



## **"Towards a European Model of Private Security"**

### **Joint declaration by CoESS and UNI-Europa**

#### Introduction

All over the world, private security services have never been more in the spotlight than today. The growing awareness for security creates a growing demand for private security services. The expansion of the sector can also be largely explained by the movement towards outsourcing the security activities of a great number of both private and public companies, which previously provided these services themselves.

This growing demand is linked with an increasing call for a high level of quality together with the guarantee - for those who contract private security services and for those who are the end-users of private security services - that these services are being delivered in a professional way that leaves absolutely no room for abuse. These factors oblige the private security services sector to evolve towards an even more professional level, characterised by a serious image, and dependent upon well-trained, highly qualified personnel, benefiting from good work conditions and a proper level of remuneration.

UNI-Europa and CoESS believe that the private security services industry within the European Union is ready to fulfil that role. The foundations are there. The general framework is there. UNI-Europa and CoESS have already made a start by defining the content. Subsequently, the European model of private security services is unique in the world. Certainly, it has its shortcomings and many more efforts and investments from all concerned parties will be necessary to develop this model over the coming years in order to make it a reference. But the awareness that UNI-Europa and CoESS have been trying to raise over the last fifteen years is starting to have its effects. Security services are considered less and less by European institutions, national authorities, companies and clients as a commodity. They now stress the importance of private security and are active in defining the right conditions for the private security services industry to assume its role as a genuine partner in the public and societal debate about security.

#### How the European Model of Private Security Services emerged

The European model of private security services has strong foundations. First of all, through their European Social Dialogue, UNI-Europa and CoESS have constantly taken initiatives to improve and promote basic aspects of our industry at a European level, such as licensing, training, quality of services, work organisation, health and safety, and integration of the industry in the new Member States and in the Candidate Countries. This has been confirmed over the past few years by the joint opinions signed by the following social partners:

- Vocational training (1996);
- Licensing (1996);
- Agreement for the creation of a Sectoral Dialogue Committee (1998);
- Memorandum on the awarding of contracts made with private security companies in the public sector (1999);
- Mutual recognition of UNI-Europa and CoESS within the framework of Social Dialogue (1999);
- Expansion of the European Union to include countries from Central and Eastern Europe (1999);
- Modernisation of labour organisation (2000);
- European harmonisation of the legislations governing the private security sector (2001).

The slow but regular realisation of these initiatives at national and local level is starting to bear its first results.

Secondly, a number of national governments and authorities have succeeded over the years in adopting legislative and regulatory frameworks for private security activities. Although some European countries still lack such a framework, there is growing awareness that this is an absolute prerequisite for the sector to function properly.

Thirdly, many large and smaller private security companies have understood the importance and necessity of creating good working and living conditions for their staff.

And finally, owing to current affairs and their political agenda, the European institutions have recently focused their attention on our industry to a much greater extent, now taking into account the importance of the role private security is obliged to assume in the general debate about security.

#### Characteristics of the European Model of Private Security Services

The model is based on certain key principles. In the eyes of CoESS and UNI-Europa, the respect of these principles constitutes a fundamental condition to guarantee the necessary minimum of professionalism and quality.

CoESS and UNI-Europa describe the key principles behind the European model in the code of conduct and ethics they adopted in July 2003. This code aims to raise the standards applicable to the sector and to guarantee a high level of professional ethics in private security companies throughout Europe. It contains a collection of basic recommendations that should be applied by all employers and employees in the sector.

In numerous European countries, strict regulations govern how the activities of private security companies are established and exercised. CoESS and UNI-Europa consider that all companies in this sector should conform to these regulations, and that it is the responsibility of employers and employees to work together to improve them in every country where these regulations are non-existent or under-developed.

Through this code, CoESS and UNI-Europa recognise the need for a fair and transparent system for granting authorisations and for selecting and recruiting staff. The essential role of training at all levels and, in particular, basic training for new recruits, the respect and improvement of work conditions, health and safety standards and negotiation with trade unions regarding proper levels of remuneration all feature among the key principles of the European model.

CoESS and UNI-Europa also request that the labour organisations within companies take into consideration the objective to reconcile the professional and private lives of their staff better.

In general, CoESS and UNI-Europa promote the essential role of social dialogue at all levels. Support for the principles of equality and non-discrimination, co-operation with the police authorities, the prevention of various forms of unfair competition and customer relations are also essential components of the European model.

## Challenges for the European Model of Private Security Services

The challenges and the pressures that the European model has to face today are tremendous, and will not be easy to overcome.

Reducing constraints and removing the obstacles that prevent the free movement of services within the European market is one of the European Union's basic goals. Although favourable towards instruments that improve the functioning of the internal market of services capable of reducing duplications at administrative level and offering greater transparency and clarity to companies, employees and consumers, CoESS and UNI-Europa consider that the regulations governing the European private security sector cannot be considered as simple administrative constraints. Indeed, the specific nature of private security services, closely interlinked with the fundamental issue of public security, requires the establishment of strict conditions specific to the sector especially for entering the market, the screening of private security officers, training, the definition of activities, and the right and the obligation for national authorities to exercise a permanent control over private security companies. It is for this reason that CoESS and UNI-Europa consider that the private security sector must follow its own path and must be excluded from the directive's area of application concerning services, or that it should at least be the subject of specific basic exceptions. (cf. position paper CoEES/UNI-Europa).

European harmonisation of the private security services sector has always played a key role in all joint activities and projects undertaken by UNI-Europa and CoESS. It is the ultimate goal and the reference for any concrete initiative. However, UNI-Europa and CoESS have also always stressed that all European harmonisation in the private security services sector must be planned as an upward development. Some European countries have already developed very detailed and high quality legislation. It is these kinds of legislations and regulations that must serve as a basis for any future European harmonisation in order to enhance the overall level of our industry. There are very concrete reasons to favour an upward harmonisation. National regulations are sometimes non-existent, inadequate and do not guarantee the professionalism the sector needs. They differ from one country to another and prevent the sector from drawing on the full benefits of European integration. All too often, usual market practices give priority to the price of the service, and little - or no - attention to the quality aspects. The often unattractive working conditions with which a large number of workers in the sector still have to contend, the highly competitive economic environment and the tendency to perceive private security services as a commodity, have a negative effect on the quality of services and the image of the sector.

Today, various important economic players such as airports, (sea)ports, air carriers, industrial entities, transport companies, security companies and many other service providers face real risks of catastrophic losses due to acts of war and terrorism. It is true that security service providers only have a limited role as one link in the entire security chain, in particular in light of recent European regulations imposing major responsibilities related to security on national Governments. But it is also true that the liability of private security service providers is potentially unlimited in the event of a catastrophic terrorist attack. The same goes for airports, ports, air carriers, production sites, etc. Considering the important role of our industry in today's society, it can only be in the interest of society as a whole to find appropriate solutions to limit the losses incurred by all commercial parties in this industry to levels that are reasonable and/or that provide alternative funding sources for losses. It is also obvious that in order to find a long-term solution for the critical liability issues resulting from terrorist attacks or acts of war, some form of clear legal framework within the EU is required for the different sectors concerned.

## Plans for the future: UNI-Europa and CoESS commitments

In recent times, expectations regarding the private security sector have fundamentally changed. It is for this reason that UNI-Europa and CoESS are more than ever determined to play their role in the preservation, improvement and development of this European model, which they believe to be the only valid model to deal with all matters related to public security, not only for the private security services sector but also for society as a whole.

Through their social dialogue, UNI-Europa and CoESS therefore renew their commitment to:

- Improve general working conditions in Europe in order to narrow the existing gaps and to raise all European countries to an acceptable level of social environment;
- Strengthen the dialogue and the co-operation with the responsible authorities at national level, through their members, in order to create and improve the right regulatory framework, allowing private security services to play their role fully as partners to guarantee a secure environment;
- Lobby with all competent European institutions in order to guarantee that the basic European principles and foundations are realised alongside the development and the rightful protection of the private security services industry, thus allowing maximum benefits for all parties involved;
- Raise awareness among private security companies regarding the need to strive for quality and professionalism;
- Continue to raise awareness among all European or national, public or private clients concerning the need to demand a high level of private security services, thus leading the market price to a level where quality and price are in balance;
- Help all their members to develop a constructive and fruitful social dialogue at all levels;
- Use their expertise, resources and results already achieved in order to help the responsible players within the new EU Member States and Candidate Countries to harmonise their private security services industry and traditions with the European model.

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Signed in Madrid, on 15 October 2004

For UNI-Europa  
Bernadette SEGOL  
Regional Secretary

For CoESS  
Marc PISSENS  
President

[The French version alone has legal value and has been signed by the European social partners]