



## **CoESS comments on Consultation of European Social Partners on Reconciliation of Professional, Private and Family life.**

1. CoESS (Confederation of European Security Services) has been integrating the issue of reconciliation of professional, private and family life in the activities jointly undertaken with UNI-Europa in the framework of the social dialogue. In 2000, the joint declaration on the modernisation of organisation of work in the private security sector already stated that while considering practical ways of adapting to the increasing demand of flexibility by clients, «these changes should take place against a background of improvements in job security and the quality of private life.» The ulterior Code of Conduct and ethics for the private security sector also developed this principle stating that «when negotiators address subjects such as the number of hours worked per week, overtime hours and night or weekend work, they also have to take into account the goal of achieving a better balance between security officer's professional and private lives. »
2. The current working programme UNI-Europa-CoESS identifies the issue of gender equality as one of areas subject to joint reflection. In particular, it declares that both organisations «stress that the respect for equal opportunity and diversity in the European private security are amongst the objectives of the work in their social dialogue committee. The goal of the social partners is therefore to contribute to the achievement of equality of opportunity between men and women.»
3. The particular features of the sector considerably affect reconciliation of professional, private and family life in the private security activities. Provision of private security services is linked to a certain degree of flexibility; companies have to adapt to the nature of the services required by the clients, since security needs are changing on a daily basis. On the other hand, security services are required 24 hours per day, 365 days per year. All these circumstances have a direct impact on the reconciliation measures adopted at company/sectoral level and provide already the existing workforce with possibilities to work according to needs related to private and family life. The particular organisation of work of the private security services allows potential candidates to enter our sector with the necessary degree of flexibility (part time arrangements) that allows a right balance of conciliation of professional, private and family life.

- 4 As a matter of fact, incorporation of women in the sector is rather limited. No European wide validating figures exist, though some studies argue that the percentage of women ranges from 5 to 15% depending on the company<sup>1</sup>. This study also mention the fact that female employees often fill specific posts, either on the basis of customer's demand, either on demand of the female employee concerned. However, this study also concludes that «the number of women working in private security seems to be increasing».
5. CoESS considers that the issue of reconciliation between professional, private and family life, is an issue that should be constantly improved. It also believes that when specific demands of workforce regarding this issue can be met, services performed only benefit, as well as the overall image of the sector for the whole society. Private security is a highly regulated sector, be it through legislation or through collective agreements (and very often, these cannot go against the legislative framework). Where possible, not only the general political measures but also the specific pieces of legislation linked to our sector should be analysed from a reconciliation perspective, and, if possible, from a legal perspective, adapted.
- 6 Where improvements might be needed most, we insist on the need of developing working time and flexible working arrangements on the basis of the agreements already achieved by social partners at national level. While ensuring the full respect of the workers rights, and the necessary training and qualifications of the personnel involved, flexible contractual figures according to the national legal framework can contribute to fit the growing demand for our services. In this sense, the inherent flexibility to the services provided by our industry can play an extremely positive role for the reconciliation process, since private security can suit with the working demands of specific workers that are affected by personnel or family circumstances. A precondition is the particular regulation that covers our sector does not interfere with this objective.
7. We do not consider ourselves in a position to consider the adequacy of current Community legislation on parental leave or protection of maternity. In any case, inherent flexibility of our sector implies that, from our perspective, focus should be put on alternative labour law regulations (such as, regulation of flexible contracting arrangements, temporary agencies, etc).
8. Finally, a right balance of costs and benefits can only be achieved if we are in a win-win process. Eventual cost of additional reconciliation measures can be perfectly compensated as long as they also indirectly contribute to the provision of services to the company clients. Should quality of services be increased through the reconciliation process, not only these measures could be considered as a cost but also and mainly as a long-term investment.

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<sup>1</sup> TEF-ULB. Private security and work organisation. SPOT II study. 2003.