

# ACQUIRING OF PROFESSIONAL HABITS BY THE STUDENTS WITH METHOD OF THE CONTINUAL SIMULATION OF ACTIVITIES IN VIRTUAL PRIVATE SECURITY SERVICE AGENCY

DAGMAR VIDRIKOVÁ, KAMIL BOC

## Abstract

This article is aimed on the problem of acquiring of professional habits by the students of the Faculty of Security Engineering of University of Žilina. It is specifically focused on students studying the study branch 8.3.1 – Protections of Persons and Property, study programme Security Management in first degree of university education. Necessity to acquire and extend the professional habits and skills of the students during their education resulted from joint meetings between school students, and their potential employers and teaching staff. One of the applicable solutions this mission was to create a model of the private security agency. In this agency students will acquire basic skills in the areas of management, economics and accounting, planning, audit execution in the area of personnel management, development of safety guidelines and development of security directive etc. Students will acquire basic skills from own performance activities in some selected type position too. Students will acquire basic skills of their own performance activity some of selected of type positions.

**Key words:** private security, Faculty of Security Engineering, agency, education, students, employment, type positions, Protection of Persons and Property, professional habits.

**Classification JEL:** M12 – Personnel Management.

## 1. Introduction

The level and quality of higher education together attracted considerable attention. The quality of education is now generally applies in particular to the need to acquire not only theoretical knowledge but especially also practical skills desirable (Blašková, 2011; Blašková & Blaško, 2011, 2012; Sventeková & Loveček, 2012; Veľas & Hudáková, 2013; Vázquez, Aza & Lanero, 2014; Bober & Hertmanowski, 2014; Čandík & Jedinák, 2014; etc.).

One of the priorities which were accepted by the Government of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter “SR”) in its policy statement in the field of knowledge-based society, education and culture, was also the commitment resulting from following citation: “*The Government shall in its approach to education shall take into account not only the ambitions of the pupil or student, but also his abilities, and shall create such legislation conditions, that the school operators will have to observe also the requirements of the job market when creating performance plans*” (Manifesto of the Government of the Slovak Republic 2012 – 2016).

We fully identify with the ambitions of the Government of SR in that part of its policy statement, in which it expressed interest in deepening of connection between education and requirements of the job market, respectively of practice. For this purpose, the authors of this article carried out several activities focused not only for deepening of this cooperation, but also for increasing of employment of the graduates after their studies end.

Several projects were accepted for the purpose of increasing of student employment, for example start-up, youth employment support, youth counselling centres. These activities are, in their own way, contributing to increasing of employment of young generation. However, we believe that these activities would not be necessary if the education traced the requirements of the job market and reacted to them more flexibly. Through listed government activities or deepening of cooperation with employers it is possible to expect the employment to increase, but it cannot be considered to be a systematic solution. We believe that the educational institutions should be responsible for applicability of their graduates on job market. It is not possible to solve this difficult problem by policy statements, accepted

projects or creation of different counselling centres, etc. This difficult problem cannot be solved neither by government program manifestos, nor by creation of different counselling centres, etc. and we think that each educational institution should, within a self-reflection, accept such study programmes, which create positive conditions for their graduates on the job market. A requirement that graduates of universities have practical experience was stated during the meetings with business entities in the recent period. Current Act no. 131/2002 Coll. on Higher Education as amended by later acts partially takes this requirement into account and creates necessary legislative environment for its fulfilment by educational institutions.

Except mentioned above legal standard, *professional competencies* for the job are based on a number of knowledgeable sources, for example: Act 473 (2005); Manual (2003, 2012); SK ISCO-08 (2011); OECD (2012); Integrated System of Type Position (online). Also the scientific papers of Šimák & Míka (2009) and Dvořák & Leitner (2014) could be viewed as very inspirational.

## 2. Analysis of the current status of applicants for employment in the Žilina region

Žilina region ranks in the structure of SR between regions with higher unemployment rate of graduates of secondary schools and higher education. For purposes of this article we focused mostly on the dynamics of development of employment applicant placement with higher education. The reason for this focus was the fact, that most of the students of University of Žilina (hereinafter “ZU”) comes from the Žilina region. According to the results of statistical investigation by the Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family in Žilina (hereinafter “OLSAAf Žilina”), the development of available unemployment rate (AUR) in Žilina region compared to the averages in SR within years 2011 – 2013 shows its dynamics to be stable and to oscillate in fluctuation range between 10,51 – 12,00% AUR. Within the given period the AUR is higher in the Žilina region as well as in the average of whole country. The differences can be seen in Figure 1.

**Comparison of available unemployment rate development in Žilina region, nationwide and in Žilina district in years 2011, 2012, 2013**

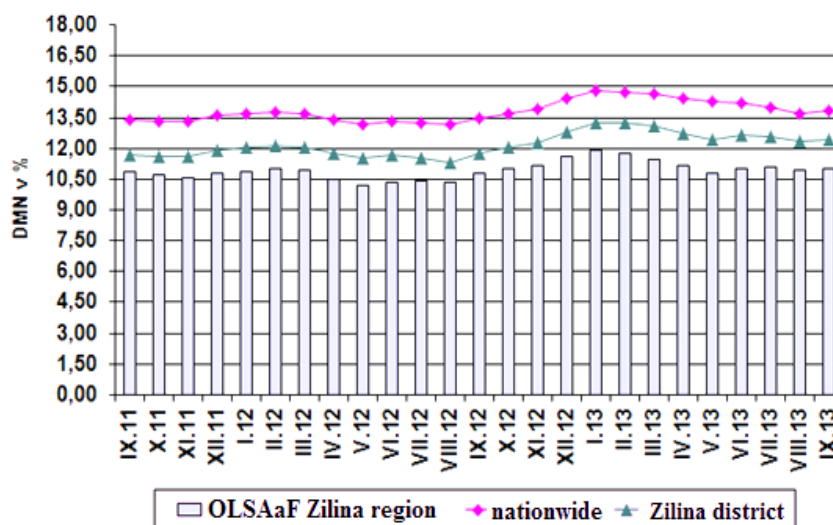


Figure 1: Comparison of available unemployment rate development OLSAAf Žilina region, nationwide and in Žilina district in years 2011, 2012 and 2013 (Statistics of the Office Labour)

For purposes of deeper analysis we focused on identification of determining indicators which could elucidate the existing situation in sphere of student unemployment in this region. Overview of the selected indicators for Žilina region during the period from January to September 2013 can be seen in Table 1.

*Table 1: Overview of selected indicators for OLSAaF Žilina (Statistics of the Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family Žilina)*

Year 2013 Month	Amount of job applicants	Amount of available job applicants	Long-term unemployment rate [%]	Long-term unemployed job applicants	Amount of absolvents	Rate of absolvents [%]
January	13 568	12 730	11.88	5 938	710	5.20
May	12 410	11 590	11.82	5 372	574	4.60
June	12 580	11 824	11.03	5 354	796	6.30
July	12 556	11 878	11.08	5 358	850	6.70
August	12 337	11 706	10.92	5 381	754	6.10
September	12 405	11 731	10.95	5 593	1 256	10.10

The data from Table 1 shows that the absolute count of job applicants from the ranks of graduates in period from January to September 2013 has nearly doubled (increase of 94.23%). An interesting fact is that the lowest count of job applicants was in May, when it reached the value of 4.60%. It is the time of final examinations of university students and also of final examinations of secondary school graduates. We believe that this decrease is artificial. According to the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter "MESRS SR") more than 80% of secondary school absolvents continue their studies on universities. That considerably lowers the amount of applicants mainly from the ranks of these absolvents. Average rate of the amount of applicants for employment during listed 9 months of last year reaches 4.33%. That means that the rate of success of the applicants should be 95.67%, which is relatively high. Total unemployment rate in Slovakia averagely moves around the value of 14% which means that the absolvents of secondary schools and universities participate in the registered unemployment of Slovakia by about 30.93%. This figure has mostly indicative, not binding character, since it does not show the amount of job applicants of other seven regions of Slovakia. Based on the knowledge that the average count of absolvents of the secondary schools and higher education is on average within Slovak districts the same, we may base on the given percentage share. For orientation we list some data in Table 2.

*Table 2: Development of the number of employment applicants in Žilina region in nationwide comparison to SR (Statistics of the Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family Žilina)*

Job applicants (absolvents) 30.9.2013	OLSAaF Žilina 30.9.2013	OLSAaF Žilina 30.9.2012	Žilina region	Slovakia
Secondary school absolvents inflow	515	595	2 066	14 020
Secondary school absolvents status	903	1 075	3 743	24 006
College graduates status	353	110	1 210	9 632
Job applicants (absolvents) total status	1 256	1 185	4 953	33 638
Amount of job applicants (total)	12 405	12 294	44 539	406 554

In the framework of the examination of successfulness of Faculty of Security Engineering of the University of Žilina (hereinafter “FSE”) an analysis of current status of FSE graduates placement has been carried out.

### 3. Analysis of the current status of FSE graduate placement

Management of FSE, taking into account the current status at the job market and high unemployment rate in both Slovakia as well as Žilina region, accepted in years 2011-2013 a complex of measures focused on increasing of success rate of FSE graduates. The measures were directed at both the increase of quality and level of studies in creation of new study programme focused on security and protection of critical infrastructure elements, but also for deepening of informal cooperation with potential employer subjects.

The data published in MESRS SR under the title “Methodics of dotation breakdown for public colleges in year 2014” indicated that in years 2011 and 2012, only 19 of 502 graduates were registered at Offices of Labour. Within SR the employment rate of FSE graduates reached 96.20%.

For the purpose of objectification and refinement of statistical data concerning the success rate of FSE graduates, a survey has been performed. The survey focused on:

- Time segment before employment after graduation;
- Field of work;
- Evaluation of vocational knowledge and skills, as well as general competencies;
- Fields lacking the knowledge or skills important for increasing of professional performance quality.

Statistical sample consisted of the faculty graduates, who finished their studies in years 2011 – 2013. The questionnaire has been correctly filled in and submitted by total of 117 students. The analysis of the questionnaire resulted in following conclusions:

- 6% of respondents were already employed during their studies at FSE;
- 51% of respondents were employed within 3 months;
- 23% of respondents were employed within 6 months;
- 12% of respondents were employed within 12 months;
- 6% of respondents were employed after more than 12 months;
- 2% of respondents were still unemployed in the time of survey (see Figure 2).

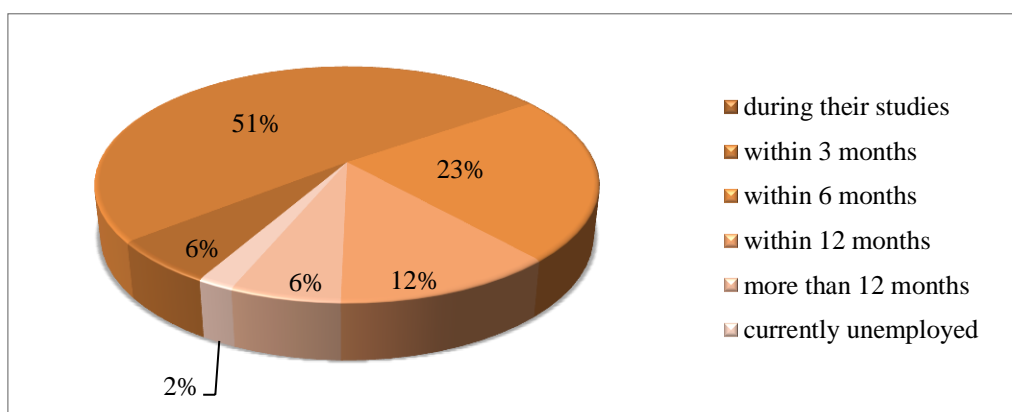


Figure 2: Graph of time segment of employment after graduation (Research FSE, 2013)

It is possible to state, that the success rate of the faculty graduates within 12 months was 98%. The fact, that 86% of respondents were employed within 6 months, is a very important indication. It shows the interest and social demand for expertise provided by our faculty.

Another significant question important for direction of faculty was the fields in which the respondents – graduates of the faculty – applied themselves. Their questions resulted in following facts:

- 49% of respondents were employed in the field of security and protection, respectively in state administration or municipality administration, i.e. in fields of expertise, which are provided by the faculty in the study programmes “protection of persons and property” and “civil protection”;
- 4–9% of respondents were represented by fields such as administration, banking, insurance, education, science and research, etc., which in total represent 51% of respondents employed in these fields (Figure 3).

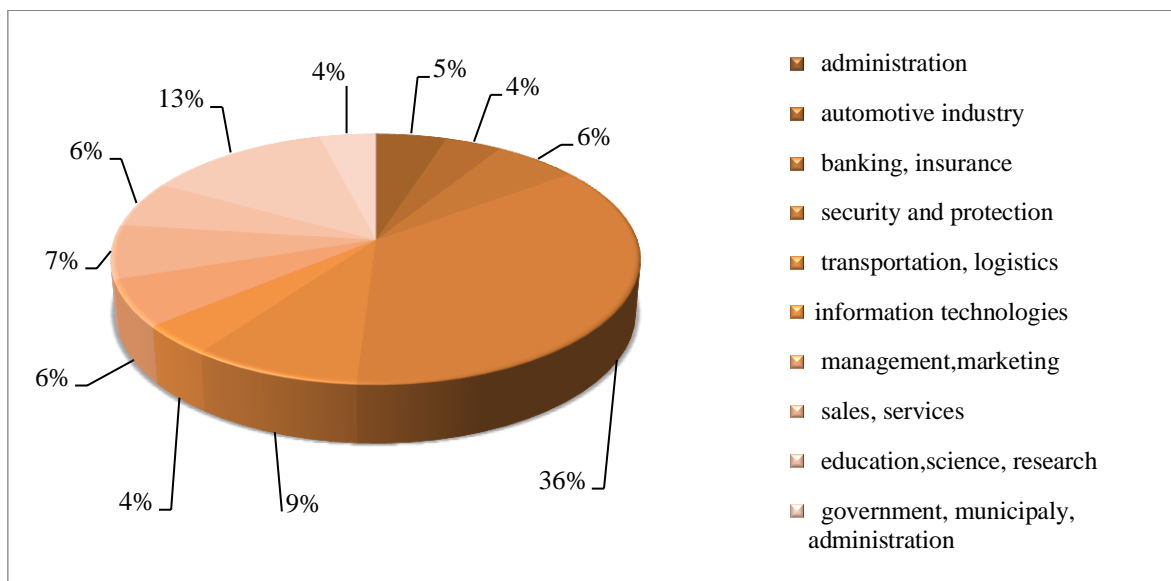


Figure 3: Graph of fields of employment (Research FSE, 2013)

The question focused on evaluation knowledge and skills acquired during the university studies had great importance for structure of the study programs and subjects taught at the faculty. 90% of respondents displayed satisfaction. This is positive statement that allows further developing and deepening the knowledge of current students in set study programmes (Figure 4).

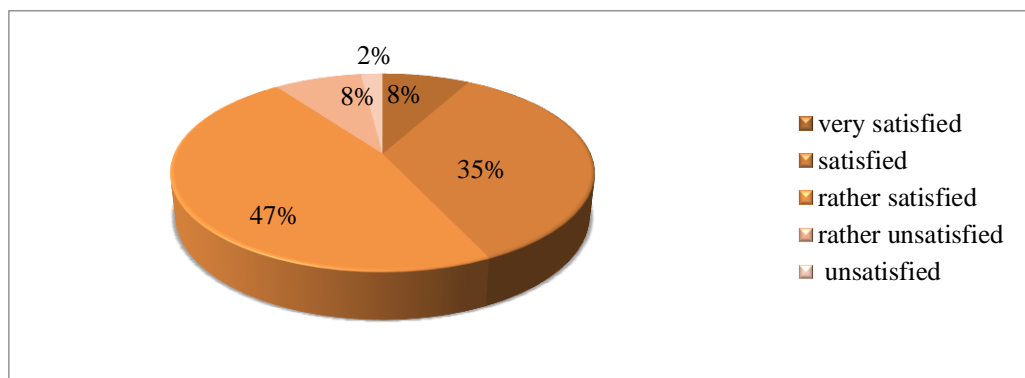


Figure 4: Graph of evaluation of the knowledge and skills acquired during the university studies (Research FSE, 2013)

Surprising were the answers of respondents to question concerning the fields in which the respondents would need to complement their knowledge for reaching of higher quality of professional performance. 74% of the respondents that answered this question stated that they need language skills for increasing of their work quality. We assume that the current study programmes and approach of faculty or university provide sufficient environment and conditions for acquirement of required level of language skills and knowledge. The fact that 8% of respondents reported the field of professional knowledge as necessary to improve was accepted positively. Also, 6% of the respondents require their communicational skills to improve (Figure 5).

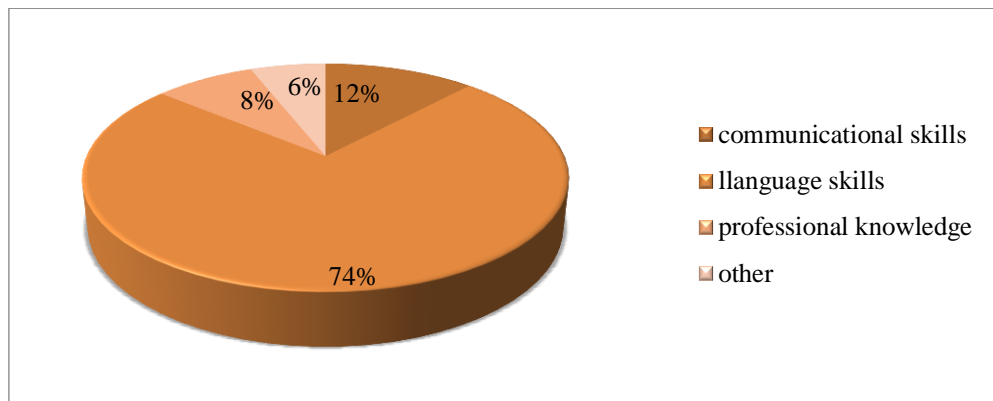


Figure 5: Graph of fields in which the knowledge or skills for increasing of professional performance quality are lacking (Research FSE, 2013)

Relatively positive evaluation of the success rate of our faculty and its study programmes is reflected also in the number of study applicants. The amount of applicants is relatively stable – mainly in daily engineer studies it moves in the range between 150 and 190 persons. This amount corresponds with the capacity and possibilities of the faculty.

Activities focused on deepening of informal cooperation between academia and potential employers were organized for the purpose of further increase of applicability of the faculty graduates in prepared study branches. One of these activities was also the “Day of job opportunities” held on 31st October 2013 in Žilina. Students of the faculty, representatives of state administration and operators of private security services participated in this activity. Requirement for wider professional skills and general competences resonated from their speeches. The potential employers noted high theoretical level of preparedness of the faculty graduates, but low level of practical experiences. We understand and identify with these requirements of the employers. They relate to strategic development of human potential which contributes to the fulfilment of goals and intentions of government organizations or companies acting in field of private security. We are aware that the strategic development of the human potential represents complicated process of definition and preparation of realisation of the long-term goals and measures for stimulation and influencing of human potential which is focused on effective utilization of actual predispositions and competencies of the employees and managers, but also continual development of their abilities, skills and talent and strengthening of their motivation for future (*Statistics of the Office Labour*).

#### 4. Methods: qualitative survey of professional habits by the students at the Faculty of Security Engineering

An educational institution ‘Academia security – KBM, n. o.’ has been established by the lecturers of vocational subjects for the purposes achievement of professional

competencies, which are required by said Act. The purpose of its establishing was creation of conditions necessary for acquiring of vocational expertise license type "P" by students of said study programme. Thereby the necessary requirements and preconditions for acquirement of required vocational skills and practical habits were met.

Simultaneously, a realization of pilot project 'Virtual Private Security Service Agency' started in beginning of winter semester of academic year 2014/2015. The goal of this project is acquirement of vocational skills and basic practical experiences by students in field of private security company management. Students of third year of first level of university studies in study programme 'Security Management' participate in this project. The basic method which is applied within the project is continual simulation of activities.

The project became a part of vocational subject "Private Security Services", which it continually follows up. The lecturer is a holder of license of vocational competence for employers, managers and entrepreneurs in field of security services. At lectures, students acquire necessary theoretical knowledge about legislation that covers provision and operation of private security services, their basic classification and legislative requirements which cover this field. During practices the students apply practically the acquired theoretical knowledge on activities of virtual agency that provides security services according to act on private security.

For the purpose of acquirement of vocational skills by individuals there were six workgroups, each containing five students, created within the study group. Basic knowledge and experience, especially with establishing of limited liability companies, operating a company, organization and practical execution of guard service should be acquired within the practices. The premises of faculty were used for practical execution of guard service.

The practices were divided into 12 topics with following content:

- 1) Creation of groups of students so following functions would be represented in the organizational structure of virtual agency:
  - a) Company manager.
  - b) Economist.
  - c) Physical protection shift supervisor.
  - d) Employee of physical protection – guard.
- 2) Establishment of the company (virtual agency) in form of Limited Liability Company
  - a) Creation of proposal for company establishment (e.g. company name, residency).
  - b) Determination of company object, handling of necessary documentation for establishment and registration of company (e.g. Articles of Association, Deed of Foundation, signature specimen).
  - c) Company capital – procedure and possibilities of repayment.
  - d) Processing of application for issuing of licence for operating of private security service at the Regional Directorate of Police Force in Žilina (§10 and following paragraphs of Act no. 473/2005 Coll. on Private security).
  - e) Request for consent of the tax authority.
  - f) Processing of company entry into the business register (according to Act no. 530/2003 Coll. on business register and notice no. 25/2004 Coll.).
  - g) Registration at tax office.
- 3) Staffing of the company – creation of the employee model based on analysis of work position (identification of general abilities, vocational skills and knowledge based on evaluation of security environment, etc.) – selection of staff.
- 4) Logistics of equipping the staff (uniform, company logo, security devices, etc.) – according to no. 473/2005 Coll. on private security.
- 5) Calculation of minimal staff costs (salary, cost of work) of private security service employee when following conditions set by legislation for 2014.

- 6) Acquirement of business partners (clients).
- 7) Proposal of contract for provision of services in private security.
- 8) Allocation of employees into services.
- 9) Creation of service (shift) plan with respect to working time fund.
- 10) Main execution of object guarding – creation of guidelines for guard service, instruction of guards, familiarization with guard plan, character of the object, state of security situation, etc.
- 11) Execution of guard.
- 12) Practical solution of cases of assault of protected object.

During seminars the workgroups present the fulfilment of individual topics.

Two selected lectures were carried out for acquirement of specific theoretical knowledge concerning private security services. One was focused on calculation of minimum wage (point 5) and the second on specifics of selection of employees for guard service (point 3). For staffing of type positions in guard service the students built on requirements listed at web portal of the Integrated System of Type Positions (portal of Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic).

An anonymous survey has been carried out among the participating students for the purpose of verification of relevance of content and procedure that has been selected for realization of the pilot project and the used method of continual simulation of agency activities. The survey has been distributed to 27 students. A filled in survey has been turned in by 24 students (89%). The survey consisted of both open (60%) and closed (40%) questions.

The questions were focused on:

- Evaluation of suitability of used method of continual simulation of virtual agency activities, the content and procedure of topics.
- Identification of problems within the project realization.
- Discovery of subjects or external sources, from which the necessary theoretical knowledge were drawn.
- Determination of topics which were difficult to realize considering acquired theoretical knowledge.
- Recommendation for further vocational training of students of security management.
- Following conclusions emerged from the survey evaluation:
  - The method, procedure and topics were overall positively received by the students (according to 89% of participants).
  - Unavailability of forms and documents necessary for establishment of Limited Liability Company has been pointed out (according to 37.5% of participants).
  - The information from following subjects was mainly utilized by the participants during project: General Law (29.17%), Security System Management (30%) and economic subjects (41.67%).
  - The most utilized external sources were the internet (83.30%) and textbooks (66.67%).
  - Creation of guidelines for guard service has been deemed the most difficult task by the respondents (37.50%).
  - The project has been positively evaluated by 62.50% of participants (37.50% of participants did not respond to the question).
  - Field trips to companies providing private security services were recommended by 33.30% of all participants.



Recommendation from 25% of all respondents to exercise the topics individually by each student, not in work groups, is considered to be important from the viewpoint of project organization (*Research of FSE, 2014*).

## 5. Conclusion

This article was created with intention of highlighting one of the possibilities of achieving a higher preparedness of graduates and bridging the generally known shortcoming that lies in the lack of work habits and practical professional skills. We see the positive side of this solution in its effectiveness, rationalization and in negligible financial demands. Although it poses particular challenges in sphere of organization and preparing of leading pedagogues, who shall manage these activities, we believe, that it presents a way even for other institutions of higher education, which meet with similar problems in application of their graduates at job market.

It is our intention to continue in this project. Students of second degree of university studies should be incorporated into the project also. Students should, within practices during three semesters, pass through both managerial and executive positions within the company.

We expect further deepening of theoretical knowledge within vocational training for taking part in vocational competence examination. Vocational training is being provided by our non-profit organization Academia Security – KBM.

To further develop practical experience, vocational practice of students in private companies, which are members of Slovak Chamber of Private Security, shall be likewise utilized. The faculty has also membership within the chamber. Students included in managerial positions shall, in practice, acquire applications of procedures, e.g. during staffing of individual type positions (with focus on selection of persons according to type model of employee created on the basis of algorithm for selection of employees into private security services, analysis of the work position and creation of work positions), calculation of salary or accounting. The emphasis shall be laid upon acquisition of procedures applicable within public procurement. We assume, that the participation in this practical part, shall remove the shortcomings of graduates that were mentioned by the potential employers the most.

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**Addresses of authors:**

Dagmar VIDRIKOVÁ, PhD.

University of Žilina

Faculty of Security Engineering

Ul. 1. Mája 32

010 26 Žilina

Slovak Republic

e-mail: Dagmar.Vidrikova@fsi.uniza.sk

Kamil BOC, PhD.

University of Žilina

Faculty of Security Engineering

Ul. 1. Mája 32

010 26 Žilina

Slovak Republic

e-mail: Kamil.Boc@fsi.uniza.sk