

4th European Conference on private security services (Madrid 14-15 October 2004)

BY JOHN BYRNE, Chairman of the Academic Board of the Security Institute of Ireland (National Security Training Body), Ireland

Introduction

My part of this session looks at the very broad, complex and changing world of vocational training in Europe. It looks at this area in the context of the human factor – the people involved within the industry. During this session we will look at the traditional distinctions of Vocational Education compared to a training course.

I will comment briefly on the importance of training and then outline what is happening within the EU on Education and Training.

Following on from there we will try to identify what CoESS are currently doing in the area and see how this fits within the evolving European framework. I will conclude with some thoughts on what we, the established social partnership, need to consider for the future.

Vocational Education versus a Training Course

The difference is one of historical arrogance, with little value today. In reality training within security is more academic and theoretical than practical and should always have had a more vocational aspect. Traditionally very little in the training of a security officer prepared the individual for further study or promotion -the focus was on minimum skills sometimes designed to keep individuals at a low level.

Vocational education broadens the mind and expands both the knowledge and confidence of learners. The Basic Guarding Manual did this as its contents demanded academic and theoretical knowledge to support practical skills. Its contents also provided for life skills and helped towards further study.

Broader education allows individuals to appreciate more the complexity of their job, results indicate that they require less supervision and feel more independent within work. This can help with staff retention, as employees feel more valued. Further benefits include a higher quality of customer service.

Over the years training courses have become more academic and vocational in nature and vocational courses have become more practical. The gap is closing and the ultimate goal is to remove completely the traditional idea that training, particularly in the security industry, is a lower form of education for a lower form of job.

Formally recognised and certified vocational education is the future.

All training is important, even informal training particularly when carried out by experienced industry professionals is critical and very beneficial. No classroom-based course of study can replace or teach practical on the job experience, the new concept of vocational education recognises and embraces this.

Discussions within the EU on Education and Training

Discussions within the EU on a new approach to education have been underway for a number of years. The major events for those who wish to research the background are the Bologna and Copenhagen Process, the Lisbon Recognition Convention, the Berlin Communique and the Irish Presidency Conference on Education earlier this year (2004) in Dublin. These discussions constantly make reference to the individuals and the individuals importance to industry.

With this emphasis on the individual – the citizen of Europe, some of the main areas under discussion include:

- Transparency in access
- Quality of delivery of education
- Objectives driven with level descriptors
- Clear progression routes
- Transfer options
- Accumulation of credits
- Lifelong learning

The main thrust of these discussions is the introduction of a Europe wide agreement on an eight level framework of qualifications.

Another important aspect of these discussions is the euroPASS proposal. The euroPASS is described as a "certificate supplement" that outlines the qualification acquired by the holder of a national vocational certificate. This can be your education passport - brought to any member state and used to identify to the local certifying body what education has been achieved to date. The local certifying body may then assess what equivalent award the euroPASS holder may be compared to. Alternatively, they may direct what further study is required for full recognition in whatever country the individual presents it. This will remove most educational barriers to learner or worker mobility within the EU.

Initially all discussions are conducted on a voluntary basis and the process is expected to be completed by the year 2010.

What are we in CoESS currently doing?

In 1999 we got off to a perfect start with the publication of the Basic Guarding Manual. We have done a lot of talking since then but not enough action. Currently, individual members of CoESS are doing what they feel is best for their respective national industry as no further direction is available to them from us.

In looking at the current training situation within the CoESS membership the first problem is lack of information, particularly with the recent enlargement of the EU. On a positive note the SPOT report does provide comprehensive information on the activities of some members.

We see from this report that Belgium, Denmark the Netherlands and Spain have strict requirements for training. The situation in Ireland, France and United Kingdom is now moving towards compulsory training also.

Approximately 32 hours is the norm for entry-level courses. In Spain we see 180 hours compulsory training and up to 400 hours in the Netherlands. Course duration can vary from a few days to one year. Certificates issued in some countries have no external value.

There are limited opportunities in most member states for independent access to basic or further training. Most training can only be done with the co-operation, support and permission of the employer.

Does this fit in the evolving European framework?

There is not enough standardisation except at the lowest entry level. Very few countries have national state certification and progression routes.

A critical issue within the evolving education system will be to discourage short duration dead end type courses. There must be options for learners to progress to further levels. While it is a starting point, the 32 hour course will only fit in at the lowest level. There is little opportunity for learners thereafter to progress within the industry or within mainstream education. This will conflict with the evolving European framework and must be addressed.

Currently we have insufficient, clearly defined industry entry criteria. There is no transparent and open access to courses. Learners do not have the option of transferring to other services or external courses. Career paths are unclear, learners must know if on completion of a course that they have options – they may wish to specialise in aviation or transport security they may

wish to transfer to a business course, they may wish to progress to higher academic levels, all these options must be open to them and not controlled by employers or academics.

The European framework will allow for individual choice, it will be possible for a security guard at the lowest grade within employment to progress to degree level qualifications while remaining a security guard. There may be situations where individuals may take a course, funding it themselves, without the knowledge of employers – this must also be possible. Vocational education need not be focused on employment – learning and expanding ones knowledge can be for pleasure or simple interest.

The rights of the individual – the human element of our industry to better themselves must be encouraged.

What should the social partners be doing now?

This must not be viewed as a “CoESS” issue only. The social partners like UNI-Europa must play an active role in any developments from the start. We must take the initiative, agree joint policies and have some input into this evolving framework. We cannot allow academics, external to the industry, decide at what level security training fits into a new framework.

Listening to what we are saying ourselves is a good place to start. We recognise this as beneficial. We have written reports and we have made statements, however we have had little real action since the Basic Guarding Manual. Here are some sample statements from within the social dialogue, some made at other conferences in the past:

“The European social partners CoESS and UNI-Europa have emphasised on many occasions that the quality of security services is mainly based on the level of professional training of employees”. *Joint CoESS and UNI-Europa strategy for the harmonisation of the legal frameworks. Summary of the Third European Conference for the Private Security Services. Brussels December 2001.*

“Never forget that the sector is made up of human beings. So the social aspect must be kept in mind when directives are drafted”. *Vincent Ancora, National Secretary, CCAS-CSC – Belgium.*

“More than ever, the applicant countries stand in need of a clear European framework”. *Sergejus Glovackas, LTUCCE – Lithuania.*

“Companies are responsible for wages, working time, specific training and all other working conditions”. *Thomas Berglund President Securitas AB & CEO Securitas Group. December 2001 conference - Brussels.*

We are saying the right things and the evolving European framework provides an opportunity to further develop our people and our industry.

I would propose a number of initial steps to help progress the issue:

1. The Basic Guarding Manual is now five years old, it must be reviewed and updated. Every member country must have a current copy, as this is the foundation stone on which we will build the future of education in the European security industry. We must review how the contents of this manual are taught, we must seek expert academic advice on how we can test its contents, we must provide guidelines for on-site training and have documented evidence of individual achievement.

2. We must have more clearly defined career paths within the European industry. Confusion with employment grades, status and levels of authority need to be addressed. We use terms such as supervisor, inspector or sergeant. We have shift mangers, site managers, chief inspectors and department or section heads. We must, in a European context agree a grading system, ideally one that may be linked to an educational framework. This is a vital exercise as it highlights career paths and helps clarify access, transfer and progression routes.

3. The SPOT study is to be extended to look at new countries – this will help but it must now look at all countries and provide an overall up to date picture of vocational training within the member countries. We have insufficient information on what educational resources and

structures are available to us within our membership. *SPOT - Private Security and Work Organisation Report. V. Cortese, P Dryon, A Valkeneers. TEF-ULB March 2003.*

We cannot progress without a proper foundation, clear structures and up to date information.

Conclusions

We face a complex, time consuming and difficult task requiring a long-term commitment from all stakeholders. It is something that may be forced on us anyway or worse it may take the same route as the DIN standard. We must be positive and look at the benefits it can bring to our customers and our people.

Putting learners, our workforce at the centre of this process demonstrates how much we recognise and value the human element. This will also improve the quality of our services and help expand the industry.

Finally, I have attempted during this presentation to merge two issues - the importance of the human factor with the evolving European Vocational framework. I feel both issues address the same topic and I would urge all present to consider this as an opportunity not to missed.

Thank you.