

# The Current State of Private Security and Municipal Police in the Slovak Republic<sup>1</sup>

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*The article contains a short description of the history of private security services and municipal police in the Slovak Republic. At the same time, it contains the position and tasks of both these security forces in the protection of persons and property, competences of private security services and municipal police, specifics, shortcomings and opportunities for their further development. More than 30 years of independence of the Slovak Republic have brought specifics that place the Slovak and Czech Republics as former common Czechoslovakia in different planes. Private security services are an inseparable part of the protection of private property and municipal police of public property. Private security services are characterised by the national minimum wage and often unprofessional interventions, which is due to the pressure of state institutions and enterprises to reduce prices in the procurement of these services. Unlike private security services, municipal police forces are well trained and equipped. Salary conditions and retirement pensions are also an attraction for young people. The two security forces are part of a rather large system and are incomparable, so they will be described separately in two sections.*

*Keywords: private security services, municipal police, education, protection of persons and property, protection of public spaces*

## Introduction

Security and protection of property, public order and persons are an integral part of everyday life in any society. In the Slovak Republic, this role is fulfilled not only by state security forces, but also by private security services and municipal (city) police. These institutions are the basic pillars of security in cities, municipalities and private premises.

Private security services in Slovakia began to take shape after 1993, and their legal framework is regulated by Act No. 473/2005 Coll. on the provision of private

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security services.<sup>4</sup> This Act defines not only the conditions of doing business in this area, but also the scope of authorisations and obligations of entities providing security services. Although the private security system in Slovakia can be considered stabilised, the legislative changes that are currently in the process of preparation may fundamentally affect the business environment in this sector. The key problems facing the private security sector are low wages, poor quality of staff, high turnover and lack of quality control of services. These shortcomings are a frequent subject of public criticism and reduce the prestige of the profession.

On the other hand, municipal police forces have a different focus and remit. Compared to private security services, they operate as local government units, with specific tasks aimed at protecting public order or controlling compliance with generally binding regulations. Although municipal police forces have limited powers compared to the state police, their presence on the streets of towns and villages is much more visible to citizens. However, in this area, too, there is a growing discussion about increasing their powers, organising them more efficiently and the need to increase their material and technical support.

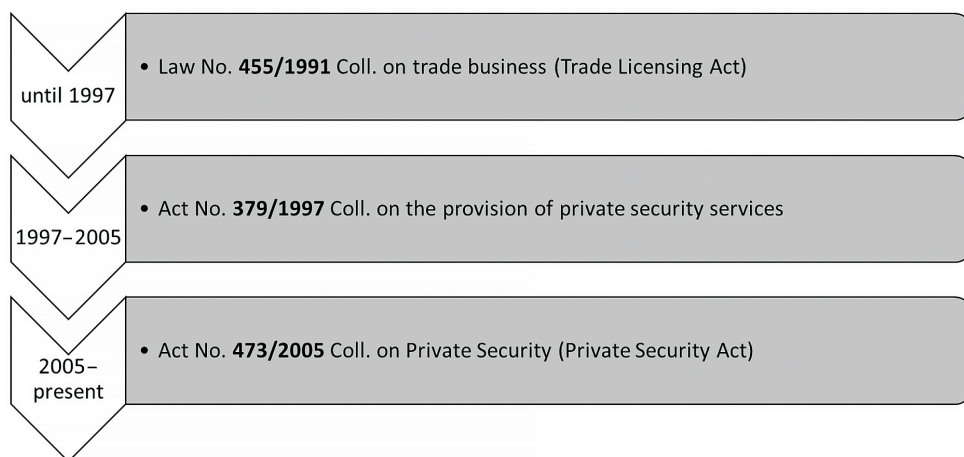
The aim of this article is to present the current state of private security services and municipal police in Slovakia, assess their key challenges and identify potential solutions to the problems they face. This analysis provides a comprehensive view of the functioning of these institutions, their legislative anchoring, relations with other entities and public perception.

## **Private security services in Slovakia**

Private security services in Slovakia came into being after 1993 with the establishment of the independent Slovak Republic. During more than 30 years of their existence, it can be stated that the system has been stabilised. Since 2005, there has been a legal regulation regulating private security services, Act No. 473/2005 of the National Assembly of the Slovak Republic on the provision of services in the field of private security (Figure 1). At present, the Ministry of the Interior has already declared that a major amendment is in the pipeline that would simplify the business of private security. Although the law has shortcomings, it has the advantage of allowing those carrying out the protection to physically carry out the intervention within the law, where the intervening person is authorised and protected by the law.

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<sup>4</sup> Private Security Services Act.



*Figure 1: Development of legal regulation in the field of private security in Slovakia*

Source: VEĽAS 2021

## Institutional framework of private security in Slovakia

Probably the most discussed aspect by the managers of private security services is their control by the Police Force. The Police Corps has created an Office of Private Security Services at the Presidium of the Police Corps and departments of private security services in all regions. Its personnel carry out regular inspections of private security services and impose sanctions. Interestingly, the police force operates monitoring and alarm receiving centres, thus creating direct competition with the private security services it inspects. For the private security services, control by the police force is not a very suitable solution and they would welcome their own independent chamber of private security, where membership would be compulsory, which would set the quality system and determine the way of training employees,<sup>5</sup> or regulate the prices for the services provided. At present, there is only one professional association in Slovakia, which has up to 50 members out of approximately 3,500 licences granted, called the Slovak Chamber of Private Security.<sup>6</sup>

Private security services employ approximately 20,000 employees in Slovakia. This is only slightly less than the number of members of the Slovak Police. Only about 3,000 employees of private security services use a weapon in the performance of their duties. The others use material security equipment. The authorisation for their use is also contained in the Private Security Act. Physical fitness training or

<sup>5</sup> VEĽAS 2016; ZVAKOVÁ 2018.

<sup>6</sup> See: <https://sksb.sk>

verification of physical fitness for the performance of this service is sporadic. The physician’s assessment of health status focuses on motor skills and the ability to move without aids, or on the assessment of visual abilities. Mental fitness is not addressed by law, and if employers started to require it, it is possible that they would have no one to employ.<sup>7</sup>

Most often, those employed in private security are retired persons, or persons with retirement pensions from the security forces of the state, or persons not applicable in another sphere of the national economy. The reason for this is the relatively low average wage. This is also why employment in the private security services is more of an emergency or temporary solution. There is a high turnover of employees throughout the private security sector. The main reason for this turnover is the average wage, which is one of the lowest in the national economy.<sup>8</sup> According to the server platy.sk, it is approximately EUR 750 brutto, which is basically the minimum wage in Slovakia in 2024 according to the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family.<sup>9</sup>

The Private Security Act lists several forms of security services in which business may be conducted. Interestingly, the law does not address the performance of commercial security consultancy and audits (Figure 2).

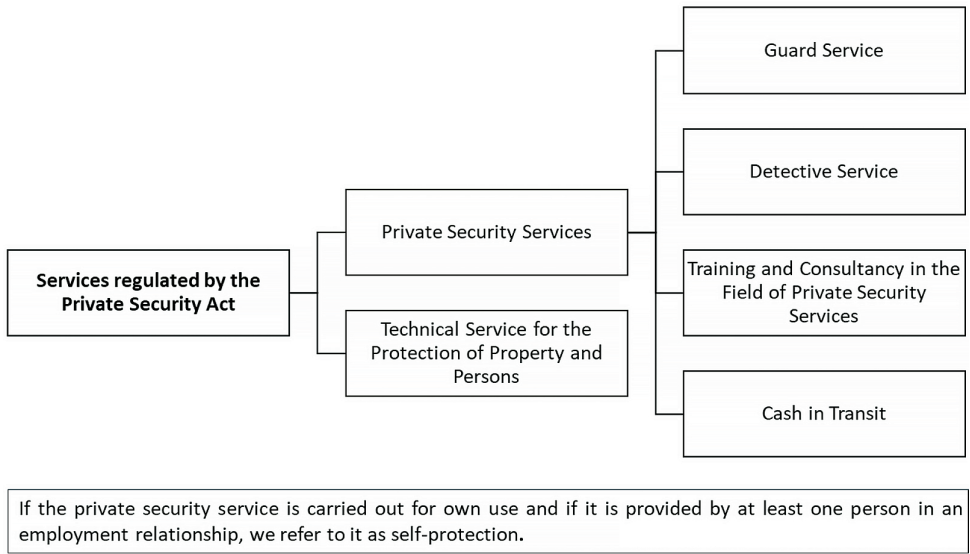


Figure 2: Types of services regulated by the Private Security Act

Source: VELAS 2021

<sup>7</sup> See: [www.minv.sk/?urad-sukromnych-bezpecnostnych-sluzieb-p-pz](http://www.minv.sk/?urad-sukromnych-bezpecnostnych-sluzieb-p-pz)

<sup>8</sup> See: [www.platy.sk/en/salaryinfo/security-protection](http://www.platy.sk/en/salaryinfo/security-protection)

<sup>9</sup> See: [www.employment.gov.sk/sk/](http://www.employment.gov.sk/sk/)

Operators of private security services have several obligations. Among these obligations we can include:<sup>10</sup>

- fulfilling the obligations laid down in the Private Security Act and other legislation
- the protection of personality, the protection of personal data in information systems, the reputation of persons and the protection of business secrets
- ensure the processing of the record of the intervention, keep a record of interventions and immediately notify the locally competent unit of the Police Force of the execution of each intervention

The responsibilities of a security guard operator:<sup>11</sup>

- ascertain whether the person with whom they intend to contract the provision of a security service is entitled to use the property to be protected. For this purpose, they are entitled to request and retain relevant documents
- refrain from supporting or protecting conduct that violates generally applicable laws
- ensure that the state of alarm is immediately verified by at least two competent persons responsible for physical protection or by means of a VSS (Video Surveillance System) system
- prohibit the provision of guarding services in a manner that could give rise to a reasonable apprehension that they will be used to forcibly influence political disputes, collective bargaining between employees and employers, or to suppress rights and freedoms

The detective service may not be carried out in a manner which interferes with personality or other rights protected by law or which intentionally interferes with the activities of a public authority or which could frustrate the activities of a public authority. The following shall not be investigated in the Detective Service:<sup>12</sup>

- a person's political, trade union or religious beliefs or his or her membership of a particular race, ethnic group or nationality
- a person's state of health, sexual relations and proclivities. Those facts may only be inquired into if they are facts which could lead to the dissolution of the marriage and the contract for the provision of the detective service is entered into by one of the spouses, or if they are sexual relations and proclivities which are unlawful or are likely to lead to unlawful conduct

Currently, the Slovak Private Security Act needs an amendment that will change the system of regulation of the provision of technical services in the field of private security. According to Section 7 of Act No. 473/2005 Coll. on the provision of services in the field of private security, a 'technical service' is the design, installation, maintenance,

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<sup>10</sup> Private Security Act.

<sup>11</sup> Private Security Act.

<sup>12</sup> Private Security Act; BOROŠ et al. 2022.

revision or repair of security systems or alarm systems and systems and equipment enabling the monitoring of a person's movement and actions in or around a protected facility, protected place or protected area. In neighbouring countries, these activities are largely unregulated by law, and a number of foreign and domestic companies carrying out electrical installation work take a similar approach. Thus, they do not apply for a license to provide technical services from the Police Department and do business without one. The police do not, therefore, inspect them and do not impose sanctions on them for breaches of the requirements of this law. In the case of an applicant for a licence to provide technical services, the police force assesses the applicant's integrity and reliability and his education, which should be in electrical engineering.

The facility can only be connected to the central protection desk of the police force if:<sup>13</sup>

- the Police Service has the necessary technical and physical capacities
- the security situation is positive
- the facility meets the technical and security-tactical requirements
- there is a separate metallic telephone line in the building (DSL line meets the condition)

The facility may be connected if:<sup>14</sup>

- the customer has lawfully acquired the individual parts of the alarm system intended for installation in the facility and has submitted documents to this effect for inspection on request and the individual parts of the alarm system comply with the relevant technical standards
- the installation, servicing and inspection of the alarm system are carried out by an authorised organisation

This service is chargeable and its price includes, in addition to the entry fees and the basic price of the service, coefficients reflecting the value of the protected asset, the risk level of the protected asset, the dislocation of the protected asset and its general characteristics.

## **The most important issues in private security in Slovakia**

Private security services often have a low value in the eyes of the public for the following reasons:

- *Negative experiences and stereotypes:* the public often associates private security services with individuals who operate unprofessionally, whether due to lack of training, poor customer service or poor communication. Incidents of inappro-

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<sup>13</sup> Ministerstvo Vnútra Slovenskej Republiky [s. a.].

<sup>14</sup> Ministerstvo Vnútra Slovenskej Republiky [s. a.].

priate behaviour appear in the media, which can shape a negative image of the sector as a whole. The media do not provide information on cases where private security services have intervened successfully, but highlight failures.

- *Lack of strong regulation and internal quality control:* Despite the control of private security services by the police force, inspections are not frequent enough and do not lead to an improvement of the situation. Rather, they are demotivating.
- *Educational requirements* are insufficient, not reflecting new trends and favouring former employees of the security forces and the police force.<sup>15</sup>
- *The role of private security services in society is underestimated.* The public often does not see the real importance of private security services, as their work is mainly preventive. If no incident occurs, their contribution remains 'invisible'. Private security services are often seen only as a necessary adjunct to buildings insurance, where required by insurance policies, or as a necessary complement to department stores.
- *Low financial remuneration* not only lowers the quality of workers, but also signals that the work itself is not sufficiently valued by society. The public is aware of this fact and subconsciously associates low pay with poor performance. They see employees standing or sitting in department stores and at the door as lazy and inept.
- *Mismatch between expectations and reality:* many people expect private security services to be highly professional and able to deal with complex situations, but the reality (due to lack of training or low wages) often falls short of these expectations. It is quite complicated to demand quality at a low price. This leads to frustration and a decrease in trust towards these services.
- *Lack of publicity and education:* private security services do little to communicate their achievements, added value and importance. The public is often unaware of the specialised services they can provide. Advertising is sporadic and limited to occasional use of billboards. Even the Slovak Chamber of Private Security does not invest in advertising. Education about their work could help to change perceptions.

The Department of Security Management of the Faculty of Security Engineering of the University of Žilina also trains professionals for the private security services. For almost 25 years of its activity, the Department has supported the Slovak Chamber of Private Security (formerly the Association for the Protection of Persons and Property) in its activities and has solved scientific tasks aimed at analysing and improving the current state of the art. It has succeeded in enforcing in the law that persons who have completed a second or third degree in a field of study in the field of security services, or who have been awarded the academic degree of associate professor or professor in these fields, meet the educational requirements required by the law in Section 17 to operate a detective service and training and consulting service.

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<sup>15</sup> ZVAKOVÁ 2018; BOROŠ et al. 2019.



## Municipal police in Slovakia

Municipal police in Slovakia are the most visible armed security force on the streets of towns and villages. Currently, 171 municipalities and towns have municipal police out of a total of 2,927 municipalities and towns. The majority of their officers, numbering approximately 2,700, are on the streets conducting patrol activities. The county towns have riot squads that are trained to carry out the crackdown.

Within the framework of the project 06-2020-VÚBP – Evaluation and management of occupational risks of municipal police officers in the context of accepted safety and security measures, the outputs were published in cooperation with the University of Žilina and the Research Institute of Occupational Safety, v. v. i., in Prague. These outputs deal with the safety of municipal police officers and the protection of their health at work.<sup>16</sup>

Other areas that have been the subject of elaboration by the authors of scientific literature include the specific scope of municipal police forces, the evaluation of their officers or the improvement of certain authorisations. The number of articles, researches and analyses dealing with the given issue obviously limits the interest of the society in its solution, but this interest has been minimal for many years. It is only now that it is possible to say that there is a general interest in better protection of the population and more effective use of the capacities of municipal police forces. This fact creates opportunities and demand for scientific work, which should be the basis for effective changes based on the real needs of society and the real potential of municipal police forces.<sup>17</sup>

Municipal police forces in different countries around the world differ from each other in their powers, scope of operation or the very idea on the basis of which they were established (Table 1). At one end of this spectrum are countries that have chosen to entrust their internal security primarily to state-established and controlled security forces. These do not use the potential of municipal police forces at all or only for limited activities such as parking control or the delivery of official decisions (e.g. Austria, the Federal Republic of Germany, which have established so-called municipal patrols). An example is the Austrian city of Linz, where a city security service was set up in September 2010, which is specific in that it is set up by the city as a limited liability company. In reality, it operates as a legal entity under the control of the municipality. Its employees are responsible for improving order and cleanliness in the city from 06:30 to 22:30 every day, and their main tasks include:<sup>18</sup>

- reporting illegal waste dumps
- educating dog owners if they breach their obligations to keep their dog on a lead, muzzled and otherwise
- prevention of illegal begging and illegal street music production

<sup>16</sup> ŠOLTÉS et al. 2020; KUBÁS et al. 2021; PEKNY 2023.

<sup>17</sup> PEKNY 2023.

<sup>18</sup> Ordnungsdienst der Stadt Linz 2023; PEKNY 2023.



- monitoring compliance with youth protection regulations
- reporting crimes, prevention and assistance to victims of crime
- reporting sources of hazards such as icy conditions, blocked fire department access roads, monitoring static traffic

On the other hand, there are states that consider their local police forces to be full-fledged armed security forces (e.g. Municipal police departments of the United States). Municipal police forces, under the control of local governments, have extensive powers and carry out all routine as well as specialised police activities within their jurisdiction. Indeed, they are well equipped, using a variety of equipment, including special emergency vehicles, ballistic protection vehicles, helicopters and boat-mounted helicopters.<sup>19</sup>

In order to operate efficiently, these police departments in the US are structured into multiple offices, with the names of these offices also suggesting the actual scope of their activities. In addition to the normal administrative offices related to the smooth running, staffing and material support of the various departments, there are special offices that are primarily dedicated to the direct performance of or support for the service. These are primarily the patrol services bureau, the detective bureau, the special operations bureau, the transit, air, boat and road transport bureau, and in some cases the counter-terrorism bureau, which serve to protect the city from the threat of international and domestic terrorism.<sup>20</sup>

Table 1: Level of municipal police authority

Level of municipal police authority	Country-typical representative	Level of competence of municipal police forces
5	USA	The municipal police operate independently and has comprehensive powers and an all-round focus.
4	Belgium	The municipal police have wide-ranging powers, high autonomy, and is partly dependent on the support of the state police.
3	Czech Republic	The municipal police have limited powers, in many cases dependent on the assistance of the state police.
2	Slovakia	Municipal police have more limited powers, in many cases dependent on the assistance of the state police.
1	Austria	Municipal police have minimal powers, mostly acting only as reporters of antisocial activities.

Source: PEKNY 2023

<sup>19</sup> PEKNY 2023.

<sup>20</sup> ŠOLTĚS 2021; MOORE 2024; PEKNY 2023.

## **Institutional framework of municipal police in Slovakia**

Municipal police forces in Slovakia are an autonomous police-security force under the control of the local government, they have the possibility to use law enforcement means, and their officers have the status of public officials. However, the dominant position is held by the Police Corps, which is reflected not only in the scope and competences, but also in the control of municipal police activities by the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic. Each municipality that has established municipal police is obliged to send a report on the activities of the municipal police for the previous calendar year to the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic by 31 March of each year. In addition to the inspection, the MoI SR issues the certificate of professional competence of a municipal police officer, provides training for applicants and determines the state policy in the area of the performance of the tasks of state supervision over the activities of municipal police.

The basic tasks of the municipal police are defined in Section 3 of the Municipal Police Act, based on which in particular:<sup>21</sup>

- ensure public order
- cooperate in the protection of the inhabitants of the municipality and other persons in the municipality against threats to their life and health
- cooperate in the protection of the property of the municipality, the property of the citizens, as well as other property in the municipality, also with the use of security systems
- maintain order, cleanliness and hygiene in the streets, public spaces and other publicly available places
- clarify and investigate in block proceedings selected offences against road safety and traffic flow, as well as offences provided for by special regulations
- address the issue of the prohibition of consumption of alcoholic beverages by minors
- participate in the performance of tasks in the field of crime prevention

For employment in the municipal police, it is sufficient to have a secondary education, to meet the conditions laid down in the Municipal Police Act and to have completed a three-month course culminating in an examination. Training activities are carried out in specialised training centres in Nitra, Košice, Žilina and Bratislava. A municipal police officer who has obtained a degree in security service studies at a secondary school or university also meets the professional competence requirements.

The theoretical part of the training of municipal police officers provides basic theoretical knowledge focused on the performance of the activities of a municipal police officer through individual teaching areas, which are:

- basics of the legal order

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<sup>21</sup> Municipal Police Act; VEĽAS 2019.

- basics of constitutional law
- selected issues of administrative law
- selected issues of criminal law
- generally binding municipal regulations
- professional police training (police service, traffic service and selected issues of criminalistics)
- ethics and psychology of police work and service
- selected occupational health and safety issues

The practical part of the training of municipal police officers provides the basic practical skills and habits necessary for the performance of the service of a municipal police officer, which are provided through practical training in the following teaching areas:

- administrative processing of documentation
- practical procedure in the application of individual authorisations and in the execution of interventions
- marksmanship training
- physical training
- medical training
- administrative techniques and the basics of computer science
- communications training

Unlike some surrounding states, city police officers carry a gun on duty. Municipal police task forces have submachine guns and shotguns. Their technical equipment often exceeds that of police officers. In addition to motor vehicles, they use motor-cycles, scooters, bicycles and other modes of transport in their work. Their activities are monitored and controlled by body cameras in selected cities. They have their own handlers with trained dogs. The material and technical equipment depends on the budget allocated to these forces by the municipal council.

Patrolling can be considered the most widely used method, which stems directly from the nature of the work of the municipal police. Its benefit lies in the fact that the presence of municipal police officers in the streets of towns and villages helps to prevent many negative phenomena, the commission of criminal and other antisocial activities or to increase the citizens' sense of security. The fact that the patrol can, at the initiative of a citizen, promptly intervene to prevent the possible occurrence of such a negative phenomenon, for example in the event of a conflict that might otherwise escalate into a physical assault, also proves to be effective.

The municipal police have an indispensable role in monitoring public spaces and preventing crime, as they operate the city's VSS monitoring systems and monitoring and alarm receiving centres. Monitoring of public spaces through VSS is a suitable substitute for the presence of a patrol in the monitored area. It can be said that VSS can make a significant contribution to the prevention of property crime in particular, but also other criminal and antisocial activities. Its indisputable advantage

is the permanent monitoring of the public space, the archiving of recordings and the possibility of using them as a means of evidence.<sup>22</sup> By comparison, the police force does not have a single street camera system, and so most of the street and other crime cases detected by street monitoring are due to municipal and city police.

Targeted prevention aimed at a specific population group is carried out by municipal police forces through lectures, projects, practical traffic education for young people or other activities that have a positive impact on their participants. Their quality, variety and possibility of delivery depend mainly on the number of prevention officers and the material and technical equipment available to the municipal or municipal police in question. It must be said that it is not compulsory for municipal police forces to carry out this type of prevention, so they do not have to carry it out at all at their own discretion.

## **The most important issues of municipal police in Slovakia**

In 2023, employment in municipal and city police forces was only a temporary solution for many officers due to low average wages. Many of them then end up in the state police or in another sector. Today, the average salary of a municipal police officer in Bratislava is approximately EUR 1,600, where the average salary is EUR 2,162. Despite this, the Association of Municipal and City Police Chiefs managed to win a benefit in the form of a special allowance for working in the municipal police for those who serve at least 25 years and reach the age of at least 56.

Despite this, municipal and municipal police forces do not have enough qualified personnel or applicants for employment. The lack of competence in the area of traffic, which is the measurement of speed on municipal roads, is a solvable problem. Municipal police officers are prohibited from doing this and so they deal primarily with road safety and traffic offences or parking policy. Another systematic problem is the absence of places where persons under the influence of alcohol, drugs and other substances can be placed under the supervision of doctors. The abundance of homeless people is a phenomenon of modern cities. They cannot be fined and banned from public spaces. They are often dealt with repeatedly by members of the municipal police who try to help them.

Opportunities lie in increasing cooperation with state police forces, which underestimate the work of municipal and city police forces and do not actively develop cooperation with them, despite the fact that they do not have sufficient staff capacity themselves. Other opportunities to increase the visibility of their activities are preventive programmes and activities in the field of soft target protection. Some municipal police offices are located in buildings they share with schools.

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<sup>22</sup> PEKNY 2023.

Municipal police officers are particularly limited in the following privileges:<sup>23</sup>

- The authority to stop vehicles, primarily in situations where preventive action can be taken to prevent a threat to property, life and health, but also situations where stopping a vehicle is required by another important task performed by the municipal police (e.g. protection of public spaces during cultural, sporting or other mass events, the ability to stop the driver of a vehicle that has caused a traffic accident or to stop a vehicle where a possible perpetrator of a crime or a witness to such an act is present).
- The authority to perform tasks in another municipality, unless there is a contract between the municipalities. This strict limitation prevents municipal police from exercising their powers outside their area of jurisdiction, even if it is an exceptional case of pursuing a perpetrator of a serious crime.
- The power to demand an explanation and the power to produce evidence of identity relate in particular to the identification of perpetrators of crime and the securing of witnesses at the scene of the crime. If municipal and city police officers could also demand explanations from witnesses to assaults, disturbances and similar incidents that occur on a daily basis, this would contribute greatly to their future clarification.

## Conclusion

Private security services and municipal police play an indispensable role in ensuring security and public order in Slovakia. Each of these institutions has its specific mission and area of competence, while their effectiveness is directly dependent on legislative conditions, material and technical provision and the quality of human resources. Private security services in the Slovak Republic face a number of challenges, such as low wages, high staff turnover, lack of psychological evaluation of staff or unclear rules for doing business in the field of technical services. The forthcoming amendment to Act No. 473/2005 Coll. should contribute to simplifying regulation and removing the shortcomings that currently hinder the transparency and competitiveness of this sector. Improving the status of private security services employees, increasing their qualifications and introducing stricter quality controls could raise the prestige of the profession in the eyes of the public.

In the case of municipal police forces, their position and role in society is gradually changing. Although their powers are limited compared to the national police, their presence on the streets of towns and villages is unmistakable. Municipal police carry out patrol activities, ensure compliance with local ordinances and participate in the protection of public order. More efficient use of the capacities of municipal

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<sup>23</sup> PEKNY 2023.

police forces, improving their equipment and training, as well as strengthening their powers could contribute to greater security in towns and cities.

Based on the above findings, it is clear that the security environment in Slovakia is undergoing changes that have the potential to improve the functioning of both sectors—private security services and municipal police. The future of these institutions depends on the ability of legislation to respond flexibly to the needs of practice and on active cooperation between state and non-state actors. The introduction of new forms of training, the modernisation of technical equipment and the strengthening of control mechanisms can help to improve the image of these services in the eyes of the public and increase their contribution to society. If the shortcomings that are currently present can be remedied, we can expect a greater degree of professionalism and credibility for these institutions. Improving the work of private security services and municipal police forces promises greater security, protection of citizens' rights and greater public confidence in these institutions.

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