

## Joint declaration by CoESS and UNI-Europa on work-related stress<sup>1</sup> - June 9, 2008

CoESS and UNI-Europa acknowledge the fact that work-related stress is a matter of increasing importance for both employers and employees in all sectors and businesses throughout Europe, including in the private security industry. This issue should be adequately dealt with on a company level, on national level and on European level.

Work-related stress not only adversely affects employees' physical and mental health, well-being, family life and performance; it disrupts organisational efficiency and results in increasing financial setbacks for the sector. Both employers and employees should therefore continuously strive to prevent or reduce problems of work-related stress.

In 2004, CoESS and UNI-Europa conducted a joint study on 'Preventing Occupational Hazards in the Private Security Sector - manned guarding and surveillance services'<sup>2</sup>. This study a.o. identifies occupational stress in security activities as one of the key facets of psychosocial workload.

CoESS and UNI-Europa also conducted a survey in 2007 among their respective national member federations to retrieve an overview of national views and tactics regarding work-related stress:

### a) State of play

In most EU Member States, no specific legislative and/or contractual framework exists regarding psychosocial risk factors and/or work-related stress. In the following Member States, such a framework could yet be identified: Belgium (Law on Well-Being (August 4, 1996), Royal Decree of March 27, 1998, Collective Employment Agreement 72), Finland (Occupational Health and Safety Acts), Serbia (Law on Security and Health Protection at Work), Spain (Law 31/1995 of November 8, 1995 on the Prevention of Work Hazards) and Sweden (Swedish Work Environment Act).

The survey does, however, clearly reflect the will of national member federations to contribute to the development of a future legislative and/or contractual framework on work-related stress, e.g. Bulgaria (negotiation of a National Tripartite Agreement on stress), Hungary (negotiation of a collective agreement), Italy and Romania (negotiation of a collective agreement).

Most national member federations refer to individual guidelines, standards and/or best practices at company level to tackle the issue of work-related stress:

- Detailed occupational health and safety plans (Finland, Ireland);
- Stress policies and employee handbooks (Ireland, United Kingdom);
- Checklists to help companies identify risks (e.g. 'Health and Safety Checklist for the Private Security Sector' in Sweden);
- Specialised training sessions for employees and management (Ireland, Romania, Serbia, United Kingdom);
- Individual working condition inquiries (Norway, the Spanish trade union FeS-UGT carried out a comprehensive study on work-related stress<sup>3</sup>);
- Health and safety committees (Spain, Sweden);
- Third-party occupational health services and/or expert assistance (Sweden, Switzerland).

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<sup>1</sup> Further information on this text can be found on the UNI-Europa website: <http://www.uni-europa.org>.

<sup>2</sup> CoESS and UNI-Europa's joint study on 'Preventing Occupational Hazards in the Private Security Sector - manned guarding and surveillance services' can be downloaded from the CoESS website: [http://www.coess.eu/documents/gardiennage\\_gb.pdf](http://www.coess.eu/documents/gardiennage_gb.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> The study on work-related stress carried out by the Spanish trade union FeS-UGT entitled 'El Estrés en Seguridad Privada' can be downloaded from the UGT website: [http://fes.ugt.org/gabinetes/saludlaboral/publica/estres\\_seg\\_privada.pdf](http://fes.ugt.org/gabinetes/saludlaboral/publica/estres_seg_privada.pdf).

b) Most frequent factors of stress

National member federations considered the below factors the most frequent factors leading to work-related stress:

- Conflicts in relationships at work (with colleagues, superiors, clients or visitors of the client) caused by a lack of training, lack of trust and communication;
- Gap between tasks assigned and tasks performed (unforeseen events and additional demands from clients, constant change of tasks assigned...);
- Feeling of job insecurity (fear of losing one's job, erosion of working conditions, lack of career prospects);
- Feelings of fear (working alone, fear of being physically/verbally assaulted...);
- Time pressure to perform a task;
- Role ambiguity (absence of clarity regarding the workers' role, objectives to be achieved, the extent of responsibilities...);
- Stress related to operations;
- Rehiring staff (uncertainty as to the reallocation of a contract);
- Post-traumatic stress (no change of tasks or premises after an assault).

c) Preventive measures

When national member federations were asked to provide a list of effective measures that employers and employees could implement in order to reduce the causes and effects of work-related stress, they provided the following key messages:

*Preventive measures from the employers' side:*

- Implement a risk (including stress) assessment policy for each post;
- Implement a stress assessment policy for each post;
- Improve vertical communication and cooperation;
- Improve the social support structure and adequately reward efforts made;
- Organise adequate training (on stress management, conflict management etc.);
- Organise on-the-job training and give clear instructions on how to perform tasks;
- Promote skill development;
- Allocate tasks corresponding to the individual's experience and know-how;
- Strive to stabilise client contracts to minimise problems related to job security.

*Preventive measures from the employees' side:*

- Identify and escalate concerns at an early stage;
- Seek support from the health and safety manager, from colleagues and/or from a representative;
- Avoid isolation.

d) Steps forward to be developed in the Sectoral European Social Dialogue

CoESS and UNI-Europa are ready and willing to address the issue of work-related stress within their Sectoral European Social Dialogue. Work-related stress is a concern affecting both employees and employers in the private security sector and should therefore be jointly examined.

CoESS and UNI-Europa believe that the most effective way to tackle this question remains at national level.

CoESS and UNI-Europa hereby decide to set up a specific working group composed of their own experts at national level regarding health and safety matters. When required, external experts are to be jointly agreed upon. The working group will try to develop a 'European stress remediation guide' that could directly be used by key players at national and company level.

The guide will seek to define the afore-mentioned preventive measures (page 2, point c)) and will propose an action-oriented frame aiming at preventing or reducing problems of work-related stress.

The Swedish checklist and the Spanish manual<sup>4</sup> have already been identified as good practices. These, together with the European training manual 'Preventing Occupational Hazards in the Private Security Sector - manned guarding and surveillance services'<sup>5</sup> as well as the 'European Educational Toolkit for three Private Security Activities/Profiles: Mobile Patrolling - Alarm Response centres - Airport Security'<sup>6</sup> will serve as starting points.

CoESS and UNI-Europa have launched a study on the 'modernisation of work organisation' in cooperation with the Free University of Brussels (U.L.B.) and with the support of the European Commission. This study partly focuses on the issue of work-related stress. Without anticipating on the results, which are to be expected by the end of 2008, CoESS and UNI-Europa might use the outcome of this study as a source for their joint guide.

Furthermore, specific attention will be given to adequate training guidelines for employees and employers.

CoESS and UNI-Europa will also examine the possibilities of benefiting from the action plan of the European Agency for Occupational Health and Safety at Work<sup>7</sup>, particularly in the context of its 2008-2009 risk assessment campaign.

Lastly, both CoESS and UNI-Europa will continue to lend their support to the multi-sectoral initiative that will be defined in cooperation with the European Commission following the multi-sectoral Seminar on Third Party Violence of March 14, 2008.

For CoESS  
Marc Pissens  
President

For UNI-Europa  
Bernadette Ségol  
Regional Secretary

June 9, 2008

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<sup>4</sup> The study on work-related stress carried out by the Spanish trade union FeS-UGT entitled 'El Estrés en Seguridad Privada' can be downloaded from the UGT website:

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<sup>5</sup> CoESS and UNI-Europa's joint study on 'Preventing Occupational Hazards in the Private Security Sector - manned guarding and surveillance services' can be downloaded from the CoESS website:

[http://www.coess.eu/documents/gardiennage\\_gb.pdf](http://www.coess.eu/documents/gardiennage_gb.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> CoESS and UNI-Europa's joint manual 'European Educational Toolkit for three Private Security Activities/Profiles: Mobile Patrolling - Alarm Response Centres - Airport Security' can be downloaded from the CoESS website: <http://coess.eu/download/EDUToolkitdef.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Further information on the European Agency for Occupational Health and Safety at Work's risk assessment campaign 2008-2009 can be found on their website: <http://osha.europa.eu/campaigns/hw2008/>.