Position Paper

Confederation of European Security Services

Contribution to the Consultation on the Review of EU Sectoral Social Dialogue

Brussels, 16 July 2021

The Confederation of European Security Services (CoESS) welcomes the European Commission's initiative to review the EU Sectoral Social Dialogue, and is glad to hereby contribute to this exercise. Our input is based on the experiences of the CoESS Secretariat in Brussels and our national affiliates in 17 EU Member States. It draws the following conclusions:

The private security sector has transformed into an essential service, which requires a high-skilled workforce in order to live up to client demand and to its role in internal security frameworks. Challenges related to labour/skills shortages, but also inadequate public procurement practices, threaten however sustainability in the sector and, hence, public security. National Sectoral Social Dialogues in our sector also face structural challenges, such as weak Social Dialogue frameworks in Central and Eastern Europe, and other political / societal developments that undermine quality standards and benefits of Collective Bargaining. This makes it difficult for them to respond to the complex transformation of the sector. European and national Sectoral Social Dialogues are crucial to ensure an equitable and sustainable change of the sector in the context of these challenges - with the former being a driver of strategic joint action that supports national Social Partners in reflecting the new normal in Collective Bargaining. In this paper, we highlight many examples on how the European Sectoral Social Dialogue adds value to Social Partners, and list solutions provided by CoESS and UNI Europa.

Still, we also believe that effectiveness of EU Sectoral Social Dialogue can be enhanced. This paper therefore elaborates on diverse recommendations to the European Commission, including:

- Earlier consultation of EU Sectoral Social Partners in policy-making.
- Better and timely exchange on legal proposals in EU Sectoral Social Dialogue.
- Better recognition of EU employer group concerns in social policies.
- Establishment of Social Dialogue Coordinators at all Directorate-Generals.
- More effective promotion of EU Sectoral Social Dialogue outcomes.
- Further direct access of national Social Partners to targeted EU-funding.
- Ensure diversity of EU Sectoral Social Dialogue and equal support.
- Flexibility to provide time-limited, targeted support to Social Partners in need.
- Additional administrative support to Sectoral Social Partners.
- Effective use of hybrid (online/physical) meeting solutions.

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About CoESS and the European private security services

The Confederation of European Security Services (CoESS) is recognised by Eurofound as the only European employers' organisation representative of the private security services[1]. We act as the voice of the private security services, covering 23 countries in Europe (out of which 17 in EU Member States) and representing 2 million security officers as well as over 45,000 companies across the European region. CoESS is actively involved in European Sectoral Social Dialogue since 1992, as well as in multiple EU Expert Groups – including SAGAS, SAGMAS, LANDSEC and the EU Operators Forum for the Protection of Public Spaces.

European private security services are an integral part of the internal security framework of EU Member States: Security in Europe is no longer imaginable without the massive capacity of the security services with its around 2 million licensed officers. Private security guarding of public buildings and (critical) infrastructure as well as screening/security services at airports, football stadiums and concert halls are today for most European citizens self-evident and fully accepted.

This can be witnessed also in the economic development of the private security sector. The nominal value of turnover generated by private security activities (NACE 80.1) has grown considerably since 2000, while general government expenditure on police services has risen far less rapidly. This translates in employment in private and public security forces: Eurostat data indicate that there were 1.62 million police officers in the EU in 2015, versus 1.59 million private security officers in 2016 in the EU alone (based on CoESS' estimates at that time)[2].

With this essential role in the public security framework comes a specific responsibility. It is for this reason that our sector is in most cases highly regulated at national level. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the private security sector has rightly been recognised by many EU Member States, and the European Commission[3], as an essential service due to its role in the continued protection of land, air and maritime supply chains (e.g. to uphold the transport of medical supplies, food and cash); deserted industry premises; the implementation of infection prevention and control measures at

[1] Eurofound (2019), Representativeness of the European social partner organisations: Private security sector, Dublin

[2] Paul Baker, Andrea Broughton (2018): Anticipating, Preparing and Managing Employment Change in the Private Security Industry. Brussels, Belgium

[3] Communication from the European Commission: Guidelines concerning the exercise of the free movement of workers during COVID-19 outbreak (2020/C 102 I/03).

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hospitals and social care facilities; as well as the guarantee of business continuity at Critical Infrastructure that relied on the continued protection by security services.

Transformation of the European private security services sector

The European private security services are experiencing, like other sectors, a profound transformation, which CoESS and UNI Europa have assessed in detail in the EU-funded project "Anticipating, Managing and Preparing Employment Change in the Private Security Sector", and continue to do so in the currently ongoing Social Partner project "INTEL: Skills Intelligence for the Private Security Sector", funded by the European Commission for the strengthening of Social Dialogue.

Due to the increasingly essential role of security services for the public security framework in Member States, this transformation is expected to have a far-reaching impact on internal security in Europe, and therewith for the security and safety of European citizens, businesses and (critical) infrastructure. These developments are also described in detail in the CoESS White Papers on "The New Security Company" (2016); "The Security Continuum in the New Normal" (2019); and "The New Normal 2.0: Private Security and COVID-19 in Europe" (2020) – all available at www.coess.eu.

Change in demand for private security services

Provision of essential services: Past societal developments and crises have led to an increasing demand for private security services in more sensitive areas. Since the increasing migration to Europe, security services have been hired to protect asylum centres. In most countries, security services play a crucial role in protecting Critical Infrastructure. Mass events are often secured by security services. The wave of terrorist attacks in the past 10 years has led to a massively increasing presence of security services in public spaces (see below). And the COVID-19 crisis has led to a demand for security services in overseeing, and managing, infection prevention and control measures. The provision of such essential services adds new responsibilities on companies to deliver quality services, also based on adequate training and working conditions of workers, and the integration of new technologies.

Public-private cooperation: Private security services are increasingly present in public spaces – a development which demands a better public-private cooperation in terms of information exchange and pooling of resources (see CoESS White Paper "The Security Continuum in the New Normal", available at www.coess.eu). Such cooperation however requires high professionalism among security services, namely in the form of qualitative training, equipment, working conditions and effective integration of technologies in security services.

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Specialisation and digital transformation: The integration of new technologies and services, such as Artificial Intelligence, Drones and cybersecurity, in private security solutions has led to an additional drive of change in client demand and new tasks performed by security services. This development also leads to new skills requirements in the sector. CoESS expects the sector to increasingly transform to a highly skilled, specialised, and unique services sector with respective needs at the labour market due to its role in public security. At the same time, "traditional" business segments, such as Cash-in-Transit, are increasingly threatened in their existence due to societal developments.

Challenges in the supply of security services

Labour and skills shortages: In the light of a general demographic change, businesses report both labour and skills shortages. The employment situation in the private security sector is expected to become increasingly problematic, posing a challenge to the adaptiveness of Social Dialogue and to the industry to respond to market demand for a widened spectrum of tasks with an adequately trained workforce. Businesses and workers have to adjust to this trend by promoting and participating in effective re- and upskilling pathways, and by enhancing the attractiveness of the sector.

Insufficient diversity in the workforce: In terms of gender composition, male workers dominate employment in the private security industry, with the share of female security guards in Europe estimated at only around 15%[4] - an important issue against the background of labour shortages. In general, enhancing diversity in all its facetts, including race, sexual orientation and religion, is a matter that must be addressed by Social Partners.

Public procurement practices: The sustainability of private security services is in many countries challenged by public procurement practices that focus on the lowest cost only instead of quality criteria – incentivising unfair competition, undeclared work, unsafe working conditions and the deployment of an inadequately trained workforce, which can, as a consequence, violate sectoral regulation or collective agreements, and in the end pose a threat to public safety and security.

[4] Paul Baker, Andrea Broughton (2018): Anticipating, Preparing and Managing Employment Change in the Private Security Industry. Brussels, Belgium

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Structural challenges in Sectoral Social Dialogue

This transformation is accompanied by and reflected in concrete challenges for National Sectoral Social Dialogues – particularly in a labour-intensive sector such as the private security services:

Collective bargaining and capacity-building

In Central and Eastern Europe, CoESS witnesses a structural weakness of Social Dialogue structures. For example, our Croatian affiliate has repeatedly made considerable efforts to establish an effective framework for national Sectoral Social Dialogue, but has difficulties in doing so until today due to the fragmentation of trade unions - a local problem that CoESS and UNI Europa are already discussing to evaluate how informal information exchange at European level can help to establish contacts with full respect of Social Partner autonomy. CoESS has also difficulties in promoting the benefits of European Sectoral Social Dialogue, and thus affiliation with CoESS, in this region due to weak Social Dialogue structures. At the same time, in Western Europe, the benefits of Sectoral Social Dialogue are threatened by low-quality market players that undermine compliance with Collective Agreements or labour and sectoral law – leading to unfair competition practices. In many Member States, social policies increasingly intervene in Social Partner autonomy, making it harder for Social Partners to promote the benefits of engaging in Social Dialogue.

Adaptation of Social Dialogue to the digital transformation

The transformation in the private security sector has already been described above. Academic research estimates the probability of computerisation – or potential job automatability – of security officers at 84 %, ranking it just below the top third of occupations most susceptible to automation[5]. However, the impact of technology on employment depends on whether workplaces are able to adjust to new demands, and whether workers can shift from routine and automatable tasks, to tasks that are complementary to new technologies, but that typically are new, more complex, and more demanding. This requires effective re- and upskilling frameworks, both at national and sectoral level, which ensure a just and equitable transformation of the workforce. This is both in the interest of workers and employers – a development which also raises the important question of how Collective Agreements will continue to reflect the new normal and anticipate, manage and prepare for this transformation on an ongoing basis.

[5] Frey, C. B., and M. Osborne (2013), 'The Future of Employment: how susceptible are jobs to computerisation?', Working Paper, Oxford Martin Programme on Technology and Employment. Available at: https://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/downloads/academic/future-of-employment.pdf

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Sectoral regulation at national level

Many of our members believe that national sectoral regulation are inadequate to deal with the much-described transformation in this paper. The private security industry has always been pushing for national sector-specific regulation that is adapted to today's reality, setting in place rules that clearly regulate tasks and competences of the private security services, based on frameworks for qualitative training and working conditions of employees. Our national affiliates need flexible administration and regulatory systems that are able to adapt to new realities in the private security sector, while preserving sustainability of businesses and adequate working conditions against unfair competition, based on a strong Sectoral Social Dialogue.

Public procurement practices

As mentioned above, public procurement practices that are not in line with the EU Public Procurement Directives threaten the sustainability of the private security services and Social Dialogue, if procurers write low-cost tenders that undermine Collective Agreements. Our national affiliates constantly work on the professionalisation of public buyers to improve public procurement procedures and fight practices that exclusively focus on lower pricing, which incentivise unfair competition, undeclared work, unsafe working conditions and the deployment of an inadequately trained workforce.

COVID-19 pandemic

These structural challenges have only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic: in many countries, Sectoral Social Partners have not been adequately considered by Member State authorities regarding the guarantee of business continuity and protection of workers in the sector; demand for new services has further driven the digital transformation of a workforce that is chronically suffering from labour shortage, while other business segments like aviation and event security came to a stand-still; in many countries, national sectoral legislation was unfit to react to this new situation and demand for private security; and bad practices in procurement and contracting have intensified.

Solutions provided by our European Sectoral Social Dialogue

In many countries, it is difficult to tackle these structural challenges by National Sectoral Social Partners alone. CoESS' members are, in most countries, organisations with limited human resources. In comparison with other EU employer groups, the same applies to CoESS at EU-level, which makes EU support in the form of EU Sectoral Social Dialogue ever more important in a sector whose sustainability plays a crucial role for public safety and security in Europe.

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CoESS is convinced that the described transformation and challenges can only be effectively managed by means of a strong Sectoral Social Dialogue, both at European and national level. In the absence of Sectoral Social Dialogue, this transformation could threaten the sustainability of the entire sector and, with it, public security frameworks in the EU Member States.

Since the establishment of the European Sectoral Social Dialogue for the Private Security Services in 1992, CoESS and UNI Europa have been constantly supporting national Sectoral Social Partners in better understanding, anticipating, managing and preparing for related systemic and employment challenges in the private security services sector, for example by means of the following initiatives:

Capacity-building for Sectoral Social Dialogue

Capacity-building at national level is a key objective of the EU Sectoral Social Dialogue in the private security services. CoESS and UNI Europa are constantly exchanging on the state of national Social Dialogue and discuss informal solutions to address eventual short-comings, while abiding by the autonomy of national Social Partners. The exchange of best practices and joint actions that incentivise, inspire and stimulate follow-up at national level are an incremental part of capacity-building, in addition to the application for EU-funding.

Anticipating, managing and preparing for employment change

CoESS and UNI Europa have repeatedly attained EU-funding in order to help national Sectoral Social Partners better understand employment change in the sector – e.g. related to the digital transformation, change of client demand, broadening of tasks, as well as labour and skills shortages. The EU-funded Study on "Anticipating, Managing and Preparing Employment Change" was a first important building block to better understand the drivers of employment change in the sector, and to provide concrete recommendations to the EU Sectoral Social Dialogue Work Programme and national Social Partners on how to tackle the matter in the short-, medium- and long-term. Since 2021, CoESS and UNI Europa have been engaged in the follow-up EU-funded project "INTEL: Skills Intelligence for the Private Security Services", aiming to help national Sectoral Social Partners in having an overview of the extent of existing labour and skills shortages. The project will be identifying current and future skills requirements and developing solutions, including the exchange of best practices, in terms of re- and upskilling the workforce, but also attracting new talent and a diverse workforce. These EU-funding projects are key to address the aforementioned structural challenges in the private security services.

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Public procurement

With the support of EU funding, CoESS and UNI Europa have developed the manual "Buying quality security services", which assists buyers in their tendering processes, highlighting the benefits of choosing quality providers as per the EU Public Procurement Directives. The manual has been translated in 15 languages and continues to play a crucial role in supporting national Social Partners to promote best value procurement in the EU Member States. Since the development of the manual, CoESS and UNI Europa have also been proactively promoting the guide in EU policy-making. For example, it is referenced in the most recent European Commission guidelines on "Buying Social" and "Innovation Procurement".

Occupational health and safety

CoESS and UNI Europa have, with the support of EU-funding, jointly developed the Online interactive Risk Assessment (OiRA) tool for the private security services – aimed at supporting national Sectoral Social Partners and national authorities in producing sector-specific, national OiRA tools which can particularly help SMEs in delivering qualitative risk assessments in the field of occupational health and safety. Also, CoESS and UNI Europa have been part of the original signatories of the multi-sectoral guidelines to tackle Third Party Violence.

Accommodating structural change in declining business segments

CoESS and UNI Europa are strongly engaged in raising awareness of challenges and solutions related to structural change in different business segments. In Cash-in-Transit, the EU Sectoral Social Partners have organised a series of roundtables with stakeholders at EU-level in order to raise awareness of the impact of the "war on cash" and cash payment restrictions on business, workers, and marginalised groups in today's society. This ongoing joint initiatives has managed to bring together a growing group of stakeholders and to develop solutions with national Social Partners on how to tackle the issue and find equitable solutions for both businesses, workers and citizens.

Crisis response

CoESS and UNI Europa have a proven track record in providing guidance to national members in times of crisis, the most recent one being the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2016, both Social Partners have published a Joint Statement on the private security sector in the light of the migration crisis, providing concrete recommendations to EU institutions, EU Member States and national Social Partners in order to ensure the provision of qualitative security services during this time. In 2020, CoESS and UNI Europa have published the Joint Declaration "Ensuring business continuity and protection of workers in the COVID-19 pandemic" with 10 calls for action, which have inspired respective follow-up action by

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national members, for example concerning the recognition of private security services as "essential services".

Standardisation

UNI Europa is supporting CoESS in standardisation activities as part of the CEN Technical Committee 439 on "Private Security Services", which establishes quality standards for the industry. The Committee has recently finalised a Standard on providers of security services for the protection of Critical Infrastructure (EN-17483-1) and we are discussing how to make it more visible in the context of the European Commission's proposal for a Directive on the Resilience of Critical Entities.

Awareness campaigns and joint representation of interests at EU-level

CoESS and UNI Europa have jointly participated in a large range of awareness campaigns, such as on Third Party Violence or Undeclared Work, in order to move forward on important challenges of the industry. Likewise, our European Sectoral Social Dialogue has always been a platform to jointly tackle important regulatory issues to protect, and raise, quality in the industy - although the private security sector is governed by law at national level. In the past, we jointly advocated for the guarantee of fundamental pillars of qualitative regulation of the private security services sector at national level, for example with regard to training and licensing of guards. Due to the persisting differences in national regulation of our sector, we successfully raised awareness that private security services must be excluded from the Services Directive to protect workers and businesses. And at present, the promotion of European Standards for private security services in Critical Infrastructure Protection, for example as part of the EU Directive on the Resilience of Critical Entities, is an important regulatory matter where CoESS and UNI Europa have joint interests.

Added value of European Sectoral Social Dialogue

The added value, and strength, of European Sectoral Social Dialogue in all these matters is manyfold:

Representativeness of businesses and workers on the ground

European Sectoral Social Partners represent, in contrast to cross-sectoral Social Partners, workers and businesses on the ground, reflecting many different realities of the world of work. They can therefore provide first-hand insights in current and future developments as well as structural change in employment and business ecosystems. European Sectoral Social Dialogue therefore presents a unique forum for Social Partners to jointly address these challenges through on-going dialogue, to learn from each other and to find sector-specific solutions at the benefit of capacity-building at national level.

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Exchange of information and best practices

The private security services are regulated at national level, which makes the EU Sectoral Social Dialogue an increasingly important and unique platform for national Sectoral Social Partners to exchange best practices and discuss the many sector-specific solutions and challenges mentioned in this paper. The EU Sectoral Social Dialogue is therewith a highly important forum to drive awareness-building of topics that are of interest for Social Partners across Europe.

Enhancing effectiveness of national Sectoral Social Dialogue

The European Sectoral Social Dialogue is by nature less conflictual than at national level, as we do not negotiate wages. This allows for Social Partners to cooperate in a more collaborative, conceptual and strategic way, which is particularly important when anticipating mid- and long-term challenges to workers and businesses in the industry – for example on such important topics as labour shortages and the digital transformation of the industry. Whatever is agreed then can also be used by Sectoral Social Partners at national level, inspiring and facilitating cooperation on topics which can more easily be addressed at EU-level. This reflects interesting feedback that we receive from our national affiliates: our German member BDSW for instance sees very clearly the above-mentioned benefits of European Sectoral Social Dialogue, because no such national sectoral forum exists in the Federal Republic, and would be interested in having similar national, sectoral structures, which could be supported by EU-funding. As a consequence, and in order to guarantee the applicability of EU agreements to national sectoral realities, we therefore stress that it is key to guarantee at all times the independence of the EU Sectoral Social Dialogue for the private security services.

Building trust in, promoting and discussing activities of, the European Commission

The EU Sectoral Social Dialogue is key for CoESS and UNI Europa to communicate the manyfold, important initiatives of the European Commission to actors on the ground. Although our sector is largely regulated at national level, many policy matters exist where the EU has a substantial influence on national matters – such as in the fields of aviation security, public procurement, skills and social policies. Likewise, the EU Sectoral Social Partners are in the position to provide the European Commission with a concrete picture of the impact of legal and non-legal initiatives, as well as societal and economic developments on workers in the field – in contrast to cross-sectoral Social Partners. The Sectoral Social Partners are in a better position to deliver a concrete picture of each sector and can provide specific data that can be used in the design of policy proposals. We therefore believe that the European Commission has an obligation to facilitate the involvement of Sectoral Social Partners in EU policy-making.

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Addressing current weaknesses: our recommendations on how to strengthen European Sectoral Social Dialogue

In the face of the sectoral transformation and tendencies in EU policy-making, we believe though that there are still areas in EU Sectoral Social Dialogue that should be improved on a more strategic level.

Better consideration in EU policy-making

As EU Sectoral Social Partner for the Private Security Services, CoESS is committed to contributing to EU Social Partner Consultations, as well as other policy debates, in order to duly represent the interests of employers in the sector at EU-level and to add its Social Partner expertise. We however believe that much should be done in order to better consider EU Sectoral Social Partners in EU policy-making and make the following recommendations to this end:

Early consultation of EU Sectoral Social Partners: We encourage the European Commission to consult the relevant European Social Partners from the earliest stage possible before the drafting of a policy proposal begins. This could also include the organisation of informal, preparatory workshops with Sectoral Social Partners before publication of a Social Partner consultation (see under recommendations in Point 7). CoESS observes an increasing quantity of social policy dossiers, which are expected to have a substantial impact on businesses and workers on the ground. The mere quantity and short deadlines to respond pose a substantial challenge to Social Partner organisations with small structures such as CoESS. Where relevant, we also encourage the European Commission to involve Sectoral Social Partners in monitoring the implementation of relevant legislation and policy.

Better consideration of EU Employer Group concerns: CoESS recognises a substantial increase in EU social policy activities, which translates in a rising number of consultations in which CoESS has participated over the past years. For instance, Directive (EU) 2019/1152 on transparent and predictable working conditions, as well as the European Commission's recent proposal for Directives on Adequate Minimum Wages and Pay Transparency, are expected to have a considerable impact on businesses. While CoESS has always agreed with the objectives of each proposal, we see a number of worrying trends. In general, CoESS believes that the concerns of EU employer groups are, repeatedly, not sufficiently taken into account in the legal proposals of the European Commission. This is particularly worrying in the case of Sectoral Social Partners, as they provide a very clear impact assessment of policy proposals on businesses and, as a consequence, workers on the ground. CoESS believes that notably the recent proposals for Directives on Adequate Minimum Wages and Pay Transparency are intervening in Social Partner autonomy – with the risk of weakening the attractiveness of Social Dialogue at national level. We believe that this development has the potential

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to seriously undermine sustainability of Social Dialogue in many EU Member States. Also, provisions often create legal uncertainty, which will, as a consequence, lead to an increasing intervention of Courts of Justice in policy-making and Collective Bargaining – further weakening Social Partner autonomy. CoESS stands ready for a further dialogue on this matter.

Establishment of Social Dialogue Coordinators at all Directorate-Generals: We highly welcome the proposal of the report on strengthening EU Social Dialogue, presented by Andrea Nahles (in the following called "Nahles Report"), to improve the consultation of EU Social Partners on new Commission initiatives by appointing in each Directorate-General (DG) a Social Dialogue Coordinator. We strongly believe that, if there were a Special Coordinator for Social Dialogue within each DG, it would ensure that EU Sectoral Social Partners are adequately considered and consulted in non-employment-related policy matters in order to better reflect the needs of businesses and workers on the ground implementing legal proposals of different DGs. This is, at this point, not the case. We experience that many DGs have a low awareness of EU Sectoral Social Dialogue and its outcomes, as well as the importance of Social Dialogue. Below are a few practical examples:

- At DG GROW, CoESS and UNI Europa had to invest considerable time to raise awareness of the sectoral Best Value Procurement Guide and to promote the initiative as part of the Buying Social Guide and Innovation Procurement Guide.
- At DG HOME, important recommendations made by CoESS concerning the control of qualitative working conditions and the importance of best value procurement have been ignored in the context of a proposal for a Directive on the Resilience of Critical Entities.
- CoESS faces similar challenges within DG MOVE regarding the promotion of qualitative training, working conditions and best value procurement practices.
- At DG CONNECT, the importance of training and working conditions of workers using Artificial Intelligence solutions and providing human oversight services was entirely ignored in the European Commission's proposal for a European Artificial Intelligence Act.

Promotion of EU Sectoral Social Dialogue outcomes

CoESS has the impression that the outcomes of EU Sectoral Social Dialogue are not adequately – if at all - promoted by the European Commission. We believe that the "Nahles Report" provides valuable recommendations to improve this situation, but in general, more effort and resources should be invested in the promotion of EU Sectoral Social Dialogue:

Within the European institutions: CoESS sees a clear lack of visibility and awareness of EU Sectoral Social Dialogue activities across EU institutions, for which the establishment of a contact point for Social Dialogue at the different DGs could be a valuable solution (see previous recommendation).

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At national level: Outcomes of European Social Dialogue are only meaningful if they are also promoted in those countries where it is underdeveloped. The European Commission and EU Member States should therefore substantially increase the visibility they give to joint outcomes of EU Sectoral Social Dialogue – for example through European Commission representations in EU Member States. CoESS is committed to have an open dialogue with the European Commission on how we can support.

Across sectors: We believe that the EU Liaison Forum plays a key role in promoting outcomes and exchanges of best practices across EU Sectoral Social Dialogues at EU-level. It is a platform we highly appreciate and find very helpful for our work. Still, represented sectors are very diverse. We recommend establishing an annual, informal, Liaison Forum meeting for services sectors only, as they deal with very particular challenges due to their labour-intensive activities.

Online: We believe that the European Commission's website is not adequate to effectively promote the outcomes of EU Sectoral Social Dialogue. We therefore recommend the Commission to work, together with EU Sectoral Social Partners, on a website that is user-friendly and provides easy navigation in order to find the outcomes of EU Sectoral Social Dialogues.

Capacity-building and support given to EU Sectoral Social Dialogue

We believe that better support could be provided by the European Commission to strengthen EU Sectoral Social Dialogue.

Administrative support: We believe that administrative work to organise Social Dialogue activities have been increasingly moved from the Commission on to the Social Partners. We perceive that not enough effort is put in supporting Social Partners promoting Social Dialogue outcomes within the EU institutions, Member States, and at national level. Many Social Partners, such as CoESS, have only very limited resources and small organisational structures, and would highly appreciate more support in this regard. We thereby highlight that we perceive our Sectoral Social Dialogue with UNI Europa as very pro-active and cooperative. The only restraint to be potentially even more active are limited resources at our end.

EU-funding: We believe that the Commission should make further dedicated funding available to national Social Partners, also to promote the outcomes and best practices of European Sectoral Social Dialogue. The current Social Dialogue project budget lines are of limited suitability for this purpose and should be revised. Also, strong EU-funding for strengthening Social Dialogue that focuses on the digital transformation and impacts on re- and upskilling should be continued.

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Recommendations on the organisation of EU Sectoral Social Dialogue

In addition to the more strategic direction of EU Sectoral Social Dialogue, CoESS welcomes the opportunity to also provide recommendations on the practical organisation of EU Sectoral Social Dialogue in order to adapt it to a new normal in the face of many drivers of change.

Ensure diversity of EU Sectoral Social Dialogue and equal support

We are convinced that the large diversity of EU Sectoral Social Dialogue is an incremental strength. It enhances representation on the different businesses and workers on the ground. While most sectors face the same kind of challenges, their responses and the impact of these challenges on the different ecosystems are highly diverse (e.g. in the light of the essential character of a sector, workforce composition, future skills requirements, etc.). CoESS therefore strongly believes that equal support should be given to all EU Sectoral Social Partners. It will be very difficult to make a fair distinction between very diverse sectors in terms of geographical representativeness, the quantity of workers and companies represented, or the essential services character of a sector. We therefore believe that the current system and structure is fit to tackle the different challenges mentioned, with adjustments in practical organisation and strategic integration of EU Sectoral Social Dialogue in policy-making.

Flexibility to be provide time-limited targeted support

Still, we recommend that, also as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the essential services character of each sector as well as the representativeness of EU Sectoral Social Partners must always be taken into account in times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, in order to allow to temporarily offer additional support to heavily affected sectors in times of urgent need (such as a pandemic or sectoral economic crisis). It would have been very helpful for CoESS and UNI Europa if the European Commission had provided support to raise awareness of the role of private security services, and the special needs of businesses and workers, among different DGs throughout the pandemic. In this light, we also recommend that the European Commission better considers the different sizes, capacities and challenges of the Social Partners – a fact that is very relevant for an organisation with limited resources such as CoESS.

Better and timely exchange on the European Commission's legal proposals in EU Sectoral Social Dialogue meetings

CoESS recommends that the European Commission provides the opportunity to organise informal workshops, outside of the planned calendar and with more basic resources (e.g. without translators or online only), with each different EU Sectoral Social Dialogue in order to present and discuss future initiatives on legal proposals in Social Affairs. This would allow for a timely preparation of EU Sectoral

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Social Partners for consultations and allow for national Social Partners to present realities at national level before legal proposals and initiatives are tabled.

Effective use of hybrid meeting solutions

We are very grateful for the support offered by the responsible Unit within DG EMPL supporting our EU Sectoral Social Dialogue, including the guidance they provide to ensure a smooth organisation of our meetings. CoESS is therefore committed to better support the responsible Unit wherever we can in order to ensure an effective collaboration among all parties to further strengthen the impact of EU Sectoral Social Dialogue. In this spirit, we would recommend to draw important lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic in order to enhance effectiveness of EU Sectoral Social Dialogue.

The pandemic has created new challenges to organising EU Sectoral Social Dialogue meetings, and we highly appreciate the adaptiveness and agility of DG EMPL to facilitate online meetings. The platforms currently in use have however proven to be not very user-friendly. Also, online meetings have had a negative impact on the fluidity of exchanges, and participation of attendees.

We therefore strongly recommend to return to physical meetings in EU Sectoral Social Dialogue as soon as the sanitary situation allows for it. Still, we believe that for some meetings, it would be beneficial to host the meetings in a hybrid way in case a physical attendance of members is challenging – for instance the Liaison Forum. It should also be evaluated with the individual European Sectoral Social Partners to which extent the offer of hybrid meeting solutions would be welcomed.

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