



## Opening Session Thursday 14 October Speech Marc PISSENS, CoESS President

Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of CoESS, the Confederation of European Security Services, it is also my pleasure to welcome you all to this fourth edition of the European Conference on Private Security Services. This type of conference has, over the years, proved to be a winning formula. We all believe that at regular times, the whole of the European private security industry must meet and discuss, exchange information and collect new views and ideas. CoESS is not the only one to strongly believe in this kind of encounters. We always organise our conferences together with UNI-Europa, our longstanding partner within the European Social Dialogue, and with the financial help of the European Commission, DG Employment and Social Affairs, our ever faithful co-sponsor.

I would like to particularly welcome all participants from the new EU Member States. We are looking forward to listen to your experiences, to the challenges the industry in your countries has to face and to your suggestions and strategies for the future.

Ladies and gentlemen, the theme of this conference could not have been better chosen. In Europe, we have managed to establish a particular model for our industry. Until now, we have been able to do this thanks to tremendous efforts by both companies and their representatives, and by the workers and their representative organisations.

First of all, there is the European Social Dialogue. Aiming at common objectives rather than to argue about conflicting interests, CoESS and UNI-Europa, over the years, have set the standards for important issues such as licensing, vocational training, quality in services, modernisation of work organisation, ethics, and health and safety. The numerous list of very concrete results is finding its way into the national level and has already inspired many a company, worker, client or authority. Our joint work for the past 15 years has certainly contributed to a very large extent to the emergence of the European model for private security services.

Then there are the customers. A new era of considering and evaluating private security services started after the tragic events of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001. The industry welcomes the fact that more and more customers demand higher quality, a higher professionalism, better trained, better skilled and more specialised employees. Let it be very clear: as an industry we never wanted September 11<sup>th</sup>. But in order to avoid as much as possible similar dramatic events in the future, we are now happy to see that an awareness process is taking place with the customers. So, we can only rejoice in the fact that many of them are now joining and subscribing the principles that CoESS and UNI-Europa have been promoting long before September 11<sup>th</sup> in Europe and across the ocean.

At national level, governments of several EU Member States have done a tremendous job by putting in place a legislative framework for the industry or by improving the already existing regulations. Not in the least by clearly defining the responsibilities between the public and the private sector, paving thus the way to a more fruitful partnership between this public sector and the companies of our industry.

Last but not least, the European Institutions are paying increasing attention to our industry. Traditionally, our industry stood alone, private security not being on top of the European agenda. Nowadays, we are solicited by all European Institutions: the European Commission wants to regulate services in the internal market, the European Commission wants to seriously tackle the problem of insurances and third party liability, CEN (the European Committee for Standardization) wants to develop standards for our industry,

the issue of security in general is high on the agenda. This recognition could not have been possible without our European Model.

So, the emerging model has proven its strength.

We are now at very important cross-roads, facing enormous challenges. I will focus on what CoESS considers to be the two most important challenges:

- 1) we cannot and will not allow the European model as it stands right now be weakened
- 2) we must invest all possible efforts to further develop the model

First of all, our model has always served one single goal: to enhance our industry in Europe as a whole. It has been a permanent inspiration not only for companies and workers, for employers' organisations and for trade union, but also for competent national authorities, to constantly improve all aspects of our industry. And it has been fruitful: employees are getting better working conditions, more and more companies go for higher quality, several national authorities are regulating the sector, the only proven method in order to purify and stabilize the market and hence, better protect society as a whole and each individual citizen against abuses. It has already been a difficult process, demanding huge efforts and investments by all parties concerned, but it was worth it.

We will therefore NOT allow a lowering or a weakening of the model as it stands already. Private security services are not to be compared to the majority of services. It is true that a European harmonization of private security services might, in the end , strengthen the European model. But only, and I really stress this, if such a harmonization is upward and takes fully into account all the tremendous efforts and investments I mentioned before. A harmonization may not deny the reality. And for our industry, the reality is that we are underway to an acceptable overall European level, but not there yet. We must first allow all EU Member States to find an acceptable level of quality, regulation and ethics. If this condition is not being respected, all harmonization will without any doubt lead us back to the situation of 20 or 30 years back.

Neither will we allow that our industry and its emerging European model be harmed by inefficient regulation, whether at European or at national level, of some issues that we as an industry have not generated but that might lead to the overall bankrupt of our industry. I am referring to the very urgent need to find efficient solutions for the potential risk and impact another September 11<sup>th</sup> (or Spanish March 11<sup>th</sup>) could have on our industry in terms of third party liability. Our industry being only one link in the chain of services and responsibilities cannot face alone all potential claims.

Secondly and most importantly, we must invest all possible efforts to further develop the model. We must adapt it to new areas opening up to our sector such as private security at high risk sites, the growing transfer of public security services to our companies, the smooth integration of the industry in the ten new Member States. We will need to combine the efforts of all involved: CoESS, UNI-Europa, our national organisations, the national authorities and the European institutions.

Today and tomorrow we will discuss the model, its strengths, its weaknesses and its challenges. It will be a difficult debate. But is will also be an interesting debate. Each one of you can play a role.

I wish all participants a fruitful and constructive conference and I am looking forward to the new ideas and views that will certainly find their way to the debates.

\*

\*

\*