



Preparation for the Career outside the Army: The View of Soldiers of the Czech Armed Forces

Renata Skýpalová¹ 
Kristýna Binková² 

Received: July 2, 2022

Accepted: August 24, 2022

Published: December 30, 2022

Keywords:

Military organization;
Sociology;
Soldiers;
Second career;
Labor market;
Transition;
Czech Armed Forces



Creative Commons Non Commercial CC BY-NC: This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial 4.0 License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>) which permits non-commercial use, reproduction and distribution of the work without further permission.

Abstract: *The paper focuses on the means of support during soldiers' labor market integration after the termination of military contracts. To find out how the military personnel of the Czech Armed Forces cope with their training for a second career and whether they are interested in the support tools used abroad, the research included 176 students of military studies at the University of Defence and 284 soldiers in active military service. Broadening their knowledge and skills for a better opportunity in the labor market is the wish of 90 % of respondents. More than four-fifths of the respondents have not started training for their second career yet. According to the results, the respondents are interested in helping with preparation for a second career. However, compared to other NATO countries, a systematic approach is not being applied in the Czech Republic at this time.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Every year a certain percentage of soldiers, get detached from the military due to retirement or various terms of service. Most of the soldiers who leave the army do not reach the statutory retirement age and belong to a relatively young population aged from 30 to 40 years. Hence, they remain with substantial productive age with a potential of working for 15 – 30 more years. Resettlement of soldiers becomes a challenge as they wish to maintain a certain living standard, financial security and expected quality of life for their families. Hence, they make an effort to build a new career in new civilian employment (Chopade & Gupta, 2020). Although the soldiers usually know the date of their terms of service, most of them do not prepare for this period or focus on rather unhelpful training activities. Unpreparedness is partly attributable to organizational barriers, limited initiative and motivation. This apparent lack of agency may be associated with the institutional nature of the military (Keeling et al., 2018).

However, career transition from armed forces to civilian life plays a prime role in the resettlement of military personnel (Chopade & Gupta, 2020; Alonso et al., 2021). Obtaining civilian employment after military separation not only provides financial stability but also a sense of purpose and meaning, which helps foster a new identity as a civilian (Kintzle & Castro, 2016). Conversely, a lack of employment following military separation is associated with poor mental health, increased stress, and financial insecurity (Zoli et al., 2015). Leaving military service creates an intense and major life transition, which requires a series of adjustments (Zoli et al., 2015; Chopade & Gupta, 2020; Geraci et al., 2020). Therefore, practical experience shows that it

¹ AMBIS university, Department of Economics and Management, Lindnerova 575/1, Prague, Czech Republic

² University of Defense, Faculty of Military Leadership, Department of Resources Management, Kounicova 65, Brno, Czech Republic

can be difficult for ex-servicemen to integrate into the civilian labor market (Kintzle et al., 2016; Keeling, 2018; Cooper et al., 2018; Aronson et al., 2019; Gonzalez & Simpson, 2021).

Although evidence suggests the majority of ex-servicemen eventually find civilian employment, some of them have persistent employment problems years after discharge (Keeling et al., 2019). Moreover, some ex-servicemen who had initial success in securing employment have jobs they are over-qualified for or uninterested in (Alonso et al., 2021) and later struggle to maintain their job (Keeling et al., 2018).

Almost half of post-9/11 veterans report that securing employment is their most significant challenge when transitioning from the military (Stern, 2017). For example, veterans were found to have a 58% higher odds ratio of being unemployed compared to matched civilian peers (Kleykamp, 2013). Research suggests that between 54% (Sayer et al., 2015) and 75% (Castro & Kintzle, 2017) of ex-servicemen report reintegration challenges, with approximately 80% leaving service without a job lined up and approximately two-thirds of veterans reporting not knowing where to go for assistance. This lack of assistance is problematic because ex-servicemen who feel supported during their transition report more successful transitions than those who lack support (Kintzle et al., 2016; Castro & Kintzle., 2017; Keeling et al., 2019).

Finding satisfying employment is a key aspect of successful transition (Ahern et al., 2015; Keeling et al., 2018). To assist with the transition out of the military and into the civilian workforce, transitioning service members must often rely on their networks of personal and professional contacts (Hall, 2017). James (2017) found that 10 out of 10 veterans reported networking as pivotal to securing civilian employment. Besides family (Bennett et al., 2015; Wilson, 2015), former colleagues (James, 2017) and civilians (Delbourg-Delphis, 2014; James, 2017), one of the most important circles of people for transitioning service members are formal resource persons, including professionals trained in helping them transition into civilian professions (Bennett et al., 2015; Alonso et al., 2021). Hence, it becomes the responsibility of the nation to utilize this capable and potential workforce for the betterment of society (Chopade & Gupta, 2020).

Studies have shown that planning and careful preparation for the second career period before the process of integration into the labor market is the only factor that provably facilitates the period of transition from the military to another career. The importance of employment preparedness to the well-being of individuals transitioning from one institution to another (military to civilian) has been noted in past research (Skomorovsky et al., 2020). According to Keeling et al. (2018) or Roy et al. (2020), preparation should not begin post-discharge but much earlier. Preparing for the transition well in advance (approximately 1 year before separation) can significantly reduce the difficulty of the transition (Ahern et al., 2015). Those who had adapted well were those who had carefully planned the transition. Keeling et al. (2019) found that the longer service members had to plan their transition, the easier the transition into the civilian workforce. Veterans from all service branches both employed and unemployed demonstrated that obtaining information about civilian careers before leaving the service eases the transition and lessens the time unemployed after separation (Keeling et al., 2019).

Individual responsibility and activity of the soldiers are essential, but the support of programs and services that help prepare transitioning service members with finding education and employment is necessary (Lee et. al, 2020). Facilitating the reintegration and ensuring a safe environment within which to find satisfying employment for military service members is a societal priority (Elnitsky et al., 2017).

The article aims to present:

- the literature review related to the second career of military professionals in order to appropriately introduce the research issue;
- the results of the content analysis of department-specific documents from foreign countries in order to summarize the approaches to the preparation and training of professional soldiers for a second career in selected NATO member states,
- the main findings from the authors' sociological survey that was carried out in order to find out how soldiers of the Czech Armed Forces approach their own preparation and training for a second career and whether they would be interested in the support tools used in foreign countries.

Following the aim of the survey, three research questions (RQ) were stated:

- RQ 1:** Have the respondents already started preparing for their second career? Do the age of soldiers in active service, their length of a service contract and the remaining period of their service contract until the contracted date of termination plays a significant role in their current state of preparation for a second career?
- RQ 2:** What are the job preferences of respondents in terms of a second career?
- RQ 3:** What are the wishes and expectations of respondents pertaining to preparation for a second career? Are they interested in the support tools used in foreign countries?

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Studies suggest that service members' reintegration into civilian life has the potential to become a challenge for military personnel due to their deeply learned military self-identities (Grimell, 2016a). Years of being immersed in a rigid hierarchy and following orders may decrease one's ability to take initiative and rely on personal autonomy (Zarecky, 2014; Keeling et al., 2018). Leaving behind the structure of military existence, military culture, and comradeship to navigate civilian life in and of itself poses numerous challenges. Despite the fact that the majority of service leavers do not leave with physical injuries or mental health problems, many will have functioning issues that make reintegration difficult (Roy et al., 2020). While military standards, discipline and team spirit were valued by ex-servicemen and were an asset with regards to some employment opportunities, their absence in a civilian working context conversely resulted in some describing reentry into civilian employment straight out of services as a shock, often because of the divergence between the two cultures (Roy et al., 2020). Armed forces are "separate world" where people live a specific lifestyle, dress in a specific way and speak specific language. Military communication is marked by frequent use of acronyms, direct command-oriented exchanges, and nuances in vocabulary and colloquialisms. Mismatch in communication and being misunderstood can lead to feelings of invalidation, disconnection and uselessness (Ahern et al., 2015; Smith & True, 2014).

Barriers to employment include insufficient education or specialized military training that does not necessarily translate to the civilian world (Pease et al., 2016; Gordon et al., 2020). Military professionals master skills that have very little application in the civilian sector, and after approximately 15 years of military service, it is not realistic to expect they could get back to the vocation they had originally trained for (Gaither, 2014).

However, the qualities and habits that they establish during the service are highly positive and often even exceed the requirements of civilian employers. Their unique skill set, a vast amount of training, experiences, impeccable work ethics, and personal characteristics are beneficial to an organization (Minnis, 2017). Hiring an ex-serviceman conditionally presents the opportunity to secure an individual who is loyal, disciplined to mission, comprehends team success, appreciates hierarchy, respects orders and superiors and can make decisions under pressure, which can yield financial benefit to the organization (Stern, 2017; Pollak et al., 2019). However, although ex-servicemen were perceived as having greater leadership and teamwork skills, they were also viewed as having poorer social skills (Yanchus et al., 2018; Stone et al., 2018; Shepherd et al., 2019)

There are additional issues that can affect the employment of ex-servicemen. Research suggests, due to the possible unfamiliarity with military service, civilian employers may struggle to understand the different roles and training of military service, thus making it hard to assess how military experience may be transferrable and military skills translated to a civilian job (Stern, 2017; Roy et al., 2020). Moreover, due to the lack of awareness of military life among civilians and the increasing gap between civilians and the military (Hines et al., 2015; Liebert & Golby, 2017) civilian employers tend to treat ex-servicemen differently due to stereotypes they hold about the military (Shepherd, Kay, & Gray, 2019). They often believe that former soldiers are too regimented and that their strict adherence to autocracy and organizational policies will be ineffective or a poor fit for the organization (Stone & Stone, 2015). Former soldiers who gain employment tend to face discrimination, negative stereotypes, stigma, underemployment, identity strain, exclusion, and a lack of adjustment (Shepherd et al., 2019). For these and other reasons, many veterans struggle with integrating into a workplace as part of their transition into civilian life, which could include failing to find or maintain employment (Ford, 2017).

This speaks to the importance of advanced career planning (Wilson-Smith & Corr, 2019). The military literature has proposed and evaluated interventions and strategies aimed at helping ex-servicemen with regard to specific issues, such as developing desirable job market skills. Some government and private initiatives are helping military personnel in search of jobs and reemployment (Chopade & Gupta, 2020). Some countries have established various systems facilitating ex-servicemen integration into the labor market. These include usually governmental agencies collaborating with the defense ministries and other support organizations. Programs currently available offer employment services such as online job boards, job fairs, resume writing resources, career counseling, coaching, mentoring, training and certification programs, and formal networking opportunities (Aronson et al., 2019).

Ex-servicemen can utilize career counseling and mentoring services with experienced professionals. Career counselors help ex-servicemen translate their military experience into civilian terms so they can more effectively illustrate their relevant expertise on resumes and in interviews with hiring managers (Delbourg-Delphis, 2014). They help them set realistic expectations regarding salaries, learn about their career goals, identify their strengths and weaknesses and provide them with actionable steps to identify and achieve appropriate vocational outcomes (Buzetta et al., 2017). An important factor for a successful transition from military to civilian life often involves the obtainment of educational goals to support the future obtainment of meaningful employment (Ainspan et al., 2018). Some organizations, therefore, attempt to meet the needs of ex-servicemen by providing the necessary training and certification for civilian careers (Owings et al., 2015).

There is some evidence that participation in employment-related programs yields positive results and has its intended effects which can be seen for example in a low rate of unemployment reported by participants (Curry Hall et al., 2014; Kerrick et al., 2016; Kerrick et al., 2014; Perkins et al., 2019). Scholars have suggested that veteran-serving organizations should develop and implement a strategy to determine what types of programs need to be offered. (Batka & Hall, 2016; Perkins et al., 2019). Ex-servicemen should be taken into account, current understanding of transition and transition support services evaluated, and improved (Roy et al., 2020). Ex-servicemen may feel more confident and supported, and less abandoned, if there is visible, strong leadership at the highest levels of government.

The Ministry of Defense of the Czech Republic offers soldiers whose service contract lasted five or more years various retraining courses aimed at preparation for the civilian environment and allowing them to obtain such knowledge and skills that they could apply to the labor market. However, the maximum allowed period the soldiers can spend in the retraining courses, which is 3 months, is not always sufficient for attaining new professional skills. It is very difficult to fully reskill a specially trained professional in a such short period. Moreover, most of the retraining courses focus just on basic knowledge and skills required for the jobs for which the soldiers retrain, and this is insufficient for the actual labor market. Some of the departmental companies offer soldiers exiting active service opportunities for further employment. These most commonly include positions of technicians, aircraft mechanics, or cooks. However, this is a benefit primarily aimed at current war veterans (Binková, 2018).

In the operational program Human Resources and Employment, which had enabled the use of funds from the European Social Fund in human resources during the 2007 – 2013 program period, seven projects focused on employing war veterans. Their drawback, however, was their short-term functioning and the strict focus on war veterans, whereby soldiers without previous participation in military missions could not take part in the activities offered under the projects (Binková & Bednář, 2017).

According to previous research, on average 18 % of former soldiers of the Czech Armed Forces of productive age remained unemployed after they terminated military service for 8 months. This is a high percentage, which is more than three times higher than the average general unemployment rate in the Czech Republic in this period, which was 5.7% (Binková, 2019).

2.1. Examples of Good Practice from Selected NATO Member States

To assist professional soldiers with integrating into labor market, in some countries, various systems are facilitating the soldiers' transition to their second career. Most of them are provided by governmental agencies collaborating with the ministries of defense, as well as by other support organizations providing counselling, training, and mediating contact with the civilian labor market.

A role model in this aspect is France. Since 2009, the French Defense Mobility Agency (Défense Mobilité) has been a part of the workforce policy of the Ministry of Defense supporting external mobility of the military personnel and enhancing the attractiveness of professional soldiers on the labor market, both to public and private organizations. The agency draws from a network of over 700 local military and civilian experts in retraining, with excellent knowledge of the specific needs of both the candidates and employers and cooperates with more than 7,000 public

and private corporations. The agency monitors professional soldiers, provides professional assistance with developing their professional projects, expert training meeting their needs, guides them, and connects with potential employers. Every year, more than 16,000 candidates use the services of the agency. The headquarters of the agency is based in Paris; there are six regional centers, 57 local offices (52 in France and 5 overseas), one retraining institute for officers, one military training center, and one center for unemployment support. The agency provides its services based on the principle of equality, regardless of the military ranking or position in the army (Bilan reconversion, 2014).

Table 1. Comparison of support tools in selected NATO member countries

Support tools	Czech Republic	Poland	France	Great Britain	Germany
Advisory		x	x	x	x
Seminars		x	x	x	x
Vocational education: training, reskilling, study	x	x	x	x	x
Assistance with job seeking		x	x	x	x
Supported job opportunities		x	x	x	x
Professional experience		x	x	x	x
Job fairs		x	x	x	x
Help with starting a business		x	x	x	x
Special job portal			x	x	x
Financial compensation, coverage of activities related to preparation for second career	x	x	x	x	x

Source: Own research

Great Britain has a similar approach. The Career Transition Partnership (CTP) project runs in collaboration between the Ministry of Defense and Right Management Ltd. Corporation, which provides full service to exiting soldiers for four years – two years before the end of their service contract and two years afterward. The aim is to provide full assistance to help the soldiers integrate into the labor market and to prepare them for future career growth. Throughout its existence, the agency has helped more than 200,000 soldiers. The agency runs one training center and nine contact centers that cooperate with employers interested in employing soldiers exiting the army. Support is provided to all soldiers, regardless of their ranking and length of their contract period, but the level of support differs upon the meeting of a set of predefined criterions. During the project, the soldiers can choose from a range of retraining courses, career advisories, or services of a special job portal (The Career Transition Partnership, 2018).

Germany is yet another example of good practice. Law governs the preparation of soldiers for a second career and it pertains to soldiers in active service as well as to soldiers whose service contract had already terminated. Berufsförderungsdienst der Bundeswehr, i.e. the agency responsible for preparing the soldiers for the second career, employs approximately one thousand civilians in 46 branches across all the military districts. The services of this institution ensured a planned and systematic preparation for the change of the soldiers' working environment, which begins with basic training and runs throughout the entire duration of one's service contract as well as after its termination. An important role in the expert preparation of professional soldiers for the needs of the labor market is played also by the Bundeswehrfachschule, which is a so-called "second chance" vocational institute established specifically for professional soldiers and training them for their second career (Jonsson, 2014).

In Poland, there are one central and seven regional offices of The Professional Activation Center (Ośrodek Aktywizacji Zawodowej), which systematically prepares soldiers for a second career. The center provides information and training services, career advisory, help with finding employment and support during starting up a business; it offers internships and reskilling courses, job fairs, and other opportunities (Rekonwersja kadry i byłych żołnierzy, 2017).

A comparative analysis of the provided tools to support the integration of soldiers into the labor market in individual countries was performed – see Table 1.

3. METHODOLOGY

To find out how the soldiers of the Czech Armed Forces approach their preparation and training for a second career, the authors of this paper performed a questionnaire survey utilizing the Google Forms application. After data acquisition, the answers were coded and entered into a data matrix in Microsoft Excel. IBM SPSS Statistics 25 software was used to verify the truthness of the statistical hypotheses.

The respondents in the total number of 460 (which is approximately 2% of the total number of members of the army) comprised two groups:

- students of military studies at the University of Defence – UD students (176 respondents, of which 141 men and 35 women). The age of respondents from the group of UD students varied from 19 up to 26 years and by military ranking, they included all the ranks from private first class up to staff sergeant.
- professional soldiers of the Czech Armed Forces in active service (284 respondents from 43 divisions of the armed forces, of which 260 men and 24 women). The age of respondents from the group of professional soldiers varied from 20 up to 51 years and by military ranking, they included all the ranks from private first class up to colonel. By achieving degree of education among professional soldiers, there were soldiers with a high school education (63 %) and a university degree (37 %). Besides the basic sociodemographic variables, the survey covered also the length of service employment and the period until the soldiers' expected exit from service employment. The length of service was as follows: up to five years of service (2.4 %) 6 – 10 years (7.3 %), 11 – 15 years (11.8 %), 16 – 20 years (17.4 %), and 21 years and more (27.9 %). The average remaining period of service was 3 years, with the shortest period of nine months and the longest of 10 years.

This research sample comprised both military professionals and military students, especially with regard to the priority measures of The Czech Armed Forces Development Concept 2030. It aims at increasing the attractiveness of military service, the motivation and the fulfillment of social needs of the personnel in all categories, declaring the University of Defence will be a high priority (Ministry of Defense & Armed Forces of the Czech Republic, 2021). The studied sample was not homogeneous in terms of sex, but this composition corresponds with the proportion of men and women in the studied reference population. Due to the very low percentage of women in the studied group, the factor of sex was not considered a discriminatory sign.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RQ 1: Have the respondents already started preparing for their second career? Do the age of soldiers in active service, their length of the service contract and the remaining period of their service contract until the contracted date of termination plays a significant role in their current state of preparation for a second career?

Only 19 % of the respondents (23 % of professional soldiers in active service and 12 % of UD students) have already started their own preparation for a second career. More than four-fifths of the total number of respondents are not preparing for their second career yet. This finding is in line with the previous study by Keeling et al., (2018).

Table 2. Relation between the current state of preparation for a second career and age, duration of service employment and the remaining period of service contract until the contracted date of termination – significance threshold 0.05

Statistical hypothesis 1: Among soldiers in active service, there is no statistically significant correlation between the current state of preparation for second career and their age.

Preparation for second career	N	Average age	Levene's test for homogeneity of variance		t-test		
			F	p-value	t	p-value (bilateral)	Difference between averages
Yes	65	33.26	F	p-value	t	p-value (bilateral)	Difference between averages
No	219	33.96	0.252	0.616	-0.635	0.526	-0.702

Statistical hypothesis was not rejected.

Statistical hypothesis 2: Among soldiers in active service, there is no statistically significant correlation between the current state of their preparation for the second career and the length of their service contract.

Preparation for second career	N	Average length of service contract in years	Levene's test for homogeneity of variance		t-test		
			F	p-value	t	p-value (bilateral)	Difference between averages
Yes	65	9.65	F	p-value	t	p-value (bilateral)	Difference between averages
No	219	11.3639	2.468	0.117	-1.418	0.157	-1.714

Statistical hypothesis was not rejected.

Statistical hypothesis 3: Among soldiers in active service, there is no statistically significant correlation between the current state of preparation for second career and the remaining period of service employment until the contracted date of expiry.

Preparation for second career	N	Average remaining period of service in years	Levene's test for homogeneity of variance		t-test		
			F	p-value	t	p-value (bilateral)	Difference between averages
Yes	65	2,74	F	p-value	t	p-value (bilateral)	Difference between averages
No	219	3.1482	3.276	0.071	-1.963	0.051	-0.40817

Statistical hypothesis was not rejected.

Source: Own research

Many authors examine the role of various factors affecting the course of preparation for a second career and the success of a soldier's integration into the civilian sector. E.g. age, sex, health status, length of a service contract, number of deployments, the remaining period of a service contract until the contracted date of termination or support of the family (Brunson, 1996; Vigo-da-Gadot et al., 2010; Morin, 2011; Robertson, 2013; Hachey et al., 2016). Therefore, the group of soldiers in active service was further studied in terms of the relation between the current state

of preparation for a second career and age, duration of service employment and the remaining period of their service contract until the contracted date of termination. To verify the individual statistical hypotheses, a two-sided (non-paired) Student t-test was used. With the presumption of homoscedasticity of variance, a test of the mean values agreement hypotheses was performed. Table 2 presents the results of the tests.

Statistical hypotheses were not rejected. Among soldiers in active service, there is no statistically significant correlation between their current state of preparation for a second career and their age, the duration of their service employment and the remaining period of their service contract until the contracted date of termination.

RQ 2: What are the job preferences of respondents in terms of a second career?

Struggling with civilian work culture points to the need for job roles in organizations that share a similar ethos of structure, discipline, and teamwork (Roy et al., 2020). The largest group of respondents – 39 % (45 % of soldiers in active service and 29 % of UD students) wish to find a job opportunity in the public sector after terminating their service contract. Forty-nine percent of all respondents (58 % of UD students, and 43 % of professional soldiers in active service) want to be employed in the security forces (Police and Fire Rescue Service of the Czech Republic). This result is consistent with studies that show veterans pursue careers in the public sector and protective services jobs (Schulker, 2017). In the second position the preference of the target groups, differ. Whereas the students wish to start their own businesses, soldiers in active service prefer to work in the private sector.

RQ 3: What are the wishes and expectations of respondents pertaining to preparation for a second career? Are they interested in the support tools used in foreign countries?

Twenty-four percent of the respondents believe that preparation for a second career needs to start about 4 to 6 months before the end of their service employment. Twenty-three percent of the respondents state one year to 1.5 years before the end of their service employment, and 22 % of the respondents state 7 months to 1 year to the end of their service employment. Fourteen percent of the respondents state the need for continuous preparation throughout the entire military career; other responses showed a low percentage. This finding confirms previous studies emphasizing the importance of early preparation for a second career, starting well in advance before the separation from the army (Ahern et al., 2015; Keeling et al., 2018; Keeling et al., 2019; Wilson-Smith & Corr, 2019; Skomorovsky et al., 2020; Roy et al., 2020).

If an ex-serviceman is able to manage the idea of an occupational transition from military to college and is willing to engage in specific occupational engagement tasks, he or she will also be ready to accomplish the tasks needed to achieve career-planning activities (Ghosh & Fouad, 2015). The vast majority of respondents (90 %) wish to extend their knowledge and skills during their service employment in order to find better opportunities in the labor market. 47 % of all respondents prefer retraining courses, and 29 % prefer university studies. Among the most frequently stated fields in which the respondents wish to improve, are foreign languages, IT and computer skills, management and leadership, electrical engineering, and training for driving licenses.

Seventy-two percent of respondents would welcome, during their service employment, an individual approach focused on training for further career opportunities. They could also rate three

specific forms of such individual assistance on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = the least useful, 5 = the most useful). According to the arithmetic average of achieved point rating respondents highlighted coaching as the most useful activity (4), while the help of a psychologist achieved the lowest score (2.4) and career counselling was rated 3.7. A job coach can help ex-servicemen learn and develop additional skills necessary to succeed in their civilian roles. Specific approaches to coaching can be used, for example, Zarecky's model (2014), focusing on soldiers' strengths.

Fifty-six percent of the respondents are interested in organizing group workshops focusing on preparation for a further career during their service employment. The topic of the highest interest is the principles of preparation and behavior at a job interview and self-presentation techniques. Research shows the usefulness of workshops of this kind. For example, a pre-and post-test comparison of results of 1315 young veterans who participated in a 5-day workshop aimed at facilitating their transition to civilian life showed that participation in the workshop reduced the participants' career decision-making difficulties and increased their career decision self-efficacy (Gati, Ryzhik, Vertsberger, 2013).

After leaving the service, those in transition may join one or more possible career pathways - employment, further education, or business start-up (Gray et al., 2017). Therefore, if the soldiers, before the expiry of their service employment, had an opportunity of consultations aimed at support during the start-up of their business as one of the possible directions of their second career, 62 % of the respondents would like to use it.

Both target groups expressed great interest in job fairs - 83 % of the respondents. As previous studies suggest, job fairs are networking-specific events that are available to assist ex-servicemen in exploring career options and obtaining employment. Beyond giving participants direct personal interaction with potential employers, job fairs may help participants determine if a specific employment opportunity is a good fit for them (James, 2017; Stonebraker et al., 2019).

Special websites, job portals, or social media sites, such as LinkedIn and Facebook, are often used by ex-servicemen to identify job leads (Weinburger et al., 2015; Hall, 2017).

Services of a job portal for professional soldiers, which would allow them to contact potential employers, would be used by 82 % of the respondents. Regular publication of job offers from employers was found as the most beneficial feature of this portal.

Respondents were also asked whether they would be interested in going on an unpaid expert internship of 3 – 6 months with a civilian employer during their service employment; during this time, they would continue receiving their service salary. Seventy-four percent of the respondents are interested in increasing their chances of employment through an expert internship in a civilian organization. The respondents also stated whether they would wish other organizations from the civilian sector (not just those under the Ministry of Defense) to offer job opportunities for ex-professional soldiers. Seventy percent of the respondents expressed their wish that organizations from the public sector offer job opportunities for ex-soldiers. The respondents were then asked to state which institutions should be involved in such activity; the results suggest respondents would be predominantly interested in security units of the state, units of the integrated rescue system, public authorities and state authorities, municipal, local, and regional authorities, healthcare institutions and educational institutions.

5. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The current results may form a basis for further research on the larger sample, as this issue will be constantly addressed by all the countries across NATO.

6. CONCLUSION

More than four-fifths of the respondents from the target group of University of Defence (UD) students and soldiers in active service have not started any preparation for their second career yet. Among soldiers in active service, the current approach to preparation for the second career does not depend on age, length of their service contract, or the remaining period of their service contract until the contracted date of termination. Almost one-quarter of the respondents think that the preparation for a second career should start 4 to 6 months before the termination of the service employment. Approximately the same percentage thought that year to 1.5 years, or 7 months to 1 year before the termination of the contract period were sufficient. The option of 1 to 3 months, which meets the current condition of attending retraining courses in the maximum length of 3 months, was stated by only 8 % of the respondents. Broadening their knowledge and skills for a better opportunity in the labor market is the wish of 90 % of respondents. Almost half of the respondents from both the target groups prefer attending retraining courses and obtaining certificates or diplomas, while nearly one-third prefer a study at a university and obtaining a degree in a civilian field.

Nearly four-quarters of respondents would be interested in an individual approach focused on preparation for further career development, most often in the form of coaching. Almost two-thirds of the respondents expressed their interest in attending group seminars focused on the preparation for their further careers. All of them express the greatest interest in learning about the principles of behavior at a job interview and self-presentation techniques. Two-thirds of respondents are interested also in consultations focusing on assistance with starting up their own business as a potential direction of their second career. More than four-fifths of the respondents wish to attend job fairs organized specifically for professional soldiers, as well as to have a specialized job portal, the most useful function of which would be the direct publishing of job offers from employers. Three-quarters of respondents would be interested in a 3 – 6 months unpaid internship in a civilian company, and almost three-quarters of the respondents wish that organizations from the public sector communicated job offers targeted specifically at ex-servicemen. Examples of such organizations included most commonly the security units of the state, integrated rescue system units, public authorities and municipalities, healthcare and educational institutions, and security agencies.

The focus on the Czech labor market, the situation of the professional soldiers' second career, and the relatively low number of respondents limit the general conclusions. However, the current results are of high interest to the Ministry of Defense of the Czech Republic because based on the performed analysis retraining is insufficient and a systematic approach is not being applied in the Czech Republic at this time. One of the objectives of The Czech Armed Forces Development Concept 2030 is to cooperate with the civilian sector and improve the offer of retraining in order for a better reintegration of the outgoing personnel into civilian life. It is therefore necessary to examine the attitudes of all categories of soldiers to ensure that this goal will be met in the future.

The results should be of interest also to HR specialists who are responsible for managing the workforce in various civilian organizations and may use the workforce of military professionals exiting their active service in the army.

REFERENCES

- Ahern, J., Worthen, M., Masters, J., Lippman, S. A., Ozer, E. J., & Moos, R. (2015). The challenges of Afghanistan and Iraq veterans' transition from military to civilian life and approaches to reconnection. *PloS One*, 10(7), 1–13. DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0128599
- Ainspan, N. D., Penk, W., & Kearney, L. K. (2018). Psychosocial approaches to improving the military-to-civilian transition process. *Psychological services*, 15(2), 129. DOI: 10.1037/ser0000259
- Alonso, N. A., Porter, C. M., & Cullen-Lester, K. (2021). Building effective networks for the transition from the military to the civilian workforce: Who, what, when, and how. *Military Psychology*, 33(3), 152-168. DOI: 10.1080/08995605.2021.1897489
- Aronson, K. R., Perkins, D. F., Morgan, N., Bleser, J., Davenport, K., Vogt, D., & Gilman, C. L. (2019). Going it alone: Post-9/11 veteran nonuse of healthcare and social service programs during their early transition to civilian life. *Journal of Social Service Research*. DOI: 10.1080/01488376.2018.1493410
- Batka, C., & Hall, K. C. (2016). What's Good for Business and for Veterans. Perspective.
- D., Wellman, G., Mahmood, M., Freye, R., Remund, D., & Samples, P. (2015). Survey of retired military pharmacist's transition to a civilian pharmacy career path. *Military Medicine*, 180(12), 1219–1224. DOI:10.7205/MILMED-D-14-00531
- Bilan reconversion 2014. (2015). Paris: Défense Mobilité.
- Binková, K. (2019). Applicability of Former Soldiers at the Labour Market. *Czech Military Review*, 28(2), 82-98. DOI: 10.3849/2336-2995.28.2019.02.082-098
- Binková K. (2018). Retraining of Soldiers. *Czech Military Review*. 27 (4), 105-119. DOI: 10.3849/2336-2995.27.2018.04.105-119
- Binková K. & Bednář Z. (2017). Outplacement in the Defence Sector Environment. *Czech Military Review*, 26(1), 22-39. DOI: 10.3849/2336-2995.26.2017.01.022-039
- Brunson, B. H. (1996). Life satisfaction and retirement: Military mid-life career change. (Doctoral dissertation, Texas Tech University, 1996). Dissertation Abstracts International, 57(7-A).
- Buzzetta, M., Hayden, S. C. W., & Ledwith, K. (2017). Creating hope: Assisting veterans with job search strategies using cognitive information processing theory. *Journal of Employment Counseling*, 54(2), 63–74. DOI: 10.1002/joec.12054
- Career Transition Partnership. (2018). GOV.UK United Kingdom: Ministry of Defence. Retrieved February 10, 2021, from <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/career-transition-partnership>
- Castro C. A. & Kintzle S. (2017). The state of the American veteran: The San Francisco Veterans Study. USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work, Center for Innovation and Research on Veterans & Military Families. Retrieved April 14, 2021 from [http:// joining-forces.issuelab.org/resources/30042/30042.pdf](http://joining-forces.issuelab.org/resources/30042/30042.pdf).
- Cooper, L., Caddick, N., Godier, L., Cooper, A., & Fossey, M. (2018). Transition from military into civilian life: An exploration of cultural competence. *Armed Forces & Society*, 44(1), 156-177. DOI: 10.1177/0095327X16675965
- Curry Hall, K., Harrell, M. C., Bicksler, B., Stewart, R., & Fisher, M. P. (2014). *Connecting veterans and employers*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. DOI: 10.7249/RB9829
- Delbourg-Delphis, M. (2014). A relational approach to hiring veterans. *Employment Relations Today*, 41(1), 11–17. DOI: 10.1002/ert.21438
- Elnitsky, C. A., Blevins, C. L., Fisher, M. P., and Magruder, K. (2017). Military service member and veteran reintegration: a critical review and adapted ecological model. *Am. J. Orthopsychiatry*, 87, 114–128. DOI: 10.1037/ort0000244

- Elrond, A., Stoltenberg, C., Nissen, L., Nielsen, A., & Pedersen, J. (2019). Labor market affiliation after deployment: Danish soldiers fare well, but face increased risk of long-term sickness absence when returning from Afghanistan. *Scandinavian journal of work, environment & health*, 45(3), 289-297. DOI: 10.5271/sjweh.3773
- Ford, D. G. (2017). Talent management and its relationship to successful veteran transition into the civilian workplace: Practical integration strategies for the HRD professional. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 19, 36–53. DOI: 10.1177/1523422316682736
- Gaither, D. (2014). Military transition management. *Career Planning and Adult Development Journal*, 30(3), 215.
- Gati, I., Ryzhik, T., & Vertsberger, D. (2013). Preparing young veterans for civilian life: The effects of a workshop on career decision-making difficulties and self-efficacy. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 83(3), 373-385. DOI: 10.1016/j.jvb.2013.06.001
- Geraci, J., Murray, C., Kapil-Pair, K.N., Herrera, S., Sokol, Y., Cary, J., Landa, Y., Goodman, M., 2020. The modern-day Odysseus: how mental health providers can better reintegrate modern warriors and mitigate suicide risk. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*. 76 (5), 878–895. DOI: 10.1002/jclp.22923.
- Ghosh, A., & Fouad, N. A. (2016). Career transitions of student veterans. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 24(1), 99-111. DOI: 10.1177/1069072714568752
- Gonzalez, J. A., & Simpson, J. (2021). The workplace integration of veterans: Applying diversity and fit perspectives. *Human Resource Management Review*, 31(2), DOI: 10.1016/j.hrmr.2020.100775
- Gordon, K., Burnell, K., & Wilson, C. (2020). Outside the military “bubble”: Life after service for UK ex-armed forces personnel. *Frontiers in public health*, 8. DOI: 10.3389/fpubh.2020.00050
- Gray, A., Wilson, R., Jenkins, K. N., Harrison, D., & Martin, M. (2017). Information-sharing in services for military personnel in transition to civilian life. *Public Money & Management*, 37(1), 15-22. DOI: 10.1080/09540962.2016.1249226
- Grimell, J. (2016a). The story of the self in the aftermath of crisis: A case study. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 29(1), 66–79. DOI: 10.1080/10720537.2015.1079509
- Hachey, K. K., Sudom, K., Sweet, J., MacLean, M. B., & VanTil, L. D. (2016). Transitioning from military to civilian life: The role of mastery and social support. *Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health*, 2(1), 9-18. DOI: 10.3138/jmvfh.3379
- Hall, A. F., Jr. (2017). *Veterans stories: A narrative inquiry research study examination of veterans navigating second careers* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (Order No. 10258880).
- Hamilton, A. B., Williams, L., & Washington, D. L. (2015). Military and mental health correlates of unemployment in a national sample of women veterans. *Medical Care*, 53, S32–S38. DOI: 10.1097/mlr.0000000000000297
- Hines, L. A., Gribble, R., Wessley, S., Dandeker, C., & Fear, N. T. (2015). Are the armed forces understood and supported by the public? A view from the United Kingdom. *Armed Forces & Society*, 41(4), 688-713. DOI: 10.1177/0095327X14559975
- Chopade, M. P., & Gupta, K. S. (2020). A Soldier’s Preparation for Second Innings—A Review. *International Journal of Environmental Science and Technology* 29(12s):2480-2485
- James, A. (2017). *A phenomenological study: Female veteran commissioned officers’ successful transition to the civilian workforce* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (Order No. 10267210)
- Jonsson, M. (2014). *What do you know? Easing Soldiers’ transition to the civilian labour market by making knowledge understandable*. Sweden, University of Gothenburg.

- Keeling, M. (2018). Stories of transition: US veterans' narratives of transition to civilian life and the important role of identity. *Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health*, 4(2), 28–36. DOI: 10.3138/jmvfh.2017- 0009
- Keeling, M., Ozuna, S. M., & Millsap, C. (2018). Employment after the military. In E. L. Weiss & C. A. Castro (Eds.), *American military life in the 21st century: Social, cultural, and economic issues and trends* (pp. 497–509). Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, LLC.
- Keeling, M., Ozuna, S. M., Kintzle, S., & Castro, C. A. (2019). Veterans' civilian employment experiences: Lessons learnt from focus groups. *Journal of Career Development*, 46(6), 692–705. DOI: 10.1177/0894845318776785
- Keeling, M., Kintzle, S., & Castro, C. A. (2018). Exploring US veterans' post-service employment experiences. *Military Psychology*, 30(1), 63-69. DOI: 10.1080/08995605.2017.1420976
- Kintzle, S., Rasheed, J. M., & Castro, C. A. (2016). *The state of the American veteran: The Chicagoland veterans study*. Los Angeles, USA: University of Southern California
- Kleykamp, M. (2013). Unemployment, earnings and enrollment among post 9/11 veterans. *Social Science Research*, 42(3), 836–851. DOI: 10.1016/j.ssresearch.2012.12.017
- Lee, J. E., Dursun, S., Skomorovsky, A., & Thompson, J. M. (2020). Correlates of perceived military to civilian transition challenges among Canadian Armed Forces Veterans. *Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health*, 6(2), 26-39. DOI: 10.3138/jmvfh-2019-0025
- H. & Golby, J. (2017). Midlife crisis? The all-volunteer force at 40. *Armed Forces & Society*, 43(1), 115-138. DOI: 10.1177/0095327X16641430
- Ministry of Defence & Armed Forces of the Czech Republic (2021). The Czech Armed Forces Development Concept 2030. Retrieved August 12, 2021 from https://www.army.cz/images/id_8001_9000/8503/CAFDC.PDF
- Minnis, S. E. (2017). Preface: Veterans in career transition and employment. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 19(1), 3–5. DOI: 10.1177/1523422316682951
- Morin, R. (2011). *The difficult transition from military to civilian life*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.
- Owings, W. A., Kaplan, L. S., Khrabrova, I., & Chappell, S. (2015). Troops to teachers update: Changing, but still pleasing principals with high teaching quality. *NASSP Bulletin*, 99(1), 70–98. DOI: 10.1177/0192636515571933
- Pease, J. L., Billera, M., & Gerard, G. (2016). Military culture and the transition to civilian life: Suicide risk and other considerations. *Social Work*, 61(1), 83–86. DOI: 10.1093/sw/swv050
- Perkins, D. F., Aronson, K. R., Morgan, N. R., Bleser, J. A., Vogt, D., Copeland, L. A., Gilman, C., et al. (2019). Veterans' use of programs and services as they transition to civilian life: Baseline assessment for the Veteran Metrics Initiative. *Journal of Social Service Research* (pp. 1–15). DOI: 10.1080/01488376.2018.1546259
- Pollak, M., Arshanapalli, B., & Hobson, C. (2019). The business case for hiring military veterans/reservists: Stock price performance of military friendly firms. *Journal of Veterans Studies*, 4(2), 52. DOI: 10.21061/jvs.v4i2.99
- Rekonwersja kadry i byłych żołnierzy. (2017). Wojskowa Komenda Uzupełnień w Radomiu. Retrieved February 13, 2021 from <http://radom.wku.wp.mil.pl/pl/6786.html>
- Robertson, H. C. (2013). Income and support during transition from a military to civilian career. *Journal of Employment Counseling*, 50, 26-33.
- Roy, D., Ross, J., & Armour, C. (2020). Making the transition: How finding a good job is a risky business for military Veterans in Northern Ireland. *Military Psychology*, 32(5), 428-441. DOI: 10.1080/08995605.2020.1785805
- Sayer, N. A., Orazem, R. J., Noorbaloochi, S., Gravely, A., Frazier, P., Carlson, K. F. & Oleson, H. (2015). Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans with reintegration problems: differences by

- veterans affairs healthcare user status. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 42(4), 493-503. DOI: 10.1007/s10488-014-0564-2.
- Shepherd, S., Kay, A. C., & Gray, K. (2019). Military veterans are morally typecast as agentic but unfeeling: Implications for veteran employment. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 153, 75–88. DOI: 10.1016/j.obhdp.2019.06.003
- Schulker, D. (2017). The recent occupation and industry employment patterns of American veterans. *Armed Forces & Society*, 43(4), 695-710. DOI: 10.1177/0095327X16659875
- Skomorovsky, A., McCuaig Edge, H. J., Lee, J. E., Wan, C., & Dursun, S. (2020). Military to civilian transition challenges, caregiving activities, and well-being among spouses of newly released Canadian Armed Forces Veterans. *Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health*, 6(1), 15-27. DOI: 10.3138/jmvfh-2019-0026
- Smith, R. T., & True, G. (2014). Warring identities: Identity conflict and the mental distress of American veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. *Society and Mental Health*, 4, 147–161. DOI: 10.1177/2156869313512212
- Stern, L. (2017). Post 9/11 veterans with service-connected disabilities and their transition to the civilian workforce: A review of the literature. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 19, 66–77. DOI: 1177/1523422316682928
- Stone, C., & Stone, D. L. (2015). Factors affecting hiring decisions about veterans. *Human Resource Management Review*, 25(1), 68-79. DOI: 10.1016/j.hrmr.2014.06.003
- Stone, C. B., Lengnick-Hall, M., & Muldoon, J. (2018). Do stereotypes of veterans affect chances of employment? *The Psychologist-Manager Journal*, 21, 1–33. DOI: 10.1037/mgr0000068
- Stonebraker, I., Maybee, C., & Chapman, J. (2019). Undergraduate students' experiences of using information at the career fair: A phenomenographic study conducted by the libraries and career center. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 45(4), 358–367. DOI: 10.1016/j.acalib.2019.05.002
- Vigoda-Gadot, E., Baruch, Y., & Grimland, S. (2010). Career transitions: An empirical examination of second career of military retirees. *Public Personnel Management*, 39(4), 379-404.
- Weinburger, C. M., Strider, S. H., & Vengrouskie, E. F. (2015). Social media job searches and the strength of veteran ties. *Human Resource Management Research*, 5(6), 133–153. DOI: 10.5923/j.hrmr.20150506.01
- Wilson, P. A. (2015). *The experience of enlisted female veterans transitioning from the military to the civilian workforce* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (Order No. 3687617).
- Wilson-Smith, K. M., & Corr, P. J. (2019). *Help with finding a civilian job. In Military Identity and the Transition into Civilian Life* (pp. 79–98). Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Pivot; Cham: SpringerNature.
- Yanchus, N. J., Osatuke, K., Carameli, K. A., Barnes, T., & Ramsel, D. (2018). Assessing workplace perceptions of military veteran compared to nonveteran employees. *Journal of Veterans Studies*, 3(1), 37-50. DOI: 10.21061/jvs.3
- Zarecky, A. (2014). How strengths-focused coaching can help military personnel in their transition to 'civvy street'. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, Spec Issue 8, 54–66.
- Zoli, C., Maury, R., & Fay, D. (2015). *Missing perspectives: Servicemembers' transition from service to civilian life — data-driven research to enact the promise of the post-9/11 GI bill*. Syracuse, NY: Institute for Veterans & Military Families, Syracuse University.

