



“Code of conduct and ethics for the private security sector”

I. What is the purpose of a code of conduct and ethics in the sector?

The private security sector in the European Union comprises almost 10,000 companies employing some 600,000 employees. When we take into account the Union’s future enlargement, it will comprise some 20,000 companies and 1,100,000 security officers.

In the sector, public and private customers alike increasingly demand high quality. Technological developments are becoming more sophisticated. The safety of employees (who are often exposed to dangerous situations) leaves no room for amateur efforts. Private security requires increasingly higher levels of professionalism every day.

The increasing demand for the security and protection of property and of persons must be combined with strict respect for democratic laws and the legal protection of citizens. Within this framework, the sector can contribute to the development of a safer society, thereby making it possible for public and private freedom to be exercised without restriction.

Accordingly, the private security sector is very important for the current and future Member States of the European Union and for their citizens.

CoESS and UNI-Europa have noted certain problems preventing the development of the sector at European level. National regulations are sometimes inadequate or non-existent, and do not guarantee the professionalism that the sector needs. In addition, national regulations differ from one another and they prevent the sector from fully benefiting from the European integration.

Concerning the future enlargement of the European Union, CoESS and UNI-Europa believe that there should be a more harmonised regulatory framework at the European level for the private security sector. In their social dialogue, CoESS and UNI-Europa have committed themselves to work towards the development of standards and European frameworks, with application on a voluntary basis in the countries and companies, to move towards a beneficial harmonisation for the whole of the sector.

In this context it is crucial that all security activities be carried out with the necessary professionalism. This code was established by the representatives of European social partners (CoESS and UNI-Europa) as part of their social dialogue, with a view to ensuring the development of standards of conduct and ethics, the purpose of which is to benefit companies, employees, clients and society in general.

II. What are the characteristics of this code of conduct?

This code of conduct contains a series of standards that are jointly recommended by CoESS and UNI-Europa to all of the sector's companies and employees.

This code lists, in a structured format, certain aspects of private security, the adherence to which constitutes, in the opinion of CoESS and UNI-Europa, a fundamental condition for guaranteeing the minimum necessary degree of professionalism and quality.

The success of this code will be dependent upon the commitment of each of the parties in question - company managers, employees, trade union delegates, national trade union organisations, national professional associations, and European organisations - to adopt the content of this code in order to ensure that the sector implements it.

III. Principles

1. Compliance with regulations applicable to the sector

In general, in European countries, strict regulations govern the incorporation and exercise of private security companies' activities. Private security companies commit themselves to applying all of these regulatory provisions to the letter, and in the spirit in which they were written. By doing so, they will demonstrate openness and transparency in all of their actions with their employees, clients (private and public) and relevant public authorities.

In those countries where national regulations are non-existent or underdeveloped, it is the responsibility of companies and employees and their representatives to promote the development of appropriate regulations, within the framework of their representative organisations.

Every person involved in the sector, regardless of his or her position, must have as permanent objective to contribute to the respect and the improvement of the legislation in force in his or her country and the entire European Union.

2. Transparency of procedures and systems established at companies

.As far as possible, the security companies must ensure that any internal organisational procedures implemented are made transparent and are applied without discrimination to all parties concerned.

Within the limit of their expertise, it is the responsibility of employees and their trade union representatives, equally to apply the same transparency of the internal procedures or systems established by agreements concluded at the company level.

3. Permits and authorisations

A company that is active in the sector, or that wishes to enter the sector, must satisfy the conditions imposed by national regulations, in order to obtain the permits and authorisations needed by the company, its management, and its staff.

Professional associations of private security companies must ensure that all of their members satisfy this obligation.

CoESS and UNI-Europa feel that the licences should be granted on an independent basis, according to procedures which are fair and transparent, and applied in the same way to all companies, irrespective of size.

4. Selection and Recruitment

Selection and recruitment of staff are important events within private security companies. The quality and value of private security services are strongly influenced by the quality and skills of the employees who perform these services.

As a result, it is particularly important to select new employees on the basis of objective criteria that allow an evaluation of candidates' professional qualities to be made. It is equally important to take the candidate's moral values into consideration. During recruitment, the company therefore ensures that the security employee has all of the basic aptitudes that will make him or her a professional private security officer.

Respect for legislation with regard to the protection of privacy notwithstanding, CoEES and UNI-Europa feel that the adoption of and the compliance with strict rules on the background of the personnel, is a priority in the security sector. They also demand the active participation of the public authorities and the setting up of effective procedures.

5. Vocational training

Companies place great emphasis on vocational training:

Basic training:

CoEES and UNI-Europa consider that it is particularly important that newly recruited employees receive basic training to provide them with the necessary skills for their work. CoEES and UNI-Europa want national and European regulations or standards to provide for quality vocational training. They also want the granting of licences to be subject to companies being able to demonstrate, through their training programmes, not only their own quality and reliability but also that of their employees.

Companies must ensure that their security officers have at least passed the basic training required by any existing national regulations or standards. In the absence of such regulations or standards, the company should endeavour to provide, at the very least, training corresponding to the contents of the European vocational training manual for basic guarding drawn up by CoESS and UNI-Europa as part of their social dialogue, for each security officer in question recruited within a limited time.

Specialised training:

Companies should also ensure that those of their security officers who are assigned to specific client departments have passed the corresponding training required by national regulations or standards, where these exist. In the absence of such regulations or standards, the company must attempt to provide appropriate training to the security officers in question within a limited time.

Ongoing training:

Companies must attempt to offer their security officers ongoing training, with a view to updating their professional skills and promoting their career development. The use of rapidly evolving new technologies also requires ongoing vocational training.

Each private security officer must understand the importance of continuing to undergo training throughout his or her career. This understanding must be reflected in a positive attitude towards the training options offered to him or her, which are paid for by the company but also with respect to any other training program opened to them by a qualified training centre. It is also the responsibility of trade union delegates to promote the importance of ongoing training with security officers.

As far as possible, staff representatives should be consulted with the development and the evaluation of the continuing security training programmes implemented by the company, in order to ensure their utility, quality and pertinence, and in order to guarantee that the desired results are achieved.

6. Social relations at the company

CoESS and UNI-Europa stress the importance of constructive social dialogue between trade unions and employers' organisations, at all levels (European, national, company).

CoESS and UNI-Europa are convinced that social dialogue is the key to improving the level of professionalism at all private security companies.

CoEES and UNI-Europa therefore recommend that all companies and employees create and/or improve social dialogue structures, and develop these entities so as to ensure greater consideration of the needs and concerns of each of the parties.

At the company level, such a dialogue should preferably be created through mutual recognition between company management and trade unions represented at the company. In order to ensure the necessary consistency between the company's social dialogue and the other levels of this dialogue (national and European), the parties in question should join recognised national representative organisations recognised respectively by CoESS and UNI-Europa.

7. Working conditions

Given the fundamental importance of manpower in private security activities, good working conditions constitute a crucial component in the development of the sector's companies and the potential of its workers.

Private security companies commit themselves to applying, to the letter and in the spirit in which they were written, all of the legislative and contractual provisions governing working conditions.

In order to make the profession more attractive and to improve the stability and well-being of personnel, as well as the quality of service provided, CoESS and UNI-Europa believe

that it is necessary to define and improve working conditions through consultation and negotiation at company and national levels.

8. Salaries and income

Quality work must be remunerated accordingly.

In addition, an appropriate level of remuneration adds to the appeal of the sector's professions, reflects the sector's maturity, and offers security officers recognition for their efforts. Maintenance of appropriate remuneration levels reduces the risks of unfair competition, leads to greater productivity, and ensures a high level of service quality.

CoESS and UNI-Europa encourage the parties involved in salary negotiation to set salary levels that respect and recognise the work performed and the particular conditions under which it is performed, while ensuring the company's competitiveness.

9. Health and safety

In certain functions of the private security sector, there are important occupational hazards to be reckoned with. The minimum health and safety standards for private security officers must at least be applied at all the sector's companies in order to ensure the maximum possible prevention of professional risks.

These standards should be regularly revised in consultation with the social partners and the competent authorities, in order to increase the security officers' health and safety.

10. Equal opportunities and non-discrimination

CoESS and UNI-Europa assert their support for the creation of a democratic, open and supportive society.

They believe that social partners at all levels must also assume their responsibilities for promoting equal opportunities and for combating all types of discrimination.

Private security companies must ensure the full integration of each security employee in his or her working environment, regardless of his or her ethnic or social origin, colour, gender, trade union affiliation, religion, nationality, sexual orientation or other distinguishing characteristics.

11. The organisation of work

CoESS and UNI-Europa believe that an appropriate balance must be found between two needs: job security and the quality of life on the one hand, and the requests and needs of the clients, on the other.

On the one hand, the parties concerned at the company level must, through negotiations, seek solutions to modernise work organisation, in order to improve professionalism and technological developments, and improve the quality of services and the level of client satisfaction. On the other hand, they also should also improve living and working

conditions, and provide professional development, job security, a regular minimum monthly wage, training levels and systems for preventing health and safety risks.

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 officers' professional and private lives.

12. Relations with clients

CoESS and UNI-Europa know that even today, private security service contracts are all too often awarded to the lowest bidder rather than on aspects such as the quality of service, working conditions, employee training and the company's reputation. Such a situation can lead to unfair competition and favours the appearance of illegal and non-professional practices systematically condemned by CoESS and UNI-Europa and their members.

Accordingly, it is the responsibility of each national federation of private security companies and its members to convince clients (public or private) to award contracts on the basis of the best value for money¹.

Private security companies must also ensure that client companies ensure the respect of the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination with respect to the security officers made available to them, the respect of good working conditions for employees, and their well being at their places of employment.

13. Relations with the police

All private security activities must take place with due and full respect for the regulations of, and practical co-operation arrangements with, national authorities, in particular with police forces.

In the framework of the strictest respect for the competence of each of the parties, it is therefore the responsibility of each private security company and the employees concerned, to develop, with the police forces concerned, good communication, and co-operation that is both open and constructive. Companies must also provide the employees in question with the necessary information concerning this co-operation. Just as the companies themselves do, individual employees assure the confidentiality of the information received.

14. Relations with other private security sector companies

Private security companies undertake to act in a manner consistent with the rules of fair competition and morality. They undertake to refrain from practices such as making use of the services of persons who falsely claim to be self-employed, or persons with other types of status who seek to bypass the normal payment of tax or Social Security contributions, or dump prices.

15. Implementation and follow-up of the code of conduct

¹ In this connection, CoESS and UNI-Europa have published a guide for the awarding of security contracts (www.securebestvalue.org)

CoESS and UNI-Europa believe that the social partners of each company have a particularly important role to play in the implementation of this code.

CoESS and UNI-Europa wish to place emphasis on the need for companies and employees to incorporate the principles of this code in their activities. They also emphasise the need for national employer and trade union organisations to promote this code's application to the greatest extent possible.

CoESS and UNI-Europa undertake, on a regular basis, to monitor and evaluate the implementation of this code within their social dialogue. To this end, it is critical that monitoring and preliminary evaluations take place both at company level and at national level.