

PREPARATION OF SOLDIERS FOR A SECOND CAREER: EVALUATION OF APPROACH OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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Abstract: Current employee career concepts are characterized by an unstructured process and variability, not only in the case of job positions or employers but in some cases also professions in which individuals are forced by the job nature to leave careers early. A typical example is a military profession, which is not lifelong. In most cases, soldiers leaving the army do not reach the statutory retirement age and seek to integrate into the labor market by starting a second career in a new, civilian job. However, the actual situation of adaptation to civilian conditions is often difficult. Therefore, there is a need for the involvement of ministry of defence and embedding supportive procedures in the relevant legislation and strategy documents to ensure a system approach for soldiers whose contract was not prolonged. The aim of the article is to evaluate current approaches to helping soldiers of the Czech Armed Forces in their career transition. In order to meet the goal, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 experts from the Ministry of Defense of the Czech Republic and other institutions dealing with the help to former soldiers and qualitative questionnaire was carried out with 313 former soldiers of the Czech Armed Forces. The obtained data were further processed and analyzed using the SWOT method. The possible implementation measures based on the implementation of the strategy, obtained at the output of the SWOT analysis, were suggested.

Keywords: soldiers, second career, SWOT analysis, Ministry of Defence, Czech Republic.

1 Introduction

The individuals' careers are not predictable and straightforward, but rather periodic, consisting of so-called career cycles. The lifelong career model is now over in most developed countries. At present, it is typical that many individuals' careers consist of multiple positions and are characterized by frequent changes and high mobility. This is characterized by shifts in which individuals do not only move to higher or lower positions but change their jobs, employers or move to other professional areas in which they start their second career.

The term second career can be defined as the next stage of career or employment in a new profession as a result of the voluntary or necessary termination of a previous career. Work security becomes not only a matter of whether people are employed but above all, whether they are employable. Therefore, in addition to the efforts of each individual, the organization's support plays a key role in successful managing the transition to a second career. Career management in organizations does not apply only to current employees, but also to employees leaving the organization, needing help to find a new career path [1], [2]. Therefore, there have been changes in the area of career management in workplace over the past decades. In the context of staff reduction, these are specifically outplacement services that serve to place employees outside the organization. It is the organization that can help its outgoing employees to provide decent conditions for the transition to a new job and thus prevent unwanted phenomena associated with the loss of employment.

During provision of outplacement services, it is important to be aware of the frequent characteristics of workers who performed their profession for several years but who are no longer able to do so. These include more difficult adaptation to change, ignorance of the labor market and job opportunities, lack of self-confidence and lack of ability to present their qualities. Adapting to the conditions of a dynamic civilian labor market is even more difficult for professional soldiers who are leaving the strict and hierarchical military environment after a few years.

A professional soldier is a citizen who performs active military service as a job. The service relationship of a professional soldier

shall expire upon the period for which it was agreed, or for other reasons stipulated by law. In most cases, soldiers leaving the army do not reach the statutory retirement age. They belong to a relatively young population, most often around the age of 40, who are at the end of a military career but with the potential to work for the next 15-30 years. As soldiers still want to maintain a certain standard of living after their service ceases, they try to integrate into the labor market and achieve a second career in a new, civilian job [3]. However, experience shows that after leaving the army, they have difficulty integrating into the civilian labor market, and it can take them disproportionately long time to find a new job [4].

2 Theoretical background

The authors who focus on the consequences of complications in the transition of professional soldiers to the civilian sector point to the following negative, socio-pathological phenomena: family disruption and higher divorce rates [5], higher suicide risk [4], homelessness [7], occurrence of depression [8] and substance abuse [9].

Although soldiers usually know the date of termination of their service [10], most of them do not prepare for this period or focus on not very beneficial educational activities [11]. However, many authors attach special importance to the preparation for their second career. According to a study of E. Vigoda-Gadota, Y. Baruch and S. Grimland [12], starting training for a second career before starting the process of integrating a professional soldier into the labor market is crucial. Preparing for a second career will enable soldiers to understand the reality of a second career better, streamline their expectations from civilian employers, and overcome difficulties in adapting to new jobs. According to P. E. Spiegel and K. S. Schultz [13], effective second career planning is a key factor in successfully managing a new job and should be given particular attention. R. L. Fuller and D. L. Redfering [14] mention that planning, during active service, greatly influences the process of adapting to labor market requirements. Those who adapted well were those who planned the transition well. According to J. S. McNeil, P. J. Lecca and R. Wright [15], it is important to start planning at least a year before leaving the service. Studies show that planning and consistent preparation for the second career period is the only factor that has proven to facilitate a period of a career change. The individual responsibility and activity of soldiers are essential, but the assistance of the state and individual organizations is necessary and increasingly important nowadays [10].

Within developed democratic countries, we would find different approaches to the outplacement of professional soldiers. Somewhere this issue is not addressed at all, but it is most likely based on a different soldier's career e.g. Austria, where Non-Commissioned Officers sign a 5-10-year contract. However, if they want to remain in the armed forces, and if they are legally competent, they can become Warrant, Junior or Senior Officers, and start their military career as a lifelong career, that is, up to retirement age of 65. Most soldiers do so, and only a very small number of them leave the army sooner (less than 100 a year). For this reason, Austria does not need to develop special programs for the transition of military personnel to civilian employment after leaving the army. To a certain extent, Hungary is a similar case. Soldiers are called into service for a minimum of 3 years, which can be extended to a maximum of 20 years. However, soldiers of the rank of Staff Sergeant and higher, who are planning a long military career and who meet the qualification requirements and prerequisites, may apply for the status of a professional soldier. They can then serve for an indefinite period, but up to the age of 60, which is the upper age limit for the Hungarian Armed Forces. The average annual retirement from the military is approximately 800 professional soldiers.

Sophisticated model could be found, for example, in France. As France wants to keep the armed forces young (average age of soldiers is 32 years), and the average annual number of terminated military contracts climbs up to 20 000, it pays considerable attention to preparing its professional soldiers for a second career. Since 2009, the Defense Mobility Agency, known as *Défense Mobilité*, has been part of the Ministry of Defense's personnel policy. It supports the external mobility of military personnel and strengthens the attractiveness of the military profession in the labor market, both for public and private companies. The agency relies on a network of more than 700 members of local military and civilian retraining specialists, with excellent knowledge of the specific soldiers' needs and cooperates with more than 7 000 public and private companies. The agency monitors professional soldiers, provides them with professional assistance in the development of their personal, professional projects, helps them to find training appropriate to their needs, accompanies them, and connects with employers. More than 16 000 candidates make use of the agency's services each year. The agency has its headquarters in Paris, 6 regional centers, 57 local offices (52 in France and 5 overseas), 1 retraining center for officers, 1 military training center and 1 unemployment center. The agency provides its services on the principle of equality, regardless of rank or function in the military.

A similar approach can be followed in the United Kingdom, where the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) project is created in collaboration with the Ministry of Defense of the United Kingdom and Right Management Ltd. company. It provides services to outgoing soldiers two years before and two years after their release to find further employment opportunities and prepare them for professional growth. It has helped more than 200 000 soldiers coming from all kinds of troops. Within the United Kingdom, the company uses 9 contact centers, and 1 is in Germany. The company also actively works with employers interested in former soldiers as potential employees and connects them together. More than 14 000 soldiers are released from the armed forces every year in the United Kingdom. Assistance is provided to everyone, regardless of the rank or length of service, but the assistance level varies according to individual criteria. Initial contact takes place through registration on the project web portal.

Another good example is Germany, where around 10 000 - 15 000 soldiers terminate their military contract every year. A special educational institution, known as the *Bundeswehrfachschule*, and career agency, known as the *Berufsförderungsdienst*, play an important role in preparing a soldier for civilian work. The agency employs approximately 1 000 civilian specialists at 46 offices across all military districts. It provides planned and systematic preparation for a job change, starting from basic military training and lasting throughout and after military service [16].

Poland, where around 5 000 soldiers are released from the armed forces every year, also takes care of soldiers and their second career. The core of the integration of soldiers into the labor market is a system based on the cooperation of specialized institutions, so called Professional Activation Centers, known as *Ośrodki Aktywizacji Zawodowej*, located in eight cities: Warsaw, where the headquarter is located (14 employees), Bydgoszcz, Gdynia, Krakow, Lublin, Olsztyn, Szczecin and Wrocław (5 employees each). In 2007, the Ministry of Defence of Poland took action aimed at implementing the relevant legislative changes to implement the system approach to preparation of soldiers for a second career. This field is currently listed in at least eight normative legal acts. All soldiers with the exception of persons who have renounced Polish citizenship, have been deprived of their service due to a serious disciplinary offense or a criminal conviction to an unconditional prison sentence are eligible for labor market integration assistance.

Ministries of defense of all of the above mentioned countries usually provide individual career advice related to job search assistance, conduct seminars to acquire necessary skills to find

employment in the labor market and organize job fairs where military representatives meet with employers from civilian sector interested in hiring former soldiers. Soldiers are offered the possibility of further education with certification, applicable in the civilian sector, or preferential job placement in the public sector. Beside this, ministries and ministerial agencies designed for this purpose provide other means of care such as operation of special job portals, financial assistance or special leave in order to ensure sufficient preparation for a second career. The preparation usually starts 2 years before the termination of the military service and continues even after it.

The Czech Republic that has been building a career soldier system since the beginning of 2005, should also deal with the systematic preparation of soldiers for the transition to civilian sector. It needs to be secured, especially concerning the fact that the Czech Armed Forces releases and will continue to release soldiers of working age (about 1 000 soldiers with an average age of 36 years every year), and also in connection with the priority measures of the current conception of the construction of the army that aims at increasing the attractiveness and competitiveness of the military profession, the application of a career management system in personnel management, and creating appropriate prerequisites for the use of the skills of soldiers after the termination of their service. The study is, therefore, very topical.

3 Research objective and methodology

Twenty semi-structured interviews lasting from 30 to 120 minutes were conducted in order to find out the information concerning the preparation of soldiers of the Czech Armed Forces for a second career. The following research question was asked: What is your opinion on the current form of preparation of soldiers for a second career in the Czech Republic? The method of deliberate, quota selection was used for the selection of respondents. The criterion was a job position at the field of human resources management within the Ministry of Defense of the Czech Republic, at war veteran associations and companies involved in implementation of projects of the European Social Fund to support the employment of war veterans. During the interviews, a record sheet was used, and a non-directive style of interviewing was applied.

In order to verify the obtained expert testimonies, additional qualitative research was carried out and distributed via an electronic questionnaire to a target group of former professional soldiers of the Czech Armed Forces whose contract terminated 1 - 3 years prior to the research. The research was attended by 313 former professional soldiers of all ranks, most of them in the rank of Corporal, Sergeant, Master Sergeant and Colonel. 90% of the interviewees were men, 10% women, half of them having secondary education with a school-leaving certificate, half of them a bachelor's or master's degree. The length of military service was for 8% of respondents up to 5 years, for 14% of respondents 5 - 10 years, for 19% of respondents 10 - 15 years, for 24% of respondents 15 - 20 years and for 35% of respondents more than 20 years. To find an employment in the civilian sector took to almost a quarter of the respondents more than 6 months. 7% of respondents were not employed at the time of the research. The research question for this part of the research was the same: What is your opinion on the current form of preparation of soldiers for a second career in the Czech Republic? The specific open questions focused on the kind of assistance Ministry of Defense provided the respondents before leaving the army, their satisfaction with the offer of retraining courses, and the issues encountered during the integration into the labor market after leaving the army.

The answers of the respondents of both parts of the research were processed using an inductive coding strategy. After the reduction of the first text of the respondents' answers, the subsequent open coding and categorization of terms was used. The findings were summarized and served as an input for the SWOT analysis.

The SWOT analysis is a highly useful and simple tool for identifying the actual state, the necessary changes, potential risks, and the necessary steps to turn weaknesses into strengths and eliminate risks. It represents a comprehensive method of qualitative evaluation of all relevant pages of a defined topic. It is an orientation tool that is particularly useful at the beginning of planning, designing or making decisions. In practice, it serves as a tool for identifying the strategic position of a company organization or group of individuals. The analysis allows perceiving a given system (process, object) using four viewpoints: S (Strength), W (Weakness), O (Opportunities), and T (Threats). The SWOT analysis identifies internal resources and confronts them with conditions and changes in the external environment. The analysis always results in a strategy formulation. The principles and use of SWOT analysis are recorded in many literature e. g. [17], [18], [19], [20], [21], [22] and others. The primary meaning and contribution of SWOT analysis lie in the comprehensive and thorough identification of external and internal influences and links toward strategy formulation [17], [18]. The SWOT analysis is a versatile tool that can be used in different areas.

The methodological procedure of SWOT analysis is not standardized. Individual phases of SWOT analysis are: preparation for SWOT analysis, identification and evaluation of strengths and weaknesses of an organization, identification and evaluation of opportunities and threats from the external environment, factors evaluation, calculation of output values of analysis and display of vectors and creation of strategies alternatives: S-O (Strengths-Opportunities), W-O (Weaknesses-Opportunities), S-T (Strengths-Threats) and W-T (Weaknesses-Threats). Identification of the internal environment was performed using a form to identify strengths and weaknesses. The form also has a Why field, which tells us why the indicator is a strong or weak point. The strengths and weaknesses of the current state of preparation of soldiers for a second career implemented by the Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic is described in Table 1 and Table 2 (see appendix A). Identification of the external environment was conducted using a form to identify opportunities and threats. The form also has a Why field, which gives us the reason for the opportunity or threat indicator. The opportunities and threats of the current state of preparation of soldiers for a second career implemented by the Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic is described in Table 3 and Table 4 (see appendix A). The research objective is to evaluate current approaches to helping soldiers of the Czech Armed Forces in their career transition and based on the SWOT analysis output to suggest possible implementation measures.

4 Results

The findings of the interviews and questionnaires are divided into four quadrants of the SWOT matrix - strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Each of the factor is listed in the following tables, in which it has its designation and description. Table 1 and table 2 list and describe internal factors - strengths and weaknesses. Table 3 and table 4 list and describe external factors - opportunities and threats.

The prerequisite for this analysis is that the observed S, W, O, and T values, as well as the resulting strategy, can make a significant contribution to the system change. From the above information, three necessary recalculation modules according to M. Jenčo and L. Lysá [23] were created. The base table shows the dependencies between the factors entering the internal (strengths and weaknesses) and the external environment (opportunities and threats). In the tables 5 - 8, you can see the value of each factor on a scale of 1-5 depending on its importance (V_f). The modified version of the Fuller Triangle is designed to meet the requirements and efficiency of the proposed application. Thus, it is a pairwise comparison of factors based on the following assessment. A value of 3 means that the first of the two factors are more important than others. A value of 2 means that the factors being compared are equally important. A value of 1 means that the first of the two factors is less important than the

other. Subsequently, the weighting factor W_f is calculated using the equation:

$$W_f = \frac{\sum_{f=1}^n e_f}{e_{all}} \quad (1)$$

when:

e_f - marks a factor evaluation (f - number),
 n - represents the number of factors in the given field,
 e_{all} - is the sum of all the assessments in the field.

Table 5 illustrates the evaluation (V_f) and weight (W_f) of each strength and all of the strengths in total. Table 6 illustrates the evaluation (V_f) and weight (W_f) of each weakness and all of the weaknesses in total. Table 7 illustrates the evaluation (V_f) and weight (W_f) of each opportunity and all of the opportunities in total. Table 8 illustrates the evaluation (V_f) and weight (W_f) of each threat and all of the threats in total (for table 5 - 8 see appendix B).

The output table (Table 9) contains the factor names, their weights (W_f), evaluations (V_f), and the weighted evaluations (P_f). The weighted evaluations provide a primary value for vector expression of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The vector sum gives us the direction of the final vector, which reflects the strategic orientation of the analyzed system. Coordinates of the final vector are displayed in Table 10.

The resulting graph (depicted in Figure 1) imitates the shape of the evaluated vectors representing the evaluator's direction. W-O represents the "mini-maxi" strategy. The purpose of creating strategies is to find ways to exploit the current state and to improve it in the future. The aim of the W-O strategy is to improve weaknesses by taking advantage of opportunities (for table 9 and 10 and Figure 1 see appendix C).

5 Discussion

What actions can Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic take to minimize the weaknesses of current approach to the preparation of soldiers for a second career using the external opportunities that were identified?

Mainly four Czech veteran associations help their members in job search. Most often by keeping their own databases of job seekers and associating them with potential employers and by sharing job offers on social networks. For this purpose, it would be appropriate to use existing portals operated by the Ministry of Defense of the Czech Republic, such as the www.army.cz website, where potential employers could fill in a job offer form, which would be provided to soldiers directly on the site or through internal portals, to which all soldiers have access to. If soldiers were allowed to create a user profile and fill in data grouped on the basis of a curriculum vitae, there would be the possibility of sharing information also in the opposite direction - viewing soldiers' profiles by employers with the option to make contact.

The preparation of soldiers for a second career in selected NATO countries usually starts 2 years before the termination of the military service and continues several months after it when soldiers are assisted during their adaptation to the civilian sector and even in their new job. We propose at least one year before the expiry of the military contract to decide whether a soldier will be released from service or not, thus ensuring a sufficiently long period of time for good preparation for the transition to the civilian sector. Retraining should be a key factor when considering weaknesses. The maximum duration of courses should be extended from three months to at least six months, starting 12 months before and at any time up to three months after termination of service. Furthermore, it is necessary to reconsider the current offer of retraining courses - exclude the courses that do not meet the requirements of the labor market and which lasts a disproportionately short time. On contrary, to

include and send soldiers to retraining courses in which they can use their existing knowledge and competencies and further expand them. A system of regular identification of demand for specific fields of retraining courses and identification of the satisfaction of soldiers who completed the courses should be implemented via collection and analysis of opinions in the form of oral, printed, or electronic questionnaires at internal communication portals. It is advisable to monitor the success of graduates in the labor market for one year at least.

Career transition assistance in selected NATO countries is provided to everyone, regardless of the rank or length of service, but the assistance level varies according to established criteria. Therefore, soldiers of the Czech Armed Forces injured or suffering from a health problem should be allowed to participate in a retraining course, even if the length of their service is less than five years. Furthermore, a support to soldiers whose service was terminated due to organizational changes or to soldiers whose specialization falls under a pre-established list of military specializations hardly applicable in the civilian sector should be also provided. The range of assistance would be reduced accordingly.

To implement all the proposed measures, it is necessary to increase the number of employees of the Education Department of the Personnel Agency of the Czech Armed Forces dealing with the area of retraining and to train the personnel department of military units.

In the framework of international cooperation between the ministries of defense, employees of the Ministry of Defense of the Czech Republic could be trained in the above-mentioned foreign career transition agencies or their specialists could be hired to provide series of lectures. Their proven knowledge and good practice could then be adapted to the conditions and legislation of the Czech Republic.

Not only by the range of outplacement assistance of selected NATO countries, mentioned in the theoretical background chapter, but also by the knowledge of people who assisted war veterans within the implemented projects is a great opportunity Ministry of Defence can benefit from. The European Social Fund is funding tens of thousands of projects across the Union that make a difference to the lives of millions of individuals. Between 2011 and 2015 seven projects were funded to support war veterans of the Czech Armed Forces and helped to approximately a thousand of them to integrate into civilian life. The tools of assistance were motivational seminars, focused on understanding communication elements in civilian environment, writing a curriculum vitae, preparing for job interview or providing basic information about employees' rights and obligations at civilian labor market, individual counseling with experts such as psychologists, career counselors, coaches and human resources managers, retraining and start-ups assistance, job creation and placement in subsidized jobs with wage reimbursement for a period of six months to one year.

Professional individual and group counselling services focused on helping to orientate in the civilian labor market is the basis for the successful start of a second career. They could be provided by recruiting offices of the Czech Armed Forces, located in 13 cities. They could be called rather career offices and provide assistance not only to incoming but also outgoing soldiers. The staff of recruiting offices could be increased, the existing staff (approximately 50 employees) could be trained to provide the assistance or the assistance could be outsourced from external educational and career agencies.

In terms of the elimination of weaknesses, it is necessary to assume a broad social consensus over the solution of the research problem, enforcement of legislative changes, and changes of internal regulations and their strict observance in personnel procedures. The Veteran Work Team currently working on a new concept of taking care of soldiers will play one of the most important roles in the future. It should be benefited from the cooperation among the team members of all

kinds of specializations and experts of external institutions. It is appropriate to elaborate a comprehensive concept of active employment policy for soldiers, based on several basic measures agreed both by the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic. This policy should contain at least the following features:

- define professional soldiers as a group at risk of unemployment,
- establish contacts with suitable suppliers of retraining courses for soldiers,
- keep a special record of suitable vacancies for former soldiers that would be shared with personnel departments of military units,
- monitor the employment of former soldiers after the termination of military service with the help of job seeker database shared by both the ministries.

The introduction of relevant changes in the legislation will eventually enable standardization of the preparation of soldiers for a second career, thus establishing a unified systemic approach, as is the case of the rest of the developed NATO countries.

6 Conclusions

The application of the SWOT analysis has helped us to quickly and effectively map the reality and enabled us to identify a strategy of possible further progress. Based on the results of our study, it can be said that interviewed experts and questionnaire respondents agreed on several internal and external factors that influence the preparation of soldiers for a second career in the Czech Republic. The most comprehensive group of factors were weaknesses that are, in most cases, connected with the current form of retraining courses provided by the Ministry of Defence. Probably the most serious weakness that emerged in all the interviews and most of the questionnaires and summarize the insight into the issue is that there is no systemic approach to the preparation of soldiers for a career transition.

The result of the SWOT analysis was vectoring that, based on the evaluation of the current state, recommend the use of W-O strategy based on maximizing opportunities to minimize weaknesses. By taking advantage of the knowledge from implemented projects to support war veterans, experience of war veteran associations, good practice of selected NATO countries and current activities of a team working on a new concept of taking care of soldiers, the weaknesses could be eliminated. Adjusting the existing form of retraining courses and widening the range of career transition assistance as suggested will also in the final consequence positively affect the presence of aforementioned threats. It will result in better preparedness of soldiers in the civilian labor market and thus increase their applicability. Civilian employers' negative opinions about the working abilities of former soldiers would be reduced, and socio-pathological phenomena of soldiers associated with poor mental status resulting from job loss would occur less frequently. From a macroeconomic point of view, the unemployment rate of former soldiers would be reduced, which would ultimately lead to a lower burden on the state budget.

In order for the process to be continually improved, this area should be further explored. It is useful to continue with the research and focus it on its quantitative aspect, that can be statistically verified. It is also important to apply SWOT analysis more frequently and thus have a constant overview of changes in the internal and external environment and orientate the direction of the activities accordingly

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Appendices

Appendix A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Identification Forms

Table 1. Strengths identification form (created by authors)

Label	Strengths	Strengths description
S1	Acquiring values during military education	Education in military schools systematically educates military students who acquire important values that are highly valued in the civilian labor market.
S2	Career order as a motivator	Through the introduction of the principles of career order, soldiers are motivated to personal development and deepening professional qualifications.
S3	Retraining courses during the military service	Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic provides retraining courses that can be attended by soldiers before the termination of military service. It enables them to acquire needed knowledge before the integration to labor market.
S4	Early evaluation interview	Consultation on the intention to extend the military service during the evaluation interview is held 24 months before the termination.

Table 2. Weaknesses identification form (created by authors)

Label	Weaknesses	Weakness description
W1	Late notification of non-renewal of the military contract	Early evaluation interview is not legally binding and does not always take place. On contrary at the latest 4 months before the expiry of the military contract, it is necessary to decide whether it will be prolonged or terminated, as it is stated in the Professional Soldiers Act and therefore legally binding. However in terms of preparation for a second career, this is a very short period of time.
W2	Short duration of retraining courses	The maximum permissible period of attending the retraining courses is three months and it is not long enough for retraining in a new field. The courses offered by the Ministry of Defense of the Czech Republic last on average 3-4 weeks. However, it is difficult to retrain a professionally targeted expert to another expert in such a short time.
W3	Insufficient depth of retraining courses	Most retraining courses focus only on the basic knowledge and skills required to pursue the occupations in which soldiers retrain. However, this is not compatible with the labor market requirements.
W4	No support for soldiers with a contract up to five years	The criterion for eligibility for retraining is a minimum length of service of five years. Although since 2016, persons with the extent of service up to three years have represented the largest share of the total number of outgoing soldiers (approx. 25 %), they were not offered any assistance, even reasonably reduced.
W5	No feedback from retraining courses participants	The Ministry of Defense of the Czech Republic does not monitor what retraining courses soldiers are interested in, whether the courses provided were beneficial in finding a job and whether soldiers found an employment in the labor market. Because of this lack of feedback, it is, therefore, challenging to adapt supply of courses and thus monitor the effectiveness of the money spent.
W6	Insufficient staffing of the department providing retraining courses	The retraining of professional soldiers is ensured only by two employees at the Education Department of the Personnel Agency of the Czech Armed Forces. Due to a large number of departing soldiers from the army who are entitled to apply for a retraining course every year, the number of retraining staff is disproportionately low.
W7	The absence of guidance during the career transition	No counseling activity within the Ministry of Defense of the Czech Republic helps the soldiers to regulate their steps in favor of finding a job at civilian labor market.
W8	Lack of contact with former soldiers	There is no single database or organizational unit that would associate former soldiers and work with them for a long time. After the termination of service, the Ministry of Defense terminates communication with soldiers and does not monitor their further employment.
W9	The absence of systemic approach to preparing soldiers for second career	There is no systemic approach to preparing soldiers for a second career in the Czech Republic. The Ministry of Defense of the Czech Republic does not have sufficient legislative, material, or personnel resources to map and satisfy the specific work related problems of soldiers in the civilian sector. So far, they have been replaced only by partial initiatives of actors in the field of military life, but with insufficient capacity and intensity.

Table 3. Opportunities identification form (created by authors)

Label	Opportunities	Opportunities description
O1	Knowledge from implemented projects to support war veterans	The seven projects implemented under the Human Resources and Employment Operational Program of the European Social Fund are a valuable practical basis for setting up a system of preparation of soldiers for a second career. Implementers and suppliers of these projects know the specifics of the target group of war veterans; thus, they can extend their know-how in favor of helping all soldiers, not only war veterans.
O2	Experience of war veteran associations	During its existence, the network of war veteran associations has provided advice and mediation to dozens of war veterans and former soldiers. Although these are not cases based on a systemic but rather individual approach, and the number of people supported in this way is marginal in terms of the number of professional soldiers leaving the army, these activities bring valuable experience.
O3	Monitoring the good practice of selected NATO countries	Follow-up of good practice in the field of preparation of soldiers for a second career in selected NATO countries should be considered. As it can be a great inspiration and starting point for relevant activities of the Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic.
O4	A team working on a new concept of taking care of soldiers	Creation of a Veteran Work Team, composed of both internal (from the Ministry of Defence) and external experts will play an important role in the future. Team works on a new concept of taking care of soldiers, including the area of assistance during the integration into the labor market.

Table 4. Threats identification form (created by authors)

Label	Threats	Threats description
T1	Negative prejudices of civilian employers towards former soldiers	When soldiers enter the civilian sector unprepared, the deepening of negative prejudice by civilian employers regarding the skills of former soldiers of the Czech Armed Forces can be observed.
T2	Cases of social exclusion of war veterans	The exclusion of former soldiers in the civilian sector, especially those who participated in a foreign mission, may lead also to the social exclusion. Former soldiers can become dangerous and easily manipulated by criminal groups, using mainly war veterans to commit crimes.
T3	Weakening of the national economy due to unemployment of former soldiers	The current situation with no systemic approach to preparing soldiers for a second career is very economically disadvantageous for the state. Soldiers who cannot find a job in the labor market become unemployed and thus passive recipients of a number of subsidies. State resources are drained, these persons do not contribute to tax payments to the state budget, and thus the entire national economy is weakened. Between 2008 - 2017, 18% of former soldiers of the Czech Armed Forces of productive age were unemployed for the average period of 8 months, according to processed statistics provided by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic. This is more than three times higher than the average general unemployment rate in the Czech Republic in this period.

Appendix B Input data for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats**Table 5.** Input data – strengths (created by authors)

Strengths	Evaluation (V_i)		S1	S2	S3	S4	Σ	Weight (W_i)
S1	3	S1	×	1	1	1	3	0,13
S2	3	S2	3	×	1	1	5	0,21
S3	4	S3	3	3	×	1	7	0,29
S4	4	S4	3	3	3	×	9	0,38
Total	14						24	1,00

Table 6. Input data – weaknesses (created by authors)

Weaknesses	Evaluation (V_i)		W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	W8	W9	Σ	Weight (W_i)
W1	4	W1	×	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	20	0,14
W2	5	W2	3	×	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	22	0,15
W3	3	W3	1	1	×	3	3	3	3	3	1	18	0,13
W4	3	W4	1	1	1	×	1	1	1	1	1	8	0,06
W5	3	W5	1	1	1	3	×	1	1	3	1	12	0,08
W6	2	W6	1	1	1	3	3	×	3	3	1	16	0,11
W7	3	W7	1	1	1	3	3	1	×	3	1	14	0,10
W8	5	W8	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	×	1	10	0,07
W9	5	W9	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	×	24	0,17
Total	33											144	1,00

Table 7. Input data – opportunities (created by authors)

Opportunities	Evaluation (V_i)		O1	O2	O3	O4	Σ	Weight (W_i)
O1	3	O1	×	1	1	1	3	0,13
O2	3	O2	3	×	1	1	5	0,21
O3	4	O3	3	3	×	1	7	0,29
O4	5	O4	3	3	3	×	9	0,38
Total	15						24	1,00

Table 8. Input data – threats (created by authors)

Threats	Evaluation (V_i)		T1	T2	T3	Σ	Weight (W_i)
T1	4	T1	×	3	1	4	0,33
T2	3	T2	1	×	1	2	0,17
T3	3	T3	3	3	×	6	0,50
Total	10					12	1,00

Appendix C Weights and scores of each factor, final vector and strategy

Table 9. Weights and scores of each factor (created by authors)

Strengths	W_f	V_f	P_f
S1	0,13	3	0,38
S2	0,21	3	0,63
S3	0,29	4	1,17
S4	0,38	4	1,50
Total	1,00	14	3,67
Weaknesses	W_f	V_f	P_f
W1	0,14	4	0,56
W2	0,15	5	0,76
W3	0,13	3	0,38
W4	0,06	3	0,17
W5	0,08	3	0,25
W6	0,11	2	0,22
W7	0,10	3	0,29
W8	0,07	5	0,35
W9	0,17	5	0,83
Total	1,00	33	3,81
Opportunities	W_f	V_f	P_f
O1	0,13	3	0,38
O2	0,21	3	0,63
O3	0,29	4	1,17
O4	0,38	5	1,88
Total	1,00	15	4,04
Threats	W_f	V_f	P_f
T1	0,33	4	1,33
T2	0,17	3	0,50
T3	0,50	3	1,50
Total	1,00	10	3,33

Table 10. Vectors (created by authors)

Evaluated factor (direction)	Y	X
Final vector	0,71	-0,14

Figure 1. Strategy W-O (created by authors)

