ASSOCIATION PROFESSIONNELLE
DES ENTREPRISES DE GARDIENNAGE ASBL

BEROEPSVERENIGING
VAN BEWAKINGSONDERNEMINGEN VZW

Joint Statement
on the Belgian EU Council Presidency
Fostering public security in Europe

Brussels, 09 January, 2024

The *Confederation of European Security Services* (*CoESS*) and the *Association Professionnelle des Entreprises de Gardiennage / Beroepsvereniging van Bewakingsondernemingen* (APEG-BVBO) underline their commitment to support the Belgian EU Council Presidency. As a follow-up to a recent EU Private Security Roundtable organised by the Belgian government, and for the benefit of public security in Europe, we recommend a reinforced dialogue between national regulatory authorities and the private security services industry at EU-level and the inclusion of a Revision of the Public Procurement Directive 2014/24 in the next European Commission Work Programme.

Addressing challenges to public security in a collaborative approach

The European Union (EU) and its citizens are facing challenging times. The war against Ukraine and the conflict in the Near East have exacerbated existing threats to public security. Climate change, but also the polarisation of European society, are leading to increasing societal upheaval and demonstrations. The Security Community at large agrees that we need to better protect our Critical Infrastructure and public spaces. The private security industry plays an essential role in enhancing the resilience of supply chains, Critical Infrastructure and public spaces against diversifying, hybrid threats. CoESS and APEG-BVBO are therefore convinced that the context urges the policymakers, law enforcement and the security industry to join forces and bring their respective knowledge and expertise to discuss challenges to and explore solutions for public security.

Our proposal to the Belgian EU Council Presidency:

- **We highly welcomed the first European Private Security Roundtable that the Belgian Ministry of Home Affairs (IBZ) organised on 21 November 2023 in the run-up of the Belgian EU Council Presidency**, and congratulate the Belgian government for this highly valuable initiative implementing for the first time the Council Recommendation of 13 June 2002. We hope that the conclusions of the meeting, including on how to tackle labour shortages in security services and problematic public procurement practices, are taken forward in collaboration with CoESS and APEG-BVBO. We look forward to, and offer our help for the

continuation of this pro-active engagement of the Presidency with the representatives of our industry.

Enforce the provision of high-quality security services to European citizens through revised EU Public Procurement Law

Including the revision of the EU Public Procurement Directive 2014/24 in the future European Commission Work Programme is a much needed action and would be a concrete follow-up to this Roundtable discussion, which underlined the challenge of inappropriate public procurement practices for private security. The vast majority of public tenders in the EU are still awarded solely on the basis of lowest cost or price ignoring social aspects such as providers' compliance with Collective Agreements[1], even when buying essential services like private security[2]. As it stands, public procurement policies and practices, which are a direct consequence of the outdated EU Public Procurement Directive 2014/24, therefore incentivise some bidders in the market to ignore social criteria, weakening the positive impact of collective bargaining and negatively impacting working conditions and quality of services – ultimately affecting public security in a dangerous way.

Our proposal to the Belgian EU Council Presidency:

- Together with our European Trade Union, UNI Europa, we call for a revision of the current EU Public Procurement Directive 2014/24 and advise the Belgian government to engage on this topic in the context of the upcoming EU elections and the drafting of a new European Commission Work Programme (see our Social Partner Declaration here). We have likewise highlighted this matter in a detailed analysis to Former Italian Prime Minister Enrico Letta, who has been designated to write a High-level Report on the future of the European Single Market for the Belgian EU Council Presidency.

We underline the strategic importance of sectoral Social Partners in EU policymaking, guaranteed by Art. 151 of the European constitution and recently recognised again in the Council Recommendation on strengthening Social Dialogue in the EU. Social Partners, such as CoESS and APEG-BVBO, are according to the TFEU actors who must be proactively consulted on policy initiatives impacting operations and working conditions in the security services.

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[1] V. Caimi, S. Sansonetti (October 2023) : The Social Impact of Public Procurement – Can the EU do more? A Study Requested by the European Parliament's EMPL Committee. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2023/740095/IPOL_STU(2023)740095_EN.pdf

[2] As recognised by the European Commission in its Communication on Guidelines concerning the exercise of the free movement of workers during COVID-19 outbreak 2020/C 102 I/03. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020XC0330(03)

We therefore look forward to strongly supporting the Belgian EU Council Presidency in its important work. In the run-up to the EU elections, the Presidency comes at a decisive stage of EU policymaking. With the European Commission and Parliament approaching the end of their term, we wish the officials in charge every success in finding consensus on a diverse range of dossiers and in preparing the work of the future European Commission.

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About CoESS

CoESS acts as the voice of the private security industry, covering 23 countries in Europe and representing 2 million security officers, over 45,000 companies and generating a turnover of over €40 billion. The private security services provide a wide range of services, both for private and public clients, ranging from Critical Infrastructure facilities to public spaces and government and EU institutions buildings. CoESS is active in European Sectoral Social Dialogue with UNI Europa and numerous EU Expert Groups, including the EU Operators Forum for the Protection of Public Spaces.

About APEG-BVBO

The Beroepsvereniging van Bewakingsondernemingen (BVBO) is the only representative employers' federation for the private security sector. The BVBO promotes the interests of its members and of the Belgian private security sector in general. BVBO members represent more than 90% of the Belgian private security market and employ more than 90% of the total number of private security officers in the sector.