police officers arrested him as well and transported

¹ May L, Fahsing I, Kelly CE, Barela S, Milne R, Bull R (2026): What is investigative interviewing (and what is it not)? A primer on the ethos of suspect interviewing. *Journal of Criminal Psychology*, Vol. 16 No. 1 pp. 5–21, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCP-10-2024-0092>

him to one of the many secret Argentine prisons in operation. During his interrogations, he was forced to lay on a table blindfolded, and high-voltage electricity was run through his naked, bound body. He was held captive illegally for nearly a year and a half until he was released on the pressure from the international organization Amnesty International; he then went into exile in 1977 and moved to the United States.² The UN Secretary General transmitted the interim report of Juan Méndez to the UN General Assembly on 5 August 2016, which had the following summary:

*„The Special Rapporteur elaborates on the legal, ethical, scientific and practical arguments against the use of torture, other ill treatment and coercive methods during interviews of suspects, victims, witnesses and other persons in various investigative contexts. He advocates the development of a universal protocol identifying a set of standards for non coercive interviewing methods and procedural safeguards that ought, as a matter of law and policy, to be applied at a minimum to all interviews by law enforcement officials, military and intelligence personnel and other bodies with investigative mandates.“*³

Inspired by this report, three organizations (Anti-Torture Initiative, Association for the Prevention of Torture; Norwegian Centre for Human Rights), under the co-chairmanship of Juan Méndez, established an international panel of 15 experts from various academic disciplines (Steering Committee of Experts, SCE). Following four years of preparatory work, the panel published a document titled “Principles on Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information Gathering” (PEI) in 2021.⁴ In the course of its work, the SCE also consulted regularly with an Advisory Council comprising more than 80 experts from 40 different countries (forensic scientists, lawyers, psychologists, criminologists, national security experts, military experts, etc.). The document, informally known as the “Mendez Principles,” is promoted by the Association for the Prevention of Torture, a Swiss-based international organization, and is available in 23 languages at the time of writing.⁵

Since 2023, work has also been underway as part of a European Union COST Action project – titled “Establishing Networks to Implement the Principles on Effective Interviewing for Investigations (IMPLEMENDEZ)” – to promote the widest

² Juan Mendez, Campaigner Against Torture. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKSDMidRHZA>

³ A/71/298 Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Note by the Secretary General. <http://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?Open&DS=A/71/298&Lang=E>

⁴ Principles on Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information Gathering https://www.apt.ch/sites/default/files/publications/apt_PoEI_EN_11.pdf

⁵ <https://interviewingprinciples.com/>

possible application of the Méndez Principles. Two staff members from the National Institute of Criminology, Judit Szabó and György Virág, are also participating in this ambitious international collaboration.⁶

2. THE SIX MÉNDEZ PRINCIPLES

The authors of PEI have organized the process and safeguards of effective yet non-coercive interviewing around six fundamental principles, each linked to a key concept:

- *Principle 1 – On Foundations:* Effective interviewing is instructed by science, law and ethics.⁷
- *Principle 2 – On Practice:* Effective interviewing is a comprehensive process for gathering accurate and reliable information while implementing associated legal safeguards.⁸
- *Principle 3 – On Vulnerability:* Effective interviewing requires identifying and addressing the needs of interviewees in situations of vulnerability.⁹
- *Principle 4 – On Training:* Effective interviewing is a professional undertaking that requires specific training.¹⁰
- *Principle 5 – On Accountability:* Effective interviewing requires transparent and accountable institutions.¹¹
- *Principle 6 – On Implementation:* The implementation of effective interviewing requires robust national measures.¹²

In the upcoming paragraphs, I will briefly outline these principles, within the limits imposed by space constraints. I will not provide separate references for each element of the principles in the text that follows.

⁶ CA22128 – Establishing Networks to Implement the Principles on Effective Interviewing for Investigations (IMPLEMENDEZ) <https://www.cost.eu/actions/CA22128/>

⁷ PEI, 6–14.

⁸ PEI, 15–27.

⁹ PEI, 28–31.

¹⁰ PEI, 32–34.

¹¹ PEI, 35–39.

¹² PEI, 40–42.

Principle 1 – On Foundations

As we have seen, the first fundamental principle identifies three areas as the guiding principles of effective interviewing: science, law, and ethics. Regarding science, a combined evaluation of the results of two types of empirical research can point the way forward. One type of research examines which practical methods are ineffective for obtaining reliable information through interviewing, while another type focuses specifically on which methods yield statements with content that accurately reflects the truth during interviewing. The PEI provides numerous examples and references for both types of research, and the authors conclude that rapport-based, non-coercive interviewing offers the most benefits and is the most effective.

The law, as a guiding principle, naturally entails the enforcement of human rights (e.g., the right to liberty and security) and procedural rights in criminal proceedings (the right to the presumption of innocence, the right to remain silent, etc.), including the rights of persons convicted and detained on criminal charges (prohibition of corporal punishment, limiting the use of solitary confinement to 15 days, etc.). Surprisingly, the document makes no mention of the right to defense or the involvement of a defense attorney in this section.

With regard to professional ethics foundations, “respect”, “fairness”, and “honesty” are the values that the authors consider to be the most important components of an interrogator’s moral toolkit – values that must not be compromised even when there is great pressure (e.g., due to limited time or demands for results). Respect includes respect for the law, the rights and dignity of the person, and the integrity of the information-gathering process, fairness means that interviewers treat interviewees justly, without favouritism or discrimination, while honesty means the lack of any form of manipulation or deception (e.g.; lies, misrepresentations, overstatements, partial truths).

Principle 2 – On Practice

Regarding Principle 2, which contains the most elements of the six, the authors emphasize, on the one hand, that effective interviewing is not a single event but part of a larger process (e.g., a criminal investigation); on the other hand, the interviewing itself must be viewed as a complex and adaptive process that typically involves the following:

- thorough preparation and planning;
- ensuring relevant safeguards are applied throughout;
- keeping an open mind, including avoiding prejudice;
- creating a non-coercive environment;
- establishing and maintaining rapport;
- using lawful and scientifically supported questioning techniques;
- active listening and enabling the interviewee to speak freely and completely;
- assessment and analysis of the information gathered and the interview process.

The list cited above includes every element of the PEACE technique; this interrogation method forms the backbone of interviewing based on the Méndez Principles. Of course, this is no coincidence; Professor Ray Bull, who played a significant role as a psychologist in the creation of the PEACE model¹³, also served on the SCE. The concept of “accurate and reliable information” in Principle 2 requires no special explanation; the document itself addresses it in just three brief points. The essence is that the information obtained during the interviewing must be as factual and complete as possible without omissions or distortion. The authors, however, explain the third element of Principle 2 – the enforcement of legal safeguards – in great detail. The authorities must ensure the effective implementation of the following safeguards throughout the interview process:

- right to information about rights;
- right to remain silent;
- right to information about the reasons for arrest and any charges at the time of the arrest;
- access to interpretation;
- right to notify a relative or third party of one’s detention;
- right of access to a lawyer, including through legal aid;
- right of access to a doctor and an independent medical examination;
- right to contact with the outside world;
- registration of persons held in detention;
- full recording of the interview;

¹³ Bull R. (2025): Research on Improving the Interviewing of Suspects. Magyar Rendészet [Hungarian Law Enforcement], 25(Special Issue), 97–110. <https://doi.org/10.32577/MR.2025.KSZ.1.6>

- Right to review and sign the interview record;
- right to be brought promptly before a judge or other judicial authority;
- access to effective and independent complaints mechanisms and oversight.

The document is divided into three sections covering the rules for conducting an effective interview (“Before the Interview – Ensuring a Non-coercive Environment”; “During the Interview – Establishing and Maintaining Rapport”; “Concluding the Interview – Assessment and Analysis”); of these, I will discuss only the recommendations that I consider most important from the perspective of Criminalistics. From the first section, I would like to highlight the very first step – the first moment of contact between the interviewee and authorities – and the PEI rightly emphasizes the crucial importance of this. The authors consider “informal talks” – that is, any communication outside an official interview – to be something to be avoided or used only to the absolute minimum extent (e.g., asking for personal information). Preparing for the interview (developing an interview plan tailored to the specific proceedings) is crucial; by reviewing the information and evidence available at that point (such as witness and victim statements already taken, prior statements by a suspect, forensic reports, physical evidence, and electronic images and information) enables more effective communication and, consequently, the collection of more reliable information. The interview plan shall contain such details as the objectives, specific questions to be asked, mode of recording, timing, location of the interview and other persons to be in the room. It must also be decided in advance whether evidence will be presented to the person being interviewed, and if so, at what point during the questioning. The PEI also rightly emphasizes the need for interviewers to consciously avoid confirmation bias – that is, in the terminology of Criminalistics, clinging to a preconceived investigative hypothesis – in their thinking, they should actively search for evidence or explanations that go beyond their initial assumptions or views.

The authors consider video recording (“audio-visual recording”) to be the most appropriate method of recording, as it allows the interviewer to focus on the interview, saves time during subsequent legal proceedings, and serves as an important safeguard against ill-treatment. As the title of the second section suggests, it contains the most recommendations regarding rapport, since establishing and maintaining it is essential for an effective interview. The term “rapport” refers to a

relationship characterized by the following traits: respect and trust; a non-judgmental mindset; non-aggressive body language; attentiveness; and patience. The authors devote a separate section to explain active listening and emphasize that, at the beginning of an interview, the interviewee should be allowed to give his or her statement in their own words without interruption. The interviewer can ask follow-up questions after that, but the type of questioning employed is crucial, the authors prefer open-ended questions (such as “explain to me,” “tell me” or “please describe”). However, probing questions, such as “who,” “what” and “where”, may be necessary as well, once a response has been given to an open-ended question.

An accurate summary of what the interviewee has said can have a positive impact on the interview as a whole and can help in recalling important details; at the same time, poorly worded summaries can have negative consequences (confusing the interviewee’s memories, or creating the impression that the interviewer was not paying attention, or perhaps that they wish to influence the content of the statement).

With regard to an interviewee who refuses to make a statement or is reluctant to do so, the authors note, on the one hand, that if the interviewee has the right to remain silent, their decision must be respected and should not be held against them; on the other hand, they identify possible reasons for such reluctance: anxiety or uncertainty regarding the proceedings (especially if it is their first time in such a situation), fear of the police or other government officials, possibly fear that their social circle would react negatively if they found out they had spoken with the authorities, psychological distress due to their experiences, etc.

The PEI makes no mention of the fact that the main reason suspects refuse to make a statement is their desire to avoid being held accountable and, consequently, to evade the criminal penalties they face. If we do not identify and confront this reason, we will not find a solution for how to overcome it and persuade someone who refrains from making a statement for such reasons to communicate. It is always in the authorities’ interest for the person they intend to interview to make a statement, even if they share false information. Someone who refuses to make a statement – and they have every right to do so – cannot be “effectively interviewed,” because it is simply not allowed to ask them any questions.

After describing the circumstances under which an interview may be suspended (breaks, consultation with a lawyer, medical reasons), the document correctly points out that a person being questioned as a witness must be immediately notified of the

change in their status and informed of their rights as soon as they become a suspect during the interview.

In the third stage, upon concluding the interview, it is essential to review the written record together with the interviewee (and, if present, their attorney). Any amendments and the fact that the interviewee refused to sign the interview record must be recorded in the document, and a copy of the minutes must be provided to the interviewee (and to the attorney as well). The final step in the closure process is a thorough analysis and evaluation of the information gathered, based on the following criteria:

- the value and reliability of the information obtained and how it fits with known evidence, information gaps and other intelligence gathered;
- what further enquiries are necessary in order to advance the investigation or operation;
- whether all relevant safeguards were applied effectively.

Principle 3 – On Vulnerability

In addition to the fact that everyone interviewed by the authorities is, to some extent, in a vulnerable position due to the unequal balance of power, special mention must be made of individuals in the situation of heightened vulnerability. Such risk factors can include, for instance:

- age, sex, gender, gender identity or expression, or sexual orientation;
- nationality or ethnicity;
- cultural or religious background;
- physical, intellectual, or psychological disability;
- difficulties with communication;
- difficulties in understanding (including language barriers);
- Inability to read and/or write;
- age-related conditions such as dementia;
- Belonging to a minority group or a marginalised socio-economic group.

Beyond these, however, there are other situational features that may heighten vulnerability (e.g.; injury, illness, depression, being pregnant or breastfeeding, prior traumatic experiences). To ensure an effective interview, it is necessary to assess,

prior to carrying out the interview, whether the interviewee is considered vulnerable and, if so, what special measures are required to counter this situation (e.g., summoning another interviewer of a different gender or with specialized training; prior consultation with experts, family members, or social workers; use of a sign language interpreter; presence of a support person). It is an essential safeguard to document the circumstances underlying the vulnerability and the support that interviewers provided to the interviewee in this regard. Interviewers of persons with heightened vulnerability should, where possible, have special training or receive expert assistance, particularly when interviewing minors.

Principle 4 – On Training

All persons conducting interviews must be provided with specific training that is of sufficient duration and depth to enable them to master the theoretical foundations and practical knowledge of effective interviewing. Such training programs must include practical exercises based on realistic operational scenarios, following which participants receive feedback from supervisors and their peers. Additional training should be given to interviewers who are involved in interviewing persons in situations of heightened vulnerability, and personnel who manage and supervise interviewers should also receive training, so they learn how to assess the overall quality of an interview conducted by their subordinates. The document also emphasizes that regular training is necessary to maintain and improve theoretical knowledge and the skills required for conducting interviews.

Principle 5 – On Accountability

Authorities must have standard operating procedures, codes of conduct or other institutional guidelines governing interviewing practices that meet international standards, and they must make these available to the public. Regular, thorough, and comprehensive reviews conducted by the authorities must cover not only these regulations but also assess the level of financial resources invested in interviewing (e.g., the appropriate use of technology). The effective recording of information is an important element of transparency and accountability, whenever someone is held captive, an individual custody record – preferably in an electronic form – must be

opened as soon as possible. The interviews must be accurately recorded; the audiovisual technology mentioned above is the most appropriate for this purpose. The improper conduct of an interview (whether unlawful or in violation of internal regulations), should trigger an appropriate institutional response, ranging from making the interviewer to retake the specific training course, through disciplinary measures, to criminal proceedings and the imposition of criminal penalties. Public officials must never ignore unlawful conduct, regardless of the perpetrator's rank, position, or the time and circumstances of the offense. A reporting obligation must be established regarding mistreatment, and channels must be provided for submitting such reports that allow for the avoidance of direct confrontation with the person named in the complaint.

External oversight bodies (e.g., Ombudsperson Offices, courts, or specialist oversight organisations) should have access to facilities in which detained persons are interviewed and information on the interviewees. Ensuring confidential communication with representatives of such bodies is also an important element of Principle 5. Civil society organizations can also play a role in external oversight.

All interviewees have the right to complain of any mistreatment, such complaints must be promptly, thoroughly and impartially examined (and no reprisals should be taken in response to their submission). Access to complaints mechanisms must be easy, direct, free of charge, and confidential, and the interviewee must be informed of the rules of the complaint procedure and its possible outcomes. The author emphasize, that all complaints should be recorded, and should be part of the official record. (In my view, this is inconsistent with the principle of confidentiality previously outlined in connection with the complaints.) Redress and reparations proportionate to the harm suffered constitute the final element of accountability for interviewees who have been subjected to torture or other ill-treatment, including the exclusion of any evidence from the proceedings obtained in this manner.

Principle 6 – On Implementation

Principle 6 concerns the measures necessary to implement the previous five principles and institutionalize them at the national level. The document lists judicial oversight of interviewing authorities as the first of these measures. It is also important to ensure access to medical examination and access to a lawyer, to criminalize torture and other forms of ill-treatment, as well as to regulate in national

law that confessions and statements obtained through torture or other forms of coercion shall be inadmissible, and that perpetrators of acts involving coercion or other abuses during interviews shall be subject to criminal sanctions. In addition to developing the institutional culture for conducting interviews – in which the leaders of the respective organizations play a key role – it is also important for individual states to invest adequate human and financial resources in this field (e.g., organizing specific trainings and providing appropriate recording equipment). The state must also ensure that law enforcement agencies and other organizations specializing in intelligence gathering maintain constructive relationships with one another, with researchers, and with the academic community, which can contribute to the development of interviewing techniques, even at the international level.

Ensuring the independence of courts and prosecutors is a prerequisite for these bodies to play an active role in implementing effective interviewing at the national level. In addition to safeguarding fundamental rights and the procedural rights of interviewees, courts must examine, on the one hand, how the interview was conducted and, on the other hand, whether the legal safeguards were guaranteed to the person who was questioned. Judicial and prosecutorial bodies naturally serve as safeguards to ensure that the results of unlawfully conducted interrogations are excluded from the evidence. Judicial and prosecutorial authorities must initiate an investigation *ex officio* if they detect circumstances indicating that the interviewee was subject to ill treatment, and it is the duty of the judicial authorities to ensure that the perpetrators of such acts are held accountable.

The final element of Principle 6 is that states must adequately disseminate the rules governing effective interviewing and ensure that they reach not only the executive, legislative, and judicial bodies operating in the country, but also civil society organizations and the general public.

3. CRITIQUE OF THE MÉNDEZ PRINCIPLES

The PEI (a.k.a. the Méndez Principles) is a thorough and well-written document (though it does contain some repetition in places) that comprehensively summarizes the principles and criteria of a lawful interview process; however, I am not certain that all of its proposed recommendations also serve the purpose of effectiveness. Here I turn to the main focus of my critique, namely the ethical expectations mentioned in Principle 1. Fairness and honesty are undoubtedly important and noble

moral values that should generally be upheld during interviews, but by no means always, or at least not in such a strict sense. If we eliminate all forms of deception and manipulation from the interviewer's toolkit, we narrow the scope of interrogation tactics to such an extent that it seriously jeopardizes effectiveness, particularly when interrogating suspects. Reading the PEI, one gets the impression that the authors had in mind only well-meaning, cooperative interviewees with nothing to hide regarding the subject of the proceedings when they put the rules for effective interviewing down on paper. In reality, however, the situation is not nearly as favorable. If the suspect has indeed committed the crime he is accused of and is willing to make a statement, he often tries to mislead the authorities and has no intention of providing "accurate and reliable" information (i.e., confessing to the crime), because quite simply, it is not in his best interest to do so. Of course, I am not arguing that it should be allowed to rely on non-existent evidence to obtain a confession; I, too, consider this to be unlawful and unfair, even though it is still legal in some U.S. states.¹⁴ What is certain, however, is that deception in some form is present in many of the interrogation tactics used on a daily basis in Hungary as well. Without going into detailed explanations, it suffices to state that the use of a tactical bluff during an interrogation does not at all comply with the Méndez Principles (because it is not "fair"), nor does the conscious choice or alteration of an interrogation attitude, or its adaptation to a given interrogation situation (because it is not "sincere"). I certainly agree that interrogation tactics must remain within certain limits (for example, they must never result in an innocent person making a confession that incriminates themselves), but in my view, the boundaries of fairness are broader in this regard.

The use of – not disproportionately large – deception, role-playing, scenario creation, etc., deployed as part of carefully planned interrogation tactics necessary to obtain a confession regarding a criminal offense that is factually accurate, does not, in my opinion, infringe upon the rights of the person being interrogated; but it can be extremely effective. There are cases where only methods of this kind can produce results. It is worth considering the other side of the coin here: the interests of victims of real crimes are seriously harmed if, for example, due to insufficient physical evidence (in some cases resulting from the suspect's actions) the actual perpetrator is not held accountable in the absence of a confession.

¹⁴ Logan, W. A. (2025). Deepfakes in interrogations. *Wake Forest Law Review*, 60(1), 97–150.

It is worth reading and reflecting on my thoughts above in light of the fact that, when it comes to fairness, my approach is stricter than the current judicial practice in Hungary. For example, I disagree with the decision that declared the actions of a police officer lawful, who was posing as a doctor during the interrogation of a suspect accused of murdering a newborn baby.¹⁵

CONCLUSIONS

The presentation of the Méndez Principles on effective and non-coercive interrogation, as described in the study, is naturally not exhaustive, since a 42-page document cannot be fully summarized in just a few pages. In my paper, I have highlighted the aspects of each principle that I consider most important and most relevant from the perspective of Criminalistics. It is worthwhile for any professional who conducts interviews and interrogations or does research in this field to familiarize themselves with the Méndez Principles, as they contain scientifically grounded and legally well-founded recommendations and requirements, which Hungary, by the way, complies with, albeit not entirely. For example, Hungary still has a long way to go when it comes to video recording of interrogations, as well as in making specialized training for interrogators a regular practice. In fact, I do not consider compliance with all the ethical requirements set forth in Principle 1 to be desirable, as I explained in my critique of the Méndez Principles. In summary: it would be nice to live in a world where one could obtain all the necessary information from interviewees while fully adhering to the Méndez Principles.

¹⁵ Mészáros B. (2026): A kihallgatási taktika megítélése a bírói gyakorlatban. [The Assessment of Interrogation Tactics in Judicial Practice] In: Mészáros B. (Ed.) Verziók: Tanulmányok a 60 éves Dr. Anti Csaba László rendőr alezredes tiszteletére. [Versions: Essays in Honor of Police Lieutenant Colonel Dr. Csaba László Anti on His 60th Birthday.] Budapest, Magyar Bűnüldözők Szakmai Egyesülete [Professional Association of Hungarian Criminal Investigation Officers], 114–115.

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