



## Statement

# Better recognition of private security for safe and secure economic recovery in the COVID-19 situation

Brussels, 29 April 2020

The COVID-19 crisis is becoming a new normal, shaping social and economic life in Europe for the months or years to come. With some European countries gradually lifting containment measures, this is a good moment to take stock of the situation and look at how we can organise a safe and secure economic recovery that puts the health of citizens first. To support decision-makers in formulating solutions for this new normal, the Confederation of European Security Services (CoESS) conducted a survey among national associations about the role of private security in supporting the crisis management so far. What we see is that there's a need for competent authorities on EU and national level (1) to support struggling businesses financially; (2) to address bad contracting practices of public and private buyers; and (3) to engage with the private security sector to find safe and secure solutions for existing and future challenges on the way to economic recovery.

### Private security services are essential services

The European Commission<sup>1</sup> and many European governments officially recognised private security as “essential services”. As already highlighted during the terrorist attacks in the mid-2010s, over the past months, the work of private security guards has proven to be irreplaceable for the continued functioning of the economy, by supporting the enforcement of public health and safety measures, protecting hospitals, critical infrastructure and supply chains. More than 60% of CoESS members report a satisfactory cooperation with law enforcement during the crisis, and the crucial role of private security in the “security continuum” has received public praise by Heads of State, national police forces and the media in many countries.

### Continued need for financial aid to struggling businesses

Still, the industry faces a difficult financial situation: 75% of CoESS members report lack of liquidity as a problem for the sector. While in many countries we witness an increasing demand for services

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<sup>1</sup> C(2020) 102I final

at hospitals and the retail sector, other service segments, such as aviation and event security, have come to a standstill. In some countries, overall business activity has declined by 25% to 30%.

CoESS therefore highly welcomes the EU's and Member States' immense efforts to provide financial support to businesses suffering from the COVID-19 situation. Financial aid must now become quickly available with low administrative burden, and competent authorities must engage with trade associations to find quick, sector-specific solutions. Private security is also part of the value chain of many sectors that are severely affected by contingency measures, such as tourism and transport. We therefore call [in a separate statement](#) today on the EU and Member States to propose swift, targeted measures and guidelines for safe and secure economic recovery in these sectors.

### **Action to address bad contracting practices**

In addition to a difficult financial situation, 50% of CoESS members report that both public and private buyers have adopted bad contracting practices, including: unilaterally scaling-down or suspending services without bridging agreements, extending or suspending payment terms, or forcing contractors to lower rates that compromise quality and collective agreements. Such practices exacerbate our members' financial difficulties and stand in contrast to the role that private security plays in managing the COVID-19 situation. CoESS therefore calls on the European Commission and Member States to urgently address this matter and engage with businesses and trade associations to discuss practical, temporary solutions during the ongoing crisis. Now more than ever, buyers who incentivise unfair competition are a danger to public safety and economic recovery.

### **Engagement with private security to find safe solutions for economic recovery**

It is further worrying that, although the crisis has proven that private security provides essential services, still many CoESS members report a lack of recognition of the profession by public authorities in practice. More than 30% of CoESS members report that governments did not respond to the urgent need of recognising private security as an essential service - which stands in contrast with the work carried out by the industry, including in cooperation with law enforcement, and to the public praise expressed in many countries to the sector.

CoESS therefore calls on the EU Institutions and Member States to better recognise the essential role of private security in ensuring a safe and secure economic recovery. Private security will help enforce many of the health and safety measures, which citizens will have to live with for the foreseeable future, in collaboration with or on behalf of public forces. An increasing interest for private security to provide access control and enforcement of safety measures can already be

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witnessed in those countries that have gradually started re-opening businesses, schools, factories and retail stores. Buyers engage with private security to find solutions for the protection of workers and customers.

At the same time, the list of challenges that our industry faces is long: the lack of available personal protective equipment remains an issue in many countries. In addition, businesses may face labour shortages due to sick leaves, barriers to redeploy guards in different services, and interrupted licensing and training of guards. It is crucial that local and national authorities listen to the needs of our industry, and engage with private security companies and trade associations to find solutions for a safe and secure economic recovery and return of social life and business activity.

## About CoESS

CoESS acts as the voice of the private security industry, covering 23 countries in Europe and representing 2 million guards as well as over 45,000 companies. 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 facilities, including transport, events, HORECA, retail, supply chains, national government and EU institutions buildings.

CoESS is actively involved in European Social Dialogue with UNI Europa and official member of multiple EU Expert Groups, including the EU Operators Forum on the protection of public spaces as well as SAGAS (aviation security), SAGMAS (maritime security), LANDSEC (land transport security) and RAILSEC (rail transport security).

## Selected publications for further reading

[April 2020 - CoESS Statement - Call for EU measures towards a safe and secure recovery of the tourism and transport sectors \(29/04/2020\)](#)

[April 2020 - Airport Security Services Association International \(ASSA-i\) - Observations and Recommendations on the COVID-19 Situation \(15/04/2020\)](#)

[April 2020 - CoESS Statement - Call for pro-active Engagement with the Private Security Sector on the COVID-19 Situation \(14/04/2020\)](#)

[March 2020 - CoESS Statement - Observations and Recommendations on the COVID-19 Situation \(26/03/2020\)](#)

[October 2019 - CoESS White Paper - The Security Continuum in the New Normal](#)