

VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN THE EUROPEAN SECURITY INDUSTRY

Introduction and Background

The social partners for the European private security industry are EURO-FIET for labour and CoESS for management. The social partners initiated a formal social dialogue at European level, with the active support of the European Commission, in December 1993. From the outset, vocational training has been a central concern within the European social dialogue for the security industry. Improving vocational training has been identified as a key component in raising standards of quality, professionalism and employment in the private security industry. A primary role for the social dialogue at European level is therefore to give a transnational view across the single European market and to undertake initiatives to spread innovative techniques and best practice in the field of vocational training.

To this end, the social partners have been co-operating in a number of ways on the issue of vocational training. A project under the European Union's FORCE Programme was carried out during 1994. This European perspective provides the basis for deepening co-operation between the social partners on the subject of vocational training. It has allowed the defining of common occupational profiles described in terms of the tasks which security operatives carry out. This provides the basis for developing a common European approach to vocational training in the European security industry which highlights the best from each national context whilst respecting the diversity in national practices and training structures which exist. The research carried out under the FORCE Programme is now being further developed through a joint project from the social partners which is being submitted under the Leonardo programme.

The value of this research into vocational training from a European perspective has already been apparent. In the social dialogue at European level, the basis has now been reached where discussions can take place on identifying best practice in vocational training. The objective of the following guidelines is to put forward ideas on best practice for the European private security industry which can be taken out and implemented through negotiations between the social partners at national level. EURO-FIET and Co.E.S.S emphasise the central role that improving standards of vocational training has for the future of the private security industry. The European social partners in the private security industry are determined to build a thoroughly professional service industry, providing high quality services to clients and good quality employment for workers in the industry.

Guidelines on Best Practice

1. The Key Role of the Social Partners

The social dialogue at European level has increased understanding of different training systems in the Member States for the private security industry. The European Commission should continue to assist in promoting and distributing these results to a wider audience. This audience comprises not just management and labour in the security industry, but also customers of security services, enterprises which provide their own security services in-house, public authorities and regulators of the security industry as well as the general public. An effort must also be made to educate the client as the main purchaser of private security services, in order to install a culture of quality. At the European level, the social partners have a role to play in drawing up recommendations on best practice on minimum agreed standards. Respecting the subsidiarity principle the European recommendations should assist in creating national regulations agreed between the social partners.

2. Research

An extensive amount of research has been carried out under the FORCE Programme of the European Union on job-profiles in the private security industry across Europe. Additional research on existing training methods related to the defined job-profiles is essential and should be carried out by the new Leonardo programme monitored within the social dialogue between Co.E.S.S and EURO-FIET. The result of the research should assist the security industry on the national level to improve services for customers, to develop new service ranges and to create new jobs within the industry.

3. Entry Level Training

It is particularly important for an industry committed to high quality service that all entrants to the private security industry must receive a minimum level of basic training which gives them the relevant skills they require to carry out the job. These minimum standards of basic training must be integrated with a regulatory and licensing framework at the national level that ensures that all private security companies in each Member State meet acceptable quality standards.

4. Health and Safety

Workers in the private security industry, as in any other industry, must be adequately trained in best practices in the field of health and safety. National laws and collective agreements provide for this training. However, the growth of the private security industry and the extension of responsibilities which security staff are expected to shoulder mean that high quality training in relevant aspects of health and safety is vital. Security operatives must be equipped with the skills and competencies that ensure not only that they are subject to the minimum risks in carrying out their functions but also that they are able to fulfil an important role in securing public safety and the security of property.

5. Licensing and Regulation

In many countries of the European Union, vocational training cannot be separated from questions of licensing and regulations. The European social partners believe that licensing and regulation of the security industry are essential foundations to a high quality industry. Where possible, vocational training requirements should be integrated with the system of licensing and regulation which prevails in each Member State. Systems of licensing can help to ensure that each employee and each employer is equipped with the skills and competencies to carry out the functions required in a high quality service industry.

6. Unfair Competition

One of the major obstacles to raising quality standards through vocational training in some countries is the opportunity to compete unfairly which is used by a number of disreputable companies. It is a prerequisite for high quality training that the same rules and therefore the same costs apply to all enterprises operating in the private security industry within any single national market. High quality standards in the field of vocational training must not be allowed to be undercut by "free riders" who benefit from the investments made by others in vocational training but do not carry out an equivalent investment themselves.

7. Follow-Up and Monitoring

The social partners for the private security industry call on the European Commission to continue to provide assistance for the implementation of these guidelines in practice.