

## The Presentation and Evaluation of the Project ‘Core Curriculum for Border Guard Training’

**Annotation:** One of the most decisive factors for the future of the Schengen area is that uniform regulations must be interpreted and implemented in the same way at the external borders of the area. In order to achieve that, it was essential to harmonize border guards’ training and its content on the basis of uniform principles. The establishment of the common European border guard training played a fundamental role in this process. My research reveals that the first period in this development lasted from the adoption of the *Schengen Convention* (1990) to the establishment of the Ad-hoc Centre for Border Guard Training (Kiss, 2012), and one of the most significant achievements was the launch of the project ‘Core Curriculum for Border Guard Training’ (*Council of the European Union*, 2003).

**Keywords:** Core curriculum, border guard training, working group meetings in Gross Enzersdorf and Stockholm.

On the basis of my research and according to the organizational and operational characteristics, I concluded that the first period of the development of the common European<sup>1</sup> border guard training lasted from the adoption of the Schengen Convention to the establishment of the Ad-hoc-Centre for Border Guard Training.

After the signing of the *Schengen Agreement* (1985) and the Schengen Convention, the practical functioning of the Schengen area started on 26 March 1995 in Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain. The establishment of the Schengen area resulted in new border control and later in a new integrated border management system. It became clear to the member states of the European Union and to the Schengen Partner States that the harmonization of border control activities requires a closer cooperation in the sphere of operational management as well as in education and training.

In the first period of the harmonization of the European border guard training, I consider the following documents and events to be the most significant: the Schengen Convention (Kiss, 2012. p. 53), the EU Schengen Catalogue, External borders control, Removal and Readmission (*Council of the European Union*, 2002a), (Kiss, 2014), Towards Integrated management of the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (*Commission of the European Communities*, 2002), the Feasibility Study for the Setting up of a European Border Police (2002), the ARGO program (*Council*, 2002), (Kiss, 2014), the Adoption of the Plan for the Management of the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (*Council of the European Union*, 2002b), (Kiss, 2012. p.54) and the Seville European Council meeting on 21 and 22 June 2002 (*Council of the European Union*, 2002c), (Kiss, 2012. p. 55).

The above-mentioned documents had a key role in the creation of the common border guard training as they established a need for common border guard training, set forth the implementation, time frame and proposals for the levels of the border guard training and also provided the funding for the implementation.

In the first part of my article, I present one of the most important elements of the process – the project ‘Core Curriculum for Border Guard Training’, which was the first step towards the practical implementation of the common European border guard training.

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<sup>1</sup> In my article the expressions *European border guard training and education* and *European* refer, from a territorial point of view, to the Schengen Member States and the countries closely cooperating with the Schengen Member States. Within this framework, I examine the process and the events that resulted in the establishment of the Ad-hoc Centre for Border Guard Training and later the FRONTEX Training Unit.

Based on the initiatives of the Tampere Program (*Presidency Conclusions*, 1999) and the Leaken meeting of the European Council (*Presidency Conclusions*, 2001) and after the Seville meeting of the European Council in July 2002, the realization of the Core Curriculum for Border Guard Training project began. (Kiss, 2013)

### **1. The launching of the project ‘Core Curriculum for Border Guard Training’, the working group meetings in Gross Enzersdorf and Stockholm**

With the aim to present the content and outcome of the Austrian and Swedish project, the Gross Enzersdorf and Stockholm working group meeting materials, the project report (*Council of the European Union*, 2003) and reports on the subject prepared in Hungary were examined. On the basis of the previously mentioned materials, the following findings were made.

Shortly after the decision was taken in Seville, preparations for the development of a common European core curriculum for the border guard officers and their mid-level management began. In the Elsinore meeting on 22 July 2002, the project ‘Core Curriculum for Border Guard Training’ was proposed by the representatives of Austria and Sweden and accepted by the Common Unit of Border Guard Practitioners.

After the meeting in Elsinore, on 28 August 2002, an Austrian-Swedish Core Team was established for the management of the project, where Austria was assigned the role of a project leader and Sweden that of a project partner.

The project plan made by the Austrian-Swedish Core Team contained the following key tasks and deadlines:

- creating an ongoing contact and data supply with the participating countries until October 2002,
- developing a border guard training curriculum proposal and a related questionnaire, which should be sent to the participating countries; the evaluation of the questionnaire and materials received from the countries until the end of January 2003,
- organizing study visits to France, Germany, Poland and the United Kingdom in February 2003,
- organizing workshops with all the participating countries’ representatives in March and April 2003,
- “Presentation of the common core curriculum for the Thessaloniki European Council on 20-21 June 2003” (*Council of the European Union*, 2003, p. 20).

The Core Team started their work according to the project plan. The representatives of the participating countries and organizations were first informed about the project results in Gross Enzersdorf, Austria, on 11-13 March 2003. The most significant findings were represented in an overall report and in a presentation provided by the Core Team of the project.

In the preamble of the report, the circumstances that had given rise to this project were described. The first chapter defines the key elements of the project, its implementation and quality assurance. The same chapter contains a table which – based on the questionnaires – summarizes the tasks carried out by national border guards. The third chapter titled ‘Core Curriculum’ lays down the structure of the planned core curriculum. The proposal contains three independent parts, where the minimum standards for first, second and mid-level officers are set forth. Afterwards, the concepts of border guard, checks at external borders, surveillance at external borders, and of first, second and mid-level officers are defined. As an educational method the proposal distinguishes between theory, practice and group work. Regarding the extent of the acquisition of the learning material, the following levels were applied: being informed, knowledge, ability to apply, ability for critical reflection and discussion.

The fourth chapter covers the implementation of the proposed Core Curriculum. The application of the Core Curriculum on an international level is ensured by the Common Integrated Unit. The latter consists of the Administration Unit and the International Management Unit, which is made up of international experts. At the national level, the implementation was organized and governed by the National Management Team.

Annex 1 of the report titled 'Common Integrated Unit for Border Guard Training' illustrates the proposed tasks.

Annex 2 contains a subject overview table concerning the subjects taught at all three levels, supplemented with the minimum and the maximum number of lessons regarding each subject.

Annex 3 contains the module and subject structure of first-level, second-level and mid-level curricula. The content of the subjects at this level of the Core Curriculum is not detailed, however, besides the names of the planned modules and subjects, recommended educational methods, acquired levels and the prospective number of lessons are laid down.

The proposed modules, subjects and the number of lessons are summarized in Annex 1 of this paper.

With regard to the fact that the structure and the used concepts in the proposed Core Curriculum are different from the ones adopted by the participating countries' Core Curriculum, the following issues needed to be discussed after the Core Team's presentation.

The project's content had to be clarified. The name of the project – 'Core Curriculum for Border Guard Training' – was misinterpreted by most participants. They thought that the proposed training programmes constituted a basic, minimum programme. It became clear during the explanations and discussions that the term *core* was used by the project team to define the content and not the level of border guard training. That is, what was drawn up within the framework of the Core Curriculum for Border Guard Training was the most important knowledge to be acquired.

First-level officers were defined in the working material and working group meetings as 'border guards without the right to take coercive measures' (*Council of the European Union*, 2003, p. 28). No other criteria were specified. The setting up of this category of border guards was justified by the practice of some countries where officers without the right to take coercive measures were employed as border guards (for example, car drivers, administrators).

According to the uniform interpretation of the concept of the second-level officers, they are 'border guards with the right to take coercive measures' (*Council of the European Union*, 2003, p. 28). In practice the majority of these officers were employed as patrols carrying out border checks and surveillance tasks.

Mid-level officers were described in the working materials and the project team as 'leaders of border guard groups with the right to take decisions on behalf of their groups' (*Council of the European Union*, 2003, p. 28). The concept defined above did not provide any guidelines regarding the size of the groups.

In the second part of the working group meeting, the proposed number of lessons as well as the educational method and level were discussed in smaller groups. At the end, the project leaders summarized their proposals. However, they did not state their position on the issues raised.

Within the framework of the project, the second working group meeting took place in Stockholm on 1-2 April 2003. The project team summarized the results achieved until then and made the summation available for the participants in the form of a working material.

No changes were made in the preamble or in the first chapter as compared to the previous report, but the chapter called Core Curriculum was amended by a comment. Most importantly, however, the position of the project team on the previous working group meeting was summarized. The key elements were as follows:

- the time frame established could not be changed, i.e. shortened,
- the implementation of the proposed quality standards are of primary importance,
- the whole Core Curriculum containing the minimum standards shall be executed,
- within the established time frame, the time spent on the individual modules can be changed while retaining all content elements,
- in countries where mid-level students are recruited from outside the border guard organization without professional experience, the content of the second level education should be part of mid-level education.

Annex 2 of the drawn-up working material summarizes the modified subjects and time frames. Annex 3 contains the Core Curriculum for first-level, second-level and mid-level officers. Within the different levels of education, the module and subject structure, time frame, proposed educational methods and educational aims are laid down (the modified summary of the aforementioned elements is available in Annex 2 of this paper).

At the end of the working group meeting, the project team presented an updated working material, which was followed by final comments and proposals of the participants.

Based on the comments, the participants could be divided into two major groups. One of the groups contained the countries (including Hungary) which were able to fulfil the emerging requirements easily or with a minor effort. The other group represented the countries for which the requirements set forth seemed to be fairly high. The countries in the latter group agreed to have a uniform, minimum level education for all border guards, however, they were trying to push the number of lessons laid down to the minimum.

The main debate emerged on the subject of language training. On the one hand it was clear for the participants that during the proposed number of lessons set forth in the Core Curriculum a good command of English cannot be acquired. On the other hand everyone agreed that the officers who had mastered a language – prior to the training – had to be provided with the knowledge of language for professional purposes.

The other major question raised was which language to teach to the border guards as a common language in the education process. In the working materials, English was named as the language to be used. There were some arguments raised for and against English, and French and Greek participants expressed their reservations. The French representative demanded that for second-level and mid-level officers, learning English should only be an option. Greek representatives' reservations were similar, namely that for border guards working in border surveillance, learning English should be optional.

The working group did not discuss the Implementation chapter of the working material this time either.

## **2. The report on the Core Curriculum for Border Guard Training project**

The report (*Council of the European Union, 2003*) of the Austrian and Swedish project team was submitted to SCIFA<sup>2</sup>.

The report was complemented with two annexes following the first (and only) page. Annex 1 contains a main chapter titled 'Implementation of the Plan for the management of the external borders of the Member States of the European Union', having a sub-title 'Core Curriculum Project Final Report'. Based on the above, the structure of the report already points out the place of the project in the process which aims to establish integrated border management. Annex 2 summarizes the modified results of the material of the working group meetings under the title 'Core Curriculum for Border Guard Training'.

Among other issues, Annex 1 lists the participating countries and organizations in the project.

From the EU Member States and Schengen Partner States:

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<sup>2</sup> Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum.

“Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.” (Council of the European Union, 2003, p. 4).

From the acceding and candidate countries:

“Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and Turkey.” (Council of the European Union, 2003, p. 4).

The representatives of the following organizations participated as observers:

“European Commission, DCAF, UNHCR, CEPOL and KERA.” (Council of the European Union, 2003, p. 5)

The independent national application of the Core Curriculum was stated in the same annex to the report. The members of the working groups accepted the Core Curriculum as part of their national border guard educational programme.

However, it was clear to the project team as well that the Core Curriculum did not have full legal authorization. To reach the desired level of authorization, the new codification of Common Manual was proposed to achieve that the Core Curriculum and the proposals were adopted as a binding regulation for all the member states.

With the aim to set up a uniform European educational level, the project team suggested the development of quality assurance measures, setting forth the following:

- providing a constant advisory and consultation opportunity during the implementation,
- deplozing a constant monitoring system and conducting an evaluation based on the information received from the participating countries,
- making adjustments in order to reach the goals set forth,
- training multipliers in order to achieve the uniform educational aims.

The report drew up two different structures for the implementation. According to the first option, the Central European Border Service Academy would be established although this possibility was rejected because of the absence of sufficient infrastructure, staff as well as logistic network and because of language barriers and significant travel costs.

The second option was the establishment of the Common Integrated Unit with experts from the participating countries for the coordination of international activities and the National Management Team that supported the application of the Core Curriculum at the national level.

At the end, Annex 1 titled ‘Conclusions contributing to the further planning of the long-term objectives as set out by the Plan for the management of the EU external borders’ drew a conclusion that a “common standard for border guard training is needed.” (*Council of the European Union*, 2003, p. 11).

Annex 2 of the report contains an updated version of the working material presented in the first and second working group meetings. The finalized and summarized module and subject structure and the number of lessons can be found in Annex 3 of this paper.

### **3. The project, its evaluation and the conclusions made**

The changes that occurred in European border security prior to the start of the project made it necessary to define uniform and minimum level requirements in the field of border control and border guard training in the Schengen area. In the field of border guard training, the participating countries wanted to achieve the planned objectives by developing a common Core Curriculum for border guard officers and their mid-level management.

In my opinion, the goal setting, the chosen instrument and the implementation of the Core Curriculum were adequate. The minimum level harmonization of contents and competences of border guard training and education was ensured.

Regarding the execution of the project, as compared to the previous attempts in the same field, I think that the project in question was implemented efficiently and within a short

period of time. It is important to mention that the process was significantly supported by the activity of Austria and Sweden. They contributed to the project especially with their staff, experience and diplomacy regarding the organization of the project.

In my opinion, the most significant achievement of the project is that the project team got the participating countries' full support for developing<sup>3</sup>, monitoring, analysing and evaluating the Core Curriculum<sup>4</sup>. In practice it means that a new era in the development of European border guard training began with the project. At this early stage of the common European border guard training, the professional content of the curriculum was rather secondary, the positive message sent out during the implementation of the project having even greater significance.

Furthermore, I find it almost as important that, apart from the elaboration of the Core Curriculum, with the setting up of the structure and tasks of the Ad-hoc Centre for Border Guard Training, the project substantially contributed to the establishment of the future continuation of the development of the common European Core Curriculum.

If we examine the content of the Core Curriculum, we can establish that the objectives set forth at the beginning of the project were carried out only partially, and the detailed content of the subjects was missing.

In the summary of the subjects and lessons in the final report, it can be observed that the aim of the core curriculum is to provide general minimum training for border guards, but the national differences deriving from the countries' various border sections<sup>5</sup> were not taken into consideration. The changes in the time frame of the lessons reflect the same problem.

The proposed time frame for first-level officers in the prepared working material was between 141 and 255 lessons. After the second working group meeting it was limited to 174, and in the final report to 189 lessons in total.

Regarding second-level officers, the proposed time frame of the training was between 560 and 803 lessons. It was reduced to 475 after the second working group meeting, and 477 lessons were stated in the final report.

For mid-level officers the proposed time frame was between 297 and 434 lessons, which was significantly reduced to 253 by the end of the second working group meeting and slightly raised to 263 lessons in the final report.

The aforementioned substantial changes in the time frames (the decided number of lessons in the last two categories was smaller than the originally proposed minimum time frame) reflect the efforts of the project leadership to make changes with the ultimate aim of finding a solution acceptable by all the participating countries.

In my view, one of the negative aspects of the project was that, due to the lack of practical experience, the introduced new officer categories (first-level, second-level and mid-level) were difficult to be interpreted in most of the participating countries.

The project focused mainly on setting up the minimum requirements for border guard training, and there was no guidance for the countries whose border guard training already exceeded the minimum level. I consider these two problems as the biggest disadvantages of the project. Consequently, we can say that the project defined tasks mainly for the countries that had not been able to fulfil the minimum requirements earlier.

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<sup>3</sup> At the end of the project, the Core Curriculum contained curricula for first-level, second-level and mid-level officers. Each curriculum included the module and subject structure, the planned time frame of lessons, proposed educational methods and the level of competences. The content of the subjects was not detailed, though.

<sup>4</sup> Except for the compulsory English language training in France and Greece.

<sup>5</sup> At this time there were countries which did not have all the three types of border sections (land, air and sea).

The difficulties in the practical implementation of the project could already be predicted when the national implementation of the Core Curriculum remained in the ‘highly recommended’ category.

All in all, I am of the opinion that the completed curricula of the project were not perfect from the professional point of view. Still, they conveyed an even more important message to the participating countries that the harmonization of border guard training had been started and was supported by the Schengen member states and the participating countries.

### **Summary**

The establishment of the Schengen area resulted in a new border control system, in which one of the most decisive factors in ensuring efficiency was the harmonization of the content of different national border guard training programmes and the definition of minimum requirements regarding border guard competences in the European Union Member States, Schengen Partner States as well as in acceding and candidate countries.

One of the most significant initiatives in this process was the launch of the project ‘Core Curriculum for Border Guard Training’ in the countries participating in the Schengen cooperation to develop the common content elements and time frames for the training of border guards and their mid-level management.

A result of the project was a three-level Core Curriculum (first-level, second-level and mid-level), which contained the module and subject structure with the competence levels and time frames. The content of the subjects was not detailed in the Core Curriculum.

In my opinion, the most significant result of the project was that almost all the stakeholders in the field of border guard training were involved in the development of the Core Curriculum, and the project started a new process in the Schengen area. The project team was authorized by the participating countries to continue and further develop the results of the project, and proposed the establishment of the Common Integrated Unit. Basically, the message of the project was more important than the content.

I consider as a negative aspect of the project that it only wanted to define minimum requirements concerning border guard training and did not take into account different characteristics of air, land and sea borders and that the national implementation was only highly recommended and not compulsory.

## Annex 1

### Summary of the planned educational modules, subjects and time frames (Gross Enzersdorf)<sup>6</sup>

sn	Planned modules and subjects	first-level officer	second-level officer	mid-level officer
<b>1.</b>	<b>Human resources development</b>			
	History of border control	2-4	4-6	-
	Policy of the European Union	4-8	15-20	-
	Applied psychology	4-6	25-30	30-45
	Sociology	-	15-20	15-20
	Professional ethics	5-10	15-20	5-10
	Human rights	4-8	4-8	10-15
	Language training	15-25	15-25	15-25
<b>2.</b>	<b>International legislation</b>			
	Provisions concerning border service	10-15	15-25	10-15
	International legislation	-	10-15	10-15
<b>3.</b>	<b>National legislation</b>			
	Administrative law	25-35	35-45	20-25
	Penal law	-	20-30	20-30
	Constitutional law	-	15-20	10-15
	Border service provisions	-	60-80	25-30
	Border officer employment law	-	-	-
<b>4.</b>	<b>Operations training</b>			
	Tactical procedures	6-14	43-55	25-35
	Technical equipment	10-20	30-40	10-15
	Weapons training	-	40-50	20-25
	Physical training	-	28-36	12-14
	First aid	5-10	10-15	-
<b>5.</b>	<b>Criminology</b>			
	Crime investigation tactics	-	59-81	20-30
	Document examination	20-40	20-40	5-10
	Forensic methods	-	8-16	-
	Organised crime	-	15-20	5-10
<b>6.</b>	<b>Information technology</b>			
	Information technology	18-36	20-38	5-10
<b>7.</b>	<b>Applied working methods</b>			
	Airport control	4-6	5-10	-
	Land border control	5-10	5-10	-
	Sea border control	4-8	4-8	-
<b>8.</b>	<b>Administration</b>			
	Cooperation and coordination	-	20-30	20-30
	Reporting	-	5-10	5-10

<sup>6</sup> The summary table was made on the basis of the Gross Enzersdorf working material (p. 28). The summarised data can be found in Chapter 3 of the document.



## Annex 2

### Summary of the planned educational modules, subjects and time frames (Stockholm)<sup>7</sup>

sn	Planned modules and subjects	first-level officer	second-level officer	mid-level officer
<b>1.</b>	<b>Human resources development</b>			
	Development of border control	3	6	-
	Policy of the European Union	4	4	-
	Applied psychology	6	16	30
	Sociology	-	15	15
	Professional ethics	5	15	5
	Human rights	8	8	10
	Language training	15	25	25
<b>2.</b>	<b>International legislation</b>			
	Provisions concerning border service	10	20	15
	International legislation	-	-	-
<b>3.</b>	<b>National legislation</b>			
	Administrative law	25	40	20
	Penal law	-	20	15
	Constitutional law	-	8	5
	Border service provisions	-	40	15
	Border officer employment law	-	-	-
<b>4.</b>	<b>Operations training</b>			
	Tactical procedures	10	32	16
	Technical equipment	8	12	-
	Weapons training	-	40	10
	Physical training	-	28	12
	First aid	4	4	-
<b>5.</b>	<b>Criminology</b>			
	Interviewing skills	4	9	-
	Crime investigation tactics	0	24	25
	Document examination	32	40	5
	Forensic methods	-	4+(4)	0
	Organised crime	-	15	5
<b>6.</b>	<b>Information technology</b>			
	Information technology	22	20+(2)	5
<b>7.</b>	<b>Applied working methods</b>			
	Airport control	6	6	-
	Land border control	6	6	-
	Sea border control	6	6	-
<b>8.</b>	<b>Administration</b>			
	Cooperation and coordination	-	8	12
	Reporting	-	4	8

<sup>7</sup> The summary table was made on the basis of the Stockholm working material (p.32). The summarised data can be found in Chapter 3 of the document (p. 28).

### Annex 3

#### Summary of the planned educational modules, subjects and time frames (Final report)<sup>8</sup>

sn	Planned modules and subjects	first-level officer	second-level officer	mid-level officer
<b>1.</b>	<b>Human resources development</b>			
	Development of border control	3	6	-
	Policy of the European Union	4	4	-
	Applied psychology	6	16	30
	Interviewing skills	4	4	-
	Sociology	15	15	15
	Professional ethics	5	15	5
	Human rights	8	8	10
	Language training	15	25	25
<b>2.</b>	<b>International legislation</b>			
	Provisions concerning border service	10	20	15
	International legislation	-	-	-
<b>3.</b>	<b>National legislation</b>			
	Administrative law	25	40	20
	Penal law	-	20	15
	Constitutional law	-	8	5
	Border service provisions	-	40	15
	Border officer employment law	-	-	-
<b>4.</b>	<b>Operations training</b>			
	Tactical procedures	10	32	16
	Technical equipment	8	8	-
	Weapons training	-	40	10
	Physical training	-	28	12
	First aid	4	4	-
<b>5.</b>	<b>Criminology</b>			
	Crime investigation tactics	-	29	25
	Document examination	32	40	5
	Forensic methods	-	8	-
	Organised crime	-	15	15
<b>6.</b>	<b>Information technology</b>			
	Information technology	22	22	5
<b>7.</b>	<b>Applied working methods</b>			
	Airport control	6	6	-
	Land border control	6	6	-
	Sea border control	6	6	-
<b>8.</b>	<b>Administration</b>			
	Cooperation and coordination	-	8	12
	Reporting	-	4	8

<sup>8</sup> The summary table was made on the basis of the Report – Core Curriculum for border guard training (Council of the European Union, 2003, p. 43). The summarised data can be found in Chapter 3 of the document.

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**Anotácia:** Jedným z rozhodujúcich faktorov ovplyvňujúcich budúcnosť schengenského priestoru je potreba rovnakým spôsobom interpretovať jednotné smernice a zavádzať ich na všetkých častiach jeho externej hranice. Pre dosiahnutie tohto cieľa je nevyhnutné, aby sa zjednotila odborná príprava hraničných stráží a jej obsah. V tomto procese hralo dôležitú úlohu zavedenie spoločnej európskej odbornej prípravy hraničnej stráže. Autorov výskum ukázal, že prvá etapa tohto procesu trvala od prijatia Schengenského dohovoru (1990) po zriadenie tzv. Ad hoc centra pre odbornú prípravu hraničnej stráže (Kiss, 2012) a že medzi najvýznamnejšie úspechy možno zaradiť spustenie projektu Základné osnovy odbornej prípravy hraničnej stráže (Rada Európskej únie, 2003).

**Kľúčové slová:** základné osnovy, odborná príprava hraničnej stráže, stretnutia pracovných skupín v mestách Gross Enzersdorf a Štokholm

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Recenzent: JUDr. Alexandra Zvalová