



Joint Response to the Social Partner Consultation

Update of the Skills Agenda for Europe

The Confederation of European Security Services (CoESS) and its Social Partner UNI Europa published in 2018 a joint report on “[Anticipating, Preparing and Managing Employment Change in the Private Security Industry](#)”, which was part of a European Commission funded project. According to the report, the private security industry is today facing a number of drivers of change, which lead to important employment challenges to the sector.

While the private security industry witnesses economic growth and demand, technological developments and digitalisation change not only the services delivered by our industry, but also skills requirements. At the same time, our industry has to cope, like many others, with demographic change, labour and skills shortage, and the ageing of the workforce. In the light of these challenges, CoESS and UNI Europa highly welcome the planned update of the Skills Agenda for Europe, and are thankful for the opportunity to participate in the consultation of Social Partners.

About CoESS

CoESS acts as the voice of the private security industry, covering 23 countries in Europe and representing 2 million guards, over 45,000 companies and generating a turnover of over €40M. The private security services provide a wide range of services, both for private and public clients, ranging from European Union institutions buildings to nuclear plants, airports, Critical Infrastructure facilities, inter-modal transport hubs, public transport stations and areas, and national governmental agencies and institutions (such as asylum seekers centres, public hospitals, etc.).

About UNI Europa

UNI Europa is a European trade union federation, which represents more than 7 million workers and 320 affiliates in 50 different countries. UNI Europa is based in Brussels and is the representative organisation for the Social Dialogue in Private Security, amongst many others. UNI Europa assists national trade unions in regards to new EU legislation through information-sharing and consultation. Its work also involves generating best practices and coordinating policy initiatives at the EU and European level which advance a Social Europe, strong public services, and fair markets with social



regulation transparent financial transactions. This strengthens trade unions in negotiations and social partners to develop equality in work as well as sustainable, secure and good employment at the national level.

The challenge

Europe is facing a demographic change that, in many countries, is characterised by an ageing population. Businesses and workers have to adjust to this trend by promoting and participating in effective re- and upskilling pathways, especially for the elder. Workforce participation will need to be promoted, and older workers encouraged to develop the skills required to be active and productive participants in the workforce.

Apart from older workers, it is not only the highly qualified that benefit from re- and upskilling pathways, but particularly less-qualified staff that have to adapt to new skills requirements as with digitalisation and technological development, many “traditional” tasks are changing or even disappearing.

CoESS and UNI Europa are particularly worried at the European Commission’s finding that only 12.8% of less qualified adults receive guidance and counselling on re- and upskilling opportunities compared to 42.1% of high-qualified ones, and that only 4.3% of Europeans with, at best, lower secondary qualifications took part in education or training compared to 18.6% of high-qualified people. According to [ILO and Eurofound](#), the least-educated get less access to opportunities to grow and develop their skills regardless of the country. The proportion of workers who report learning new things at work varies between 72% and 84% in the US and the EU. CoESS and UNI Europa believe that a renewed Skills Agenda for Europe should focus on the participation of less skilled workers in re- and upskilling.

While our sector deals with an ageing workforce and changing skills requirements within companies, businesses are also facing a general labour shortage, skills shortage and skills mismatches: a majority of CoESS’ members have difficulties finding young people willing to work in the private security industry. In Germany, 75% of private security companies have problems finding skilled workforce. In France, 55% of private security companies face this challenge. In other EU Member States, the preliminary findings of UNI’s RETAIN project suggest that high labour turnover might be affected by insufficient opportunities to upskill.



This development is not only due to demographic change. In many countries, the provision of skills to young people is not sufficiently connected with labour market needs, leading to skills shortages and mismatches. This does not only concern highly skilled workers with STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) skills. Companies also have great difficulties hiring staff with only basic skills requirements.

Due to the continuation of these trends, the employment situation in the private security sector is becoming increasingly problematic and poses a challenge to our industry to respond to market demand – with an important impact on public security overall.

It is therefore important that the renewed Skills Agenda supports Social Partners, Chambers of Commerce and Member States' employment and education agencies in tackling labour shortage, skills shortage and mismatches – with a specific focus on young people entering the labour market, but also disadvantaged groups including less skilled staff and elder people. Further, the better integration high potential workforces such as women, immigrants and workers with disabilities in the labour market could play an important role to help countering the abovementioned challenges.

The role of Social Partners to support the update of the Skills Agenda and modernisation of Vocational Education and Training (VET)

The involvement of Social Partners on sectoral, national and European level, plays a crucial role in updating the Skills Agenda and modernisation of Vocational Education and Training (VET). They know at first-hand about the challenges posed to industry sectors, businesses and workers due to demographic change and technological developments. VET, together with the overall education and training systems and other policy domains, will need to address this challenge through initial, re- and upskilling training pathways, and the involvement of Social Partners as well as stakeholders such as providers and VET learners in the development, implementation and governance of VET policies should be further strengthened.

Employers in particular need to be better involved in the design and delivery of education and training curricula so as to better align them with the real needs of industry and the labour market. Sectoral Social Partners can also play an important role in changing mindsets in society and campaign to



promote the benefits of an Initial (IVET) and Continuing (CVET) VET as well as a “life-long-learning culture”, in the shared interest and responsibility of employers and workers. Social Partners, and in particular trade unions, can play a role in fostering an occupational identity which feeds into workers’ desire to receive more training and engage in lifelong learning. In this regard, CoESS and UNI Europa also strongly support the European Vocational Skills Week.

Action needed to empower workers to up/reskill in an inclusive approach

National and sectoral re- and upskilling plans and pathways with large workforce participation will be needed in order to enable workers to adapt to the new types of tasks that they are required to carry out. It is therefore very worrying that, according to the European Commission, many workers indicate lack of employer’s or public services’ support for re- and upskilling activities and the lack of suitable education or training courses as obstacles to undertake training – in addition to high costs and lack of time. For that reason, increased public provision and certification of training can guarantee that workers can access training.

It is a responsibility of sectoral and national Social Partners, Chambers of Commerce, national education and employment agencies, with the support of their counterparts at EU-level, to develop structured, inclusive, sectoral re- and upskilling plans, pathways, frameworks and funding based on an assessment of concrete skills shortages and mismatches. These actors should provide more structured, sectoral training and competence development policies and frameworks for existing staff, young professionals and those changing from other sectors. A particular focus should thereby not only be on high-skilled workers, but also on less advantaged workers (1) with low qualifications, (2) advanced aged, (3) living in rural areas, and (4) working in SMEs. Further attention should be paid to women and immigrants to guarantee an inclusive uptake of workers in re- and upskilling.

Further, sectoral and national Social Partners, in collaboration with local, regional and national employment, education and training establishments should provide apprenticeships and more structured career paths to further enhance the attractiveness of the sector. In addition, guidance and orientation towards learners play an important role in the promotion of VET pathways. Technological training should be available to all, but also specifically targeted at those aged between 40 and 60, who are arguably more vulnerable to technological change. This would also smooth their career path, i.e. enhance their chances of keeping their position or, better still, making progress in the career ladder.



Technological developments and training can offer workers in the industry a long-term career perspective.

As a consequence, sectoral and national Social Partners should look at job descriptions in the industry, where appropriate. This will aim to ensure that job content is matched to the changing demands resulting from technology, and to ensure that technology workers are integrated into existing collective and company agreements and pay scales. A greater number of workers whose job content consists of technology-related tasks may also mean redefining pay scales and career tracks in company agreements and collective agreements, in order to accommodate workers with a different background and skills set.

If workers' skills increase further, a more optimistic scenario (suggested by [CEDEFOP 2012](#)) could have them "craft" and improve their own jobs, discover enhancements of productivity and quality, and thus facilitate that their employers innovate workplaces and services. This scenario would require institutional and political support that combines skill upgrading and professionalisation with improved accessibility of training and recognition of experience-based learning and informal skills.

The EU dimension can of course be helpful in supporting mutual learning between Member States and Social Partners, best practice sharing, skills intelligence and policy recommendations. But it is equally important to provide Social Partners, Chambers and training bodies with the means of empowering workers for re- and upskilling pathways through EU-funding to enhance the availability of qualitative training and counter lack of time and money. EU financial resources such as ESF, EaSI and Erasmus+ can play a positive role in supporting better skills and job training and matching, as well as to supporting education and training systems to adapt to digitalisation – in addition to much needed public investment by Member States. The European Commission and ESF managing authorities in the Member States should therefore design European and national initiatives aimed at supporting investment in skills with Social Partners, at both cross-industry and sectoral levels.

The importance of skills validation

If matched with job content and labour market needs, effective and practice-oriented validation of formal, non-formal and informal learning outcomes on national level are an important incentive for workers to take up further education and training and support their careers progression and long-term



employability. The matter should be brought forward in cooperation between Member States, sectoral and national Social Partners, education and training bodies, and Chambers of Commerce.

Such qualifications should directly respond to previously identified skills shortages and developments in job content. Emerging new technologies and work organisation formats should be captured faster through skills anticipation systems and translated to VET provision in terms of needed skills, curricula and qualifications. VET systems should develop 'fast response' mechanisms of stable quality assured core qualifications and skills pathways, as well as flexible formats of adding new or higher-level skills, requiring strong governance involving sectoral and national Social Partners. It is thereby a responsibility of Member State authorities to guarantee a quality-assured training. The EU should thereby play a role of ensuring exchange of best practices and provision of recommendations for quality assurance, for example through EQAVET.

The EU should in this regard respect the diversity of education and VET systems in the EU Member States, which are, in some cases, difficult to compare. Validation and recognition of skills needs to be led on Member State level. The EU can however play an important role in skills intelligence, anticipation and exchange of best practices with the help of CEDEFOP, as well as transparency of qualifications in the ESCO and EQF frameworks.

The role of the EU Blueprint for sectoral cooperation on skills and the Platforms for Centres of Vocational Excellence

CoESS and UNI Europa strongly support EU measures that bring together Social Partners as well as national education, training and employment stakeholders to address skills gaps on sectoral level. Cooperation among these actors is crucial to attain an overview of real skills requirements on sectoral level, foster exchange of best practices, improve the cross-border comparison of qualifications, and develop sector-specific VET strategies.

Such activities should however respect the diversity of VET systems and occupational profiles in the Member States. Since the private security sector has a partial exclusion from Directive 2006/123/EC on services in the internal market, CoESS and UNI Europa do not advocate for the development of cross-border occupational profiles, vocational programmes and qualifications in the sector, since these are questions to be primarily tackled at national level.



Future priorities for skills intelligence

CoESS and UNI Europa strongly support the [Opinion of the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training on the Future of Vocational Education and Training post 2020](#), which states that *“more investments are needed in the development of skills anticipation mechanisms and foresight methods including at sector and technological levels in view of understanding the specific impact of changes within sectors and occupations and using this information to inform VET governance in view of updating curricula accordingly and providing individuals with the possibility to make informed learning and career choices.”* In this regard, it is important to continue financial funding to CEDEFOP and to improve the agency’s cooperation with sectoral Social Partners on EU-level and dissemination of intelligence.

The focus should be in the sectoral identification of concrete skills needs – this would be the basis of any further action of sectoral Social Partners, Chambers and public employment, education and training agencies on national level. Also, with the help of EU intelligence, sectoral and national Social Partners, in collaboration with local, regional and national employment, education and training establishments, should work out what skills the industry needs and what skills would best serve workers in terms of their employability and adaptability.

The European Commission should also further its work to ensure a good dissemination and use of skills intelligence in order to help all stakeholders to better identify the skills needs of the future.

The European Commission should carry out a study on the qualifications of the sector and the recognition of equivalences between European countries. The sector must be able to refer to the European agency on training and qualifications, the CEDEFOP, to promote studies on the sector’s jobs and their evolutions over the next ten years.

New EU action required to address skills mismatches

In addition to real-time skills intelligence provided by CEDEFOP, we believe that the EU Public Employment Services Network (PES Network) could play an important role by sharing best practices among Member States on how to assess real skills requirements and address skills mismatches at national level. At national level, close collaboration between public employment services and sectoral Social Partners is important to address skills mismatches effectively.



Further, IVET and CVET have a prominent role to play in helping reduce skills mismatches, both regarding basic and STEM skills, and in particular through setting up quality and effective apprenticeship and VET policy frameworks in Member States. The EU should therefore foster investment and good practice sharing in effective VET policies on Member State level. Putting in place a new EU VET strategy for 2030 is an important priority.

In practice, cooperation between sectoral and national Social Partners, schools, vocational schools, professional colleges and universities should be strengthened and the introduction of dual elements at all levels of education be considered in order to ensure that provided skills are connected to real job contents and labour market needs. The role of sectoral Social Dialogue and collective bargaining, especially, should be fostered in this regard.

Labour market and income polarisation may have repercussions on service markets (which as we have seen, contribute to these effects): It may decrease the demand for services among lower-income groups and locks segments of clients into the low-price and -cost service markets. Consequently, this may have a considerable impact on service workers' and their families' quality of life. It is in this context that professionalisation guarantees higher quality of service and is essential for specialisation and qualification. Moreover, professionalisation is the first tool of an ambitious policy for risk prevention at work.

Funding and collaboration required to increase social partners' engagement in workforce skills development

Governments and Social Partners have the biggest responsibility for supporting and investing in people's skills development. Member States therefore have to provide Social Partners with the financial means to invest in skills and develop effective re- and upskilling pathways. As previously mentioned in detail, EU financial resources such as ESF can play an important role in supporting much needed public investment by Member States. In this regard, it would be highly valuable, if EU-level Social Partners had access to ESF-funding again. Sectoral Social Partners, especially, know best about skills requirements and challenges, and their involvement in the development, implementation and governance of VET policies should be further strengthened and financed.



Collaboration between social partners and with national governments to ensure better investment in re- and upskilling

Based on skills intelligence, sectoral and national Social Partners should, in cooperation with Chambers and Member State education and employment authorities, define sectoral IVET and CVET plans and pathways, as well as incentives and frameworks that facilitate an inclusive and broad participation of the workforce (as described in detail before).

CoESS and UNI Europa fully support the [Opinion of the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training on the Future of Vocational Education and Training post 2020](#) in this regard. It states that *“VET systems need to be based on effective governance at all levels which involves all relevant stakeholders, particularly Social Partners, and ensures effective and equitable social dialogue between the trade unions and employers, taking into account national industrial relations systems and education and training practices. [...] Social dialogue should be a key element in the process of the preparation and implementation of this initiative. Social Partners, in particular, at sectoral level, play an active role and have direct knowledge and experience of both labour and training markets. The initiative would encourage Member States and Social Partners to work on a tripartite and bipartite basis to enhance access to and quality of VET, in accordance with the national circumstances.”*

EU Social Partners could additionally conduct benchmarking exercises in order to learn from best practice in other sectors. Also, the Social Partners could explore the feasibility of developing e-learning platforms at EU level for soft skills. E-learning can make an important contribution to upskilling the workforce, although it should not be used to substitute more traditional forms of training.

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