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S P O T

PRIVATE SECURITY AND WORK ORGANISATION

TRANSVERSAL AND THEMATIC APPROACH

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Valter CORTESE

Philippe DRYON

Ann VALKENEERS

COESS

TEF-ULB

UNI-EUROPA

INTRODUCTION

For some 20 years there has been a considerable rise in activity in the private security sector on a European level.

The market in this sector is enjoying a period of strong growth and this is helping to heighten the profile of the private security sector as an economic asset.

There are several reasons for this remarkable growth in private security.

Firstly, concerns about safety have led to and stimulated increases in the demand for security services, which has resulted in a rise in the volume of service supply. The increase in these kinds activities, then, is part of a vast movement of security needs on the part of companies, public institutions and private individuals. The development of new public spaces, which are private in nature, such as hypermarkets, clearly shows this demand for security services and other places where people congregate, such as airports, stations, hospitals, metro stations and even schools, can also be included.

Next, due to restrictions on budget spending and the shrinking of public finances, public security services have concentrated their operations on key priorities and have gradually delegated tasks from the public domain to the private sphere. This has further contributed to the expansion and wider deployment of private security services.

Pierre Simula pointed out that in France “practically one security guard out of two is employed by companies in the trading sector (i.e. not in the security sector) or by public bodies.” However, he adds, “there is a tendency towards subcontracting, which is increasingly becoming the main organisational model.”¹

Finally, the use of subcontracting and the tendency to externalise security operations by a large number of both private and public firms, which previously had their own security services, have led to a growth in staffing levels in private security firms. Given the perspective of budget control, cost reduction and refocusing on key activities within companies, there has, for about the last ten years, been a shift in security operations towards the private sector.

The growth in this sector has been accompanied by a rapid process of increases in professionalism and improvements in the job’s image, which is of crucial importance in laying the basis for developments in the sector.

These increases, in addition to the modernisation of work organisation, represent focal points for changes in labour conditions, the issue of working time, the link between vocational training and qualifications, wage levels and recruitment difficulties.

¹ Simula P., « Précarité et relation aléatoire au travail : le cas des agents de sécurité privée », 1999

Logically enough, the increase in professionalism and labour organisation are subjects which lie within the framework of social dialogue, for both the sector as a whole and for individual companies. Given that those involved in social dialogue have common interests and there is convergence in terms of sector and business development, the growth and expansion of employment and the creation and improving of training programmes, there has been considerable progress made in the areas of regulations and collective agreements.

The European social dialogue of the private security sector quickly became concerned with the need for European harmonisation.

A first study, carried out by Tina Weber (ECOTEC) focused on describing and analysing the different legislative frameworks of the 15 member states.

This study highlighted the huge diversity and marked inequalities in the different legislation, particularly in areas such as entry requirements for companies and staff, the area of operations and the definition of the sector, training, carrying weapons and uniform.

Our research is a continuation of this first study and looks at the situation of modernising work organisation in 6 member states through legislation, but especially through collective agreements and their subsequent development.

The six countries are Belgium, Denmark, Spain, France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

The starting point for the study is the joint declaration of CoESS and UNI-Europa on the modernisation of work organisation² and we have concentrated particularly on the following aspects :

- developments in the field of work organisation ;
- the development in service quality and its relationship to price ;
- the demand for flexibility and its consequences on the management of working time ;
- the use and impact of new technologies on employment and qualifications
- improvements in working conditions ;
- the development of vocational and continuing vocational training

The aim of the study is to take stock and provide an in-depth study of work organisation and its different forms in the European private security sector based on a descriptive and comparative analysis of the legislative and customary frameworks in the 6 member states considered. This is complemented by a qualitative analysis of work organisation and its development at company level.

The objective is to formulate proposals for a European-level theoretical framework for reference and action for modernisation of work organisation in the private security sector.

² Brussels, 11th July 2000

These proposals must be subject to discussion and consultation in the European social dialogue working group in order to allow the validity of this approach, which is limited to 6 member states, to be extended to all the 15 member states, with a view to European harmonisation.

1. METHODOLOGY

The method used is centred around 4 phases.

The first phase concerns setting up the method process, devising the study and the survey, documentary research, interviews with key figures as well as devising and testing the analysis and interview grids.

The second and third phases involve the survey work itself.

Firstly, study and analysis of regulations and collective agreements pertinent to work organisation in the 6 member states was carried out. The research into this aspect was based around four central themes : vocational training, working time, working conditions (including health and safety at work and wages) and the impact of new technology. Reading and analysis tables allow the data to be structured to improve coherence and comparison of the information gathered. The key data for the sector and some economic indicators have also been included to provide a context for international comparison.

Interviews with national social partners from the sector, to gather their opinions on sector developments with regard to legislation and work organisation, complement this theoretical approach. It also provided the opportunity for a more prospective view of the sector.

Secondly, on the basis of comparative analysis and socio-economic contexts, a restricted sample of 18 companies was adopted for the qualitative approach, i.e. 3 companies per country. This sample was defined according to criteria for choice resulting from discussion and consultation with social partners from each country. The criteria adopted included the importance of social dialogue, the size of the company, the kind of company or in-house training.

Given the fact that the sample is not representative, the results were dealt with as case studies in order to illustrate and qualify the comparative analysis through a pragmatic approach to the sector. Employers and workers' representatives were interviewed.

The fourth phase was an overall assessment in which all the results were put in perspective in order to formulate proposals for defining a European-level theoretical framework for reference and action on the modernisation of work organisation.

In terms of products, the research proposes two instruments of use to European social dialogue.

A first vertical analysis looks at national situations, one after the other and is, therefore, a country by country analysis. It led to the drawing up of 6 national information sheets based on the different topics selected and preceded by a brief presentation of key data for the sector.

The information sheets go through the different legislations and collective agreements in force in the private security field of operations, authorisation requirements, training, working time, working conditions and the impact of new technology. A comparative table complements the 6 sheets.

This material is a tool in the social dialogue process insomuch as it provides a rapid view and comparison of the private security sector situation in the 6 countries studied.

This tool has been translated into 5 languages (French, English, Danish and Dutch) and is supposed to be adaptable and evolutional. Updating the data can be done easily and regularly through European social dialogue and extension to include the 15 current member states and the 10 candidate countries can be carried out on the basis of the same data collection procedure.

The second, transversal, analysis was carried out using subjects like sector development, workers' profiles, training, labour movements, new technology and social dialogue as starting points.

This analysis means that the situation in the different countries can be studied and compared but, above all, through case studies and responses generated in the field, it is easier to explain and qualify the changes in work organisation.

We have also tried to draw up a comparison between the countries on a typological basis, focused on regulations, training and wages.

The comparative synthesis report is a second tool for social dialogue purposes.

2. SECTOR DEVELOPMENTS

The private security sector has changed a great deal over the last 20 years in most of the 6 member states dealt with in the study.

This development has been marked by an increase in activity, which is reflected in increased turnovers and strong employment growth.

The activities concerned are mainly surveillance and stationary and mobile guarding, followed by cash in transit and alarm systems. The last of these has seen steadier growth in recent years.

There has been a wave of consolidation and mergers in the sector. Next to the multinational world market leaders, medium-sized, locally and regionally organised concerns have maintained their position and developed further. These are mostly dependent on the urban market, to which they claim to be closer and more responsive. These companies occupy a regional niche and have no a priori desire to expand beyond this market, but they fear being bought over by large companies and losing their independence and autonomy as a result. Observation of the workings of the market shows that competition is very strong, particularly in cities where there are a large number of companies operating.

The sector customer profile is relatively similar across the 6 countries : banking, large-scale retailing, industry, public administration, airports, SMEs and private individuals. Private contracts (80%) are more common than public ones (20%) even if, given the changes in the current economic situation, these contracts are becoming more attractive. All our interviews, however, showed up the difficulties security companies face when it comes to competing for invitations to tender for public contracts. These are reputed to pay badly and late.

The stiff competition and the supply and demand mechanism inevitably lead to tension over wages and prices. These pressures, in conjunction with budget restriction measures, often lead to contracts being awarded to the lowest bidder, which brings up the issue of the price-quality relationship.

At this point in the analysis, it is essential to underline the attitude of public partners with respect to the recommendations of the private security sector on service quality : the contract of the best bidder should replace the contract of the lowest bidder. In fact, what comes out in our interviews with the companies is that for budget reasons the public sector continues to award contracts to the company offering the lowest price most of the time, despite the efforts made for some years by CoESS and UNI-Europa in this area. This finding does not only apply to the public sector, the private sector has also kept this old practice.

The phenomenon of increased customer pressure being brought to bear on security service supply is a recurrent theme throughout our studies and research in the 6 countries. The expression “the customer always gets his way” is fully applicable in this respect.

Paradoxically, we could say that the better the security is guaranteed, the less incidents there are and the more, therefore, the security guard seems to be doing nothing.

This piece of spurious logic leads the customer to negotiate reduced rates for security or to seek an increase in the guard’s workload – for example distributing the mail, taking telephone calls, making photocopies,... In many cases, both of these factors are present.

Medium-sized companies working on local and regional levels seem to be less affected by pressure to drop rates. They put forward the argument of customer loyalty and the climate of trust which comes with years of experience. However, the demand for multiple functions and the extension of tasks assigned is very much present.

To differing degrees in the 6 countries, the most part of those questioned criticised practices of certain companies as unfair. In some cases, like in the United Kingdom, there are examples of dumping by small companies ; in other cases, as in Denmark, in France, the Netherlands, and Spain, this kind of competition is a feature of companies which barely meet legislative requirements and which operate in grey areas, on the edge of legality, and sometimes illegally. These firms hide behind legal loopholes, like in Belgium, with the operations of the so-called « false self-employed » personnel. All these practices tend to lead to a drop in the price of services offered in order to obtain a contract.

As a result, the private security sector’s demands for stricter checks by the authorities and use of punitive sanctions, notably refusal to grant licenses and renewal of authorisation, are very strong.

Furthermore, recourse to subcontracting in the private security sector during periods of peak activity or urgent response to unforeseen events was also observed. The conditions involved in this kind of subcontracting are not always easy to determine.

It is true that as a result of legitimate concern for a higher degree of professionalism, for making the sector more attractive and for social and union negotiations, wages have risen steadily in recent years.

With the economic slowdown, and therefore with a tendency on the part of customers to reduce their subcontracting costs, we attempted to find out if there was renewed interest in using internal security services, which could represent a threat to the sector’s development. We found that this tendency does exist, albeit to a limited degree, in Belgium and in France. Customers like banks are considering this in Belgium for specific parts of their operations. In France, companies have noted in a few cases the poaching of supervisory personnel by their customers.

In terms of sociological analysis of labour market operation, the private security sector is marked by what can be termed its “refuge” function. When the economic situation deteriorates and the number of layoffs goes up, the sector offers employment to workers with poor qualifications or whose employment situation has been affected by the recession. When this happens, these workers find refuge in the private security sector. This works both ways ; when the economic situation is more buoyant, some workers leave the profession to return to their former one. We will return to this point in more detail when we analyse labour movements. What is interesting to note, however, is the effect of the factor of the prevailing economic situation on sector development. At times of economic growth, the demand for private security services increases but the sector experiences difficulty in recruiting personnel and in meeting market needs. This may then seem to be a paradox of sector growth.

3. EMPLOYEE PROFILES

Average age

In the 6 countries the average age of the workers is between 30 and 35. Unfortunately, we had no access to exact figures for time spent with the company, except for Denmark and France.

Denmark

Less than 18 months with the company : 26 %

From 18 months to 3 years : 18 %

From 3 to 6 years : 28 %

More than 6 years : 28 %

France (data from 2001)

Less than 1 year with the company : 38.5 %

From 1 to 4 years : 29.5 %

From 4 to 7 years : 16 %

More than 7 years : 16 %

Percentage men / women

The percentage of women ranges from 5 and 15 %, depending on the company (in exceptional cases there are levels of 20 %, which are probably linked to the kind of operation of the Dutch company concerned : reception duties and airport security). Female employees most often fill specific posts : receptionist, security guard in retailing and, to a lesser degree, remote surveillance. Customer demand often determines the selection of a man or a woman for a particular post. The number of women working in private security seems to be increasing (Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands).

Equal Opportunities

Obviously, general provisions exist for non-discrimination in the 6 countries. However, there are only two countries in which specific equal opportunity measures exist for the private security sector. In the Netherlands, an agreement encourages yearly hiring a quota of people among the partially disabled, the long-term unemployed and / or foreign nationals. In Belgium, a collective agreement makes provision for the hiring of 4 people per year, across

the sector as a whole, from what are termed “groups at risk” (i.e. people who experience particular difficulties in finding work or returning to the labour market)

Moreover, in some companies, particularly in France, employers are encouraged to take on unemployed or disabled people through reduction mechanisms for employers’ contributions.

Workers over the age of 50

The number of workers aged 50 and over varies according to the country and the company. For the most part, it does not exceed 5 to 6 % of total staffing levels, although in some cases of family-run businesses it can reach up to 15 %. Companies do not seem to be very interested in workers over the age of 50. Some point out that there are few applicants of that age. Others consider that they have difficulty adapting and are not very flexible, or that they demand too much.

What happens, then, to workers who have a certain number of years with the company when they reach 50 ? Some are given lighter tasks (garage surveillance, car access checks,...). In some companies, the abilities and experience of older workers are taken into account when training new ones.

However, on the whole, there are, at present, no mechanisms for end of career adjustments, either on a company level or on a national level in the different countries. The exception worthy of note is the Netherlands. In this country, workers aged 55 and over have certain specific privileges (modified schedules, stand by or on call duty only on a voluntary basis, no shifts exceeding 8 hours, medical examination at the employer’s expense,...). In addition, workers aged 60 or over are not obliged to accept night work. Negotiations will take place to improve these provisions.

Union organisations believe that some leave the job of their own accord, discouraged by technical innovation or disheartened by working conditions (night work, being alone on site, changes in schedules). Changes in the profession also contribute to the numbers dropping out: the development of mobile surveillance, use of new forms of technology, night work. The role of the customer was also highlighted : their wishes often tend towards demand for young guards. For their part, the unions believe that there should be investment in training, possibly specific in nature, for older workers.

Recruitment

In general, these are the recruitment criteria for workers observed by employers :

- basic knowledge : reading, writing, counting
- behaviour (appearance, communication skills, . . .) ; in some cases psychotechnic tests are used
- motivation
- maturity (for example candidates must be over 21) and / or professional experience
- availability (evenings, weekends)
- sometimes family situation
- the fact that a candidate already meets the legal requirements (different depending on the country in question) in terms of training may influence an employer's decision
- In some countries like the Netherlands, there are additional requirements : basic IT skills, knowledge of English in addition to Dutch ...

The following recruitment methods are used :

- adverts are placed in local and regional newspapers. This demonstrates an interest in recruiting people from the company's area of operations
- family recruitment and stimulation of internal demand (bonus for hiring of family members or acquaintances)
- on the basis of unsolicited applications
- in some cases in Belgium and the Netherlands, there is cooperation with employment agencies. The agencies may also organise the compulsory training of prospective guards.
- Internet
- radio and / or TV campaign

What are the reasons behind recruitment difficulties ?

- Some companies (with the exception of the Netherlands) commented on recruitment difficulties which are often linked to the economic situation. As mentioned, the sector is in a paradoxical situation. When the employment market is depressed, the number of applicants for jobs in the private security sector increases. However, this is also the time when customers tend to reduce their costs, especially through cuts in their surveillance expenses. And when economic recovery takes place, a portion of these private security guards, who had taken "refuge" in the sector temporarily, return to work in their own sector or move on to a new one. For this reason, it is generally

when the economic situation is positive that there are recruitment problems. These difficulties can lead to a drop in staff quality.

- Employers stress the difficulties of finding staff who meet the minimum requirements.
- Low salaries, but also working conditions (night work and weekends) and the boredom and routine which progressively creep into the job are mentioned as some of the reasons for the unattractive image that the sector has. The overall image of the profession is often negative.
- In Spain, the requirement of training prior to being hired discourages applicants who can find an immediate start in other sectors.
- In Denmark, the development of technology in the workplace is considered to add to the job content and therefore to make the profession more attractive.
- For some French employers, the difficulty does not lie in the ordinary staff, but rather supervisory operational staff. This is a crucial factor for the future of the profession : developing and training enough intermediate level staff. This has led to the creation of a course in private security at the Université de ParisV.

Qualifications

Employees often have low levels of qualifications. P. Simula notes that “this profession, which created a lot of jobs, particularly in the 90s, is especially open to young males right from the start of their working lives. (...) Being widely open to the unqualified and those from short cycles of technical education, staff recruited are almost never from higher than level IV secondary education. In addition to low levels of schooling, this form of employment is also very sensitive to market demands. (...)”³

Where private security guards are qualified, their qualification is for another sector. This is an example of the role of “refuge” or “shelter” sector played by private security. This is what P. Simula has demonstrated in the case of France. On the basis of data from the Generation 92 survey of the Cereq on young people’s career paths from 1992 to 1997, he analysed the “professional proximity” of security guards in France by showing the “25 professions closest to those of security guards. This proximity is defined as being the incidence of each of these professions in the career development of young people possessing the common characteristic of having been security guards between 1992 and 1997. Apart from that job, they had held many others : in fact time spent working in the area of security only represents 36.5 % of their employment periods. (...) In terms of the aspect of proximity considered, unqualified maintenance and building workers come out top (...)” Next come sorters, packers, delivery workers, representatives and cleaners.

³ Simula P., *ibid.*

He adds that the “cornerstone of the system is the low level of qualification generally required for the profession. Generally low, the costs of learning the job encourage further recourse to the available labour reserve, all the more so because there is a structural surplus of work supply in the market.”⁴

The private security sector is further characterised by high staff turnover levels, automatic career advancement based on length of service, and changes in the nature of the job. These aspects will be analysed at a later stage.

⁴Simula P., *ibid.*

4. TRAINING

Basic initial training and certainly continuing vocational training are a key element in increasing the professionalism of a trade. Without a doubt, its existence, its form and its development are a prior condition for improving quality standards in a company, acquiring qualifications and skills and for improving chances of career advancement for workers. In all our interviews with social partners and company managers, the question of training was a recurring theme. All those involved greatly stressed the importance and the need for vocational training.

In this matter, the situations in the 6 countries analysed appear to be very different. Three countries ask for qualifications on hiring, either successfully completed training before signing a work contract (180 hours in Spain, and 111 in Denmark), or a specific qualification or obligation regarding in-house training (Netherlands). Apart from the United Kingdom, where training is not compulsory and, in the best of cases, lasts for 5 days, in all the other countries being a security guard requires training in the first few months after hiring. The durations of training vary greatly : from 32 hours of training in France during the trial period to 66 compulsory hours in Belgium and up to one year in-house training in the Netherlands.

Some training is provided through official education channels like in Denmark and the Netherlands, whilst in Belgium, France and Spain in-house as well as external training centres need to meet certain standards and be approved by the Ministry of the Interior. Most large companies have their own training centre.

For the five countries mentioned and outside of costs linked to education as in the Netherlands and Denmark, training is financed directly by the companies (in their training centres) or by a sector fund. In Spain, where 180 hours training are done prior to the work contract, workers sometimes pay for their training personally in external centres. The costs are between 600 and 700 euros.

The title “security guard” is only officially recognised in Spain and the Netherlands. In Belgium and France, after training, workers are given a certificate by the training body. In Denmark, obtaining the certificate confers the right to work in the trade. We should like to point out French efforts in the shape of the recent creation of a university degree (Paris V) to guarantee training for management personnel, something which had been sadly lacking . . .

In terms of continuing vocational training, the differences between the countries are equally marked : one week after nine months of constant work in Denmark, 32 hours per period of 5 years in Belgium, 20 hours a year in Spain, no hourly stipulation in the Netherlands, but allowance from the sector fund.

In France, it was mentioned that it is a worker's right and in the United Kingdom that it is carried out on a voluntary basis. Some French employers recommend using a "training booklet" which the worker will carry throughout his or her career.

The situation in companies is somewhat different. Big companies have long understood the interest of continuing training and consequently most of them organise training focused on new technologies and on specific jobs.

Of course, some of the people involved in the study commented that they had reservations about training workers given the high staff turnover rates in the sector and the fact that workers might leave for other companies. The risk exists, obviously, of investing in training which reaps no benefit, but according to other people questioned, this risk is negligible or almost negligible. On the one hand, it is known that the workers who resign generally do so in the first months of employment and have therefore not had the opportunity to benefit from continuing training, apart from the basic required training and on the other hand, it is known that many leave the sector. For those who stay, and only change employer, inflows of workers should compensate for outflows and therefore it is better for companies if those coming into the profession have already had good training.

We think it is interesting to point out the situation particular to Spain.

Although nobody criticised the training and its duration, the employers are unhappy about the way in which it is organised. In fact, when faced with recruitment difficulties, the requirement to follow a training course of a minimum of 5 to 6 weeks prior to hiring makes the profession less attractive since the applicant must wait to complete the course and then pass the exam before starting work and receiving their first pay packet (not to mention delays in obtaining official recognition).

To solve recruitment problems, some companies have developed a dual strategy. They organise two weeks of basic intensive training and after assessing the trainee offer him or her an auxiliary service contract. The trainee is not authorised to carry out security tasks legally, but accompanies security guards on their assignments while continuing their compulsory training. When the course has been completed and the exam passed, the trainee is given a security guard contract.

The advantage of this method is that it gives trainees a first contract. However, criticism is made of the sometimes difficult distinction between service assignments and security assignments, the latter being restricted only to those who have the necessary certificate.

It seems to us that the way in-house training is organised in the Netherlands is based on the same logic, but it has the distinct advantage of working in synergy with the law and the needs of the sector.

There is even the job title of “security guard trainee” which can be found in the professional categories with the relevant pay scale. The worker is put on a contract of a minimum of 32 hours per week and receives theoretical and practical training for a maximum of 1 year.

The Dutch method should serve as a model for organising training in different countries.

In fact there are two coexisting methods of entering the profession.

The first is organised through a schooling course in general and technical education, which leads to a professionally recognised qualification. It is both important and essential with a view to greater professionalism and trade recognition.

The second method is centred around and in the company itself and alternates theoretical training at school with practical training in the company.

Based on experience in other professional sectors, we also devoted attention to the tutoring system. This allows company workers, after a specific training course, to give very practical on-the-job training to trainees.

This system exists in the new training method in Holland. The tutors, called “mentors” are responsible for the security guard trainee in the course of their daily work in the field.

In France, some companies have showed an interest in setting up a similar system.

In the United Kingdom, the virtual absence of training organisation leads some companies to train new recruits on the job with the most experienced guards.

We feel that the tutoring system should be explored further in terms of training for young people, but also from the perspective of arrangements for workers retiring from the profession.

Why not make the most of all the experience gained by former workers by transmitting it to new staff members ?

Part-time training arrangements are possible if the status of tutor is recognised and valued in the company.

5. LABOUR MOVEMENTS –STAFF TURNOVER

Is staff turnover high ?

One way to assess turnover is to calculate the levels of staff rotation. For a given period, this is equal to the sum of the entry rate and the exit rate divided by two. The entry (or exit) rate is itself equal to the number of people recruited (or leaving) during the month divided by the total staffing levels at the beginning of the month and multiplied by 100. To find the annual rotation rate, the 12 monthly totals just need to be added together. To give an idea of size, the rotation rate for 2002 for staff in firms with more than 50 employees in the private and semi-public sector in mainland France (excluding temporary employment agencies) was 38.8 %. ⁵

It is commonly heard that the private security sector has a high rate of staff turnover. Nevertheless, precise, reliable data on the subject are missing. The information garnered from employers' organisations and companies in the 6 countries is varied.

In the Netherlands, it may be of the order of 20 to 25 % in the sector, but was estimated at 10 % in one of the smaller companies with 350 employees). In Belgium, it is also about 20 to 25 %. However, staff turnover may well vary depending on the kind of operations carried out : it is high in stationary and mobile guarding, lower in airport security (where there might be more absenteeism, though) and in cash in transit operations. In Spain, the rate mentioned is 35-50 % /year, but in some firms it may be less than 20 %. In the United Kingdom, the level may reach 65 % (“On average the staff change at least three times a year”), but in some companies it may only be 10 to 35 % depending on management and the kind of activities carried out (here, too, turnover may be lower in airport security personnel). In Denmark, turnover may be mid to high, without further details. Finally in France, the people questioned took a different approach to the question. They felt that staff can be split into two groups : a very mobile “peripheral” group, made up of young people with low levels of qualifications, who take jobs in the private security as a kind of refuge. They are thought to represent 20 or 30 % of total staff levels. This category is included in the rotation level calculations and in fact replacement levels are very high (up to 10 people for a specific post per year). The second category is made up of stable workers (often after 4 or 5 years with the company) and accounts for 70 to 80 % of staff. For this reason, some employers prefer to speak of “stability levels” and the amount of time with the company for part of the staff, rather than rotation levels. This enables a picture to be drawn of a stable nucleus of employees, around which

⁵ Insee Conjoncture. Informations Rapides, INSEE (Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques – National Institute for Statistics and Economic Study), n°356, 6 December 2002, <http://www.insee.fr>

unstable occupation of posts takes place. There should be further study done into the career paths of workers in the sector.

Nevertheless, even in the absence of scientific data, the genuine turnover of a part of the staff requires explanations to be sought.

Reasons given

The reasons often given by employers are as follows

- Working conditions : night work, isolation, poor safety on some response operations
- Difficulties in combining professional and family life
- Few opportunities for promotion (notably wage scale related)
- Unattractive salaries, particularly when starting out
- Absenteeism on the part of some guards, which quickly encourages the employer to resort to dismissal out of concern for reliability with respect to the customer (in the Belgian company which mentioned this reason 2/3 of people leaving were due to being dismissed and 1/3 were voluntary departures by employees)

The BISA (British Security Industry Association the largest employers' organisation in the sector in the United Kingdom) also cites poor management, lack of respect for staff conditions and scheduling difficulties.

Comparisons are often made with cash in transit, where there is little staff rotation. The positive factors which explain this in this sub-sector are the lack of night work (except for Holland) and weekend work, the higher wages, team spirit, pride in the job, the prestige of carrying a firearm (in countries where it is authorised).

Union point of view

The union point of view, whilst reiterating the reasons mentioned above, stresses the low wages, lack of career advancement possibilities, pressure on the staff, lack of middle management flexibility, even disdain shown towards security guards and, finally, late changes in assignment schedules. The need for effective and competent supervision referred to by the French becomes especially important in this respect.

Mobility inside and outside the sector

On the question of knowing if employees who leave a company find work inside or outside the sector, the responses are very variable and also show a kind of "outside then inside then

outside again” mobility. Some surveys carried out by companies (Belgium, the Netherlands) show that 2/3 of those leaving jobs also leave the sector.

Comparisons with other sectors

Other highly intensive labour sectors do not experience, however, such strong mobility in spite of being similar in some ways to the private security sector :

-Public sector : for jobs requiring low levels of skills such as in public transport or public cleaning services, low wage levels are balanced out by a better retirement pension and relative job security,

-Flying : job security has become less certain but wage levels are high

-Police, army : these sectors may be relatively attractive thanks to the different grades and scales which exist and the possibility of early retirement.

Encouraging staff to stay

Rotating a part of the staff is one of the techniques used in managing labour in the private security sector. Flexibility due to variations in demands from customers can be offset by the creation of a permanent reserve pool of labour and by using mobile, quickly-trained labour, possibly short to mid term temporary workers (like using overtime, which varies from country to country or subcontracting assignments at times of strong demand).

According to P. Simula “security companies develop the quantitative flexibility model for staff to extreme degrees. The work force is managed through hiring and firing. Fluctuations in demand are met with taking on and laying off staff recruited according to need. Permanent staff work alongside individuals who only occasionally work in the sector. Around the full time staff there is a considerable mass of jobs which are only available in the short or the very short term. As a rule, the number of people entering the profession and / or the number leaving during the course of 1 year is higher than the number permanently employed. (...)

Security guards share a relatively extensive space for inter-professional exchanges with many other trades, which is a kind of labour integration mechanism for part of the population with few qualifications, without any particular areas of experience and with little sector attachment. Instead of maintaining the labour market at a distance, the population group involved seems to diversify its activities to stay in work. In doing so, it makes itself into a rapidly available resource and a reserve labour pool, without ties to any particular sector. It represents a labour force which has little experience and is well below the average age for the sector. Here the particular nature of youth is exacerbated. In addition to this aspect, the labour pool is fundamentally made up of men, able to work for short periods of time and used therefore as an important instrument for productive flexibility. Security companies draw on

this pool of labour, as do many other companies, since they need staff from the same labour market and also rotate staff in order to meet their needs. These practices push back the limits of competition among workers and extend the area of their job searches. They endanger labour conditions, particularly in terms of negotiating power and recognition of skills. (...)

A dual system exists which exhibits a primary long-term market and a secondary one which is far more volatile. The situation resulting from the turnover affects, above all, the lowest-skilled work and passes over the other members of staff to a large extent. Quantitative flexibility is “segmented or segregated” (Gadrey J. et N., *La gestion des ressources humaines dans les services et le commerce. Flexibilité, diversité, compétitivité*, Editions L’Harmattan, 1991 – *The management of human resources in services and trade. Flexibility, diversity and competitiveness, Editions L’Harmattan, 1991*). It reduces the restrictions of functional adaptability and facilitates the fixing of permanent staff in stable employment, with its professional image and identifying characteristics. In spite of massive recourse to the external labour market, operations are structured around a nucleus of stable staff. This nucleus provides the continuity of its knowledge and know-how which are key elements in the companies area of operation”⁶

In spite of this, staff turnover is the source of many problems : negative image of surveillance, chaotic organisation of the work, training costs and fear of lost investment, loss of expertise, recruitment costs and the inherent risk of taking on new staff.

Employers are faced with the following question : How can staff be retained?

Some large companies give the following answers :

- a variety of social advantages restricted to the staff : group insurance, hospital insurance, days off based on time with the company, reductions in certain shops, profit sharing, performance bonuses

- training and better selection of those responsible for staff management

- better selection of staff on hiring (psychological and professional stability criteria)

- better information for applicants on the working conditions in the private security sector

- linking acquisition of new qualifications (scanning, monitoring, languages, explosives) to wage rises

- job rotation, changes in assignments to combat monotony and routine (it should be noted, however, that some customers ask to keep the same guard, since they know them)

- increase the requirements of the different positions (the Danish and the Spanish feel that new technologies could contribute in this area)

⁶ Simula P., *ibid.*

From a union point of view, social benefits are not enough to combat the problems of high staff turnover. They stress, on the one hand, training and the effect it has on wages and, on the other, better staff management and better scheduling.

6. DEVELOPMENTS IN FUNCTIONS

Career advancement

There are only limited possibilities of advancement in the private security sector. There are two kinds :

- horizontal shifts towards better positions
- vertical or hierarchical advances

Horizontal progression is, for example, moving from stationary surveillance to mobile surveillance or airport security, from surveillance to cash in transit operations, specialisation in remote surveillance or Public Service Buildings (ERP certificate), or High Rise Buildings (IGH certificate) in France.

Three countries have a classification structure which provides a certain form of wage progression : Belgium, Spain and the Netherlands.

In Belgium, there are nine categories, depending on the kind of work carried out, professional skills and the degree of autonomy and responsibility involved in carrying out tasks. These are the categories :

- Guard A
- Guard AX
- Mobile Guard B1
- Mobile Guard B2
- Cash in transit guard C
- Overseer or instructor category D
- Bodyguard E
- Ammunition in transit guard F
- “Expert” guard G

These categories are paid the minimum hourly rate. Moreover, negotiations are being held for improvements in this classification, notably with respect to employees in category A.

In Spain, the main categories are :

- Alarm centre operator :
- Security guard
- Transport security guard
- Transport security guard-Driver
- Explosives guard

In addition to the wage rises according to job functions, the monthly salary also includes extra payments for certain types of work, according to factors like risk and danger, escorting and driving armoured vehicles and explosives, being in charge of a surveillance or transport team, night work, weekend or public holiday shifts, overtime, airport scanner operation.

In the Netherlands, a detailed system for grouping functions exists and each group has its own wage structure, which includes a wage scale based on time with the company.

The function groups are as follows :

Valuable objects guard / receptionist

Mobile surveillance guard

In-store security guard

Fire-fighting squad

Cash in transit and transport of valuables

Control centre operative

In France, the classification draws the distinction between security guards (manned guarding,...) and guards on specific surveillance duties for Public Service Buildings (ERP) and High Rise Buildings (IGH), in addition to monitoring for fires. There is, though, no official provision for other career advancement conditions. Advancing up the hierarchy and gaining professional responsibilities is not done in any structured way. We also note that a guard who has completed training in ERP or IGH is only paid the corresponding wage if he or she actually holds a post pertaining to one of these activities.

Union organisations are seeking negotiations for the implementation of scales based on qualifications.

In Denmark, the categories of assistant guard, guard, chief guard, shift manager and regional manger exist.

Finally in the United Kingdom, there is no provision made for professional categories nor career advancement.

In terms of vertical or hierarchical progression, for France, hierarchical progression could be as follows : surveillance guard level 1, surveillance guard level 2, team leader, site manager, agency manager or service manger, regional manager.

In the Netherlands, employees can move up from security guard to intermediate levels of the hierarchy (team leader or unit manager)

In Belgium, the guard can become an overseer or site manager then assistant district manager then service manager.

A Spanish security guard can in theory become team leader, then inspector-supervisor, shift manager, then manager.

It has to be admitted, though, that the number of posts available at intermediate levels of company structure is quite limited. It is thought in Spain, for example, that there is one inspector for 60 guards. Moreover, some of these posts are filled by people who have gained practical experience “in the field”, but employers also indicate that there is trend for taking on applicants with higher education. This is also the aim of the training course set up at Université de Paris V in France. It is also to be noted that chances of promotion are obviously far more numerous in larger companies than in smaller or medium-sized ones.

In fact, the low possibilities of career advancement, doubtless inherent to some extent in the sector, represent one of the factors which contribute to the phenomenon of staff turnover described above. We would like to stress, though, that the most serious problems which crop up in the case studies concern working conditions, wages, lack of respect for staff on the part of the management, the location of the sites and pressure from the customer.

Extension of tasks and new functions

There are numerous examples of a trend in extending the tasks to be carried out by security guards (especially for stationary guarding). Amongst the cases mentioned : making photocopies, posting the mail, distributing the mail or parcels, changing bulbs, taking out the bins, answering the phone, filling in for reception staff during their absence, providing first aid in the case of accidents,...

In this dynamic the triangular nature of the relationship between private security, the customer and the private security employee is particularly relevant. It often happens that the company and the guard are obliged to accept the requirements of the customer regarding carrying out additional tasks which are not listed in the terms and conditions of the contract. Some companies react by accepting these tasks as they are (for example, through memos which add new tasks to those initially stipulated in the original contracts which often go back several years). Other companies accept the new tasks, on condition that they are recorded in the terms and conditions and therefore in the calculation of service costs. Others refuse to accept these additional tasks. In any event, often companies are pressured into accepting, in one way or another, the demands of the customer through the risk of losing the contract. In addition,

sometimes it seems that it is the sales representative of the security company who agrees to the new situations.

From the employees' point of view, the customers' requests can take different forms, either as demands or more as "little extras". For some security guards, there can even be a certain amount of confusion regarding the chain of command : when working on an isolated site, the chain of command tends to be established directly with the customer, rather than with the guard's supervisor at the company. It is often difficult to refuse these requests, often trivial enough, which come from someone with whom there is a certain degree of daily personal contact at work.

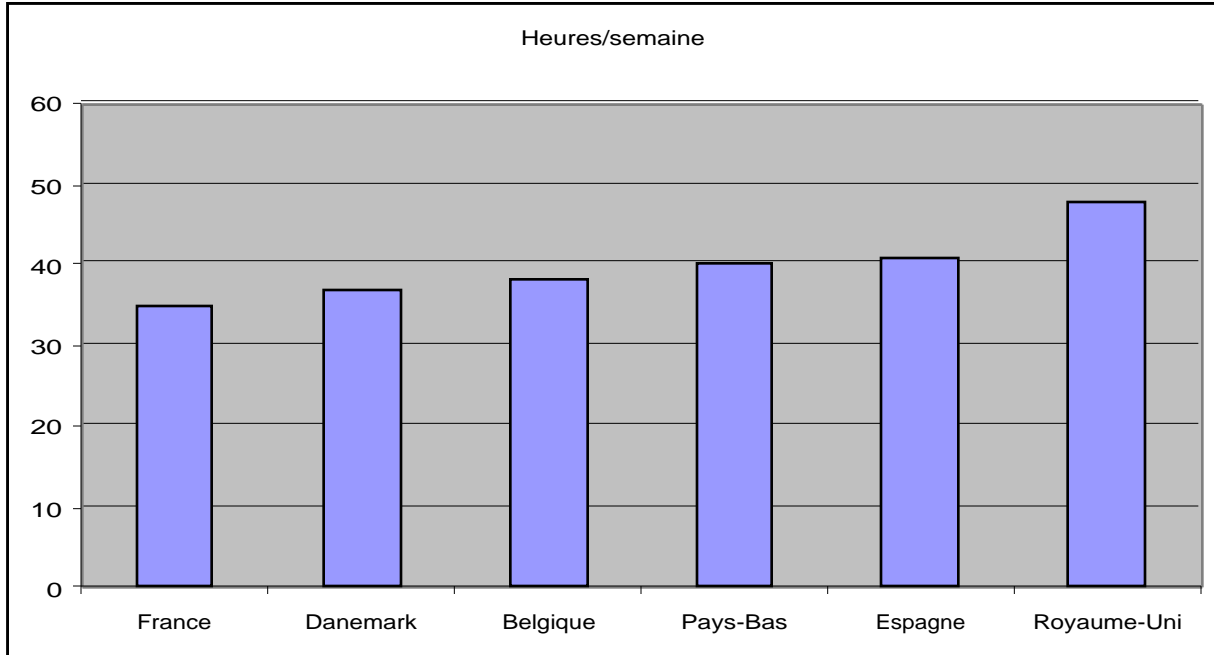
Union organisations are aware of this problem. They generally have the following position : that the employee may accept an extra task "just once in order to help out". If the situation reoccurs, the guard must refuse (particularly if he or she is not covered for accidents at work relevant to the extra task) or the new tasks must be included in the terms and conditions covering the employee's work for the contractor. In any event, these tasks may not take precedence over guaranteeing security levels.

One of the unions' aims is to negotiate on the multi-response of guards and to have this aspect included in the work contract. There is one example, in particular, in the United Kingdom concerning bank surveillance where the extension of tasks led to a 20% increase in wages and greater job satisfaction for the employee.

Some union organisations question employer management techniques, saying that "they don't know how to sell security". According to them, good management means clearly explaining to the customer the list of tasks envisaged for the guard in the framework of his or her security assignment from the start.

7. WORKING TIME AND FLEXIBILITY

The private security sector has different working time structures in the 6 countries studied.



The weekly working time in ascending order is 35 hours in France, 37 in Denmark, 38 in Belgium, 40 in the Netherlands, 40.79 in Spain and 48 in the United Kingdom.

In some countries daily and weekly maximums exist, like in Belgium (12 hours and 60 hours respectively) or in Spain (9 hours). Company level agreements can also play a part in determining daily hours worked. Generally speaking, the companies which were contacted work most often in periods of 12 hours, due to the round-the-clock nature of guarding operations.

The special and paradoxical nature of the situation in France is worthy of note. The switch to 35 hour was supposed to give workers more free time, share out working time better and create employment through the hours freed. In the private security sector, for some workers, exactly the opposite has happened. In order to increase their income, some employees have taken on another contract with a second employer and now potentially work 70 hours a week. This is very different from the intention behind the law on reducing time spent at work.

Overtime working is strictly limited in some countries like Spain (80 hours a year), the Netherlands (176 hours a year) and France (180 hours a year). In these countries, we recorded complaints regarding restrictions on overtime, given recruitment and scheduling difficulties. As a result, some employers exceed the stipulated quotas and have to pay fines. They

criticised the practice of smaller companies, which simply do not declare the number of overtime hours. They deplore the insufficient checks which fail to put a stop to this illegal practice.

In most countries, working overtime confers the right to extra wages or time in lieu. For Belgium, Spain, and the Netherlands night work and weekend work also confer the right to additional wages or time in lieu. In Denmark, a reduction in the number of hours worked is applied. In France, a 10 % bonus for night work has been paid since July 2002, but there is no provision made for weekend work. In the United Kingdom, there is no special provision made for work outside normal hours.

Companies try to keep the number of overtime hours worked down because overtime entails additional expenses. However, staff shortages do not always allow customer requirements to be met without recourse to overtime hours. Furthermore, some workers apply for overtime shifts because of the corresponding increases in basic salary.

Stand-by shifts are either not used or used infrequently in the 6 countries. Remuneration for stand by shifts is low. Sometimes it has been negotiated within companies, but at present there seems to be problems regarding its implementation. With the development of new forms of technology in the sector and alarm centre management, the question of setting up and paying for stand by shifts is becoming an important factor for social partners.

In our interviews, we focused on flexibility models used by employers in staff management. There are four of them, namely :

- the quantity of overtime hours, most frequently mentioned by employers to guarantee service and to tackle absenteeism.
- creation of a labour reserve, which can be called on as necessary to meet fluctuations in demands and unforeseen circumstances,
- collaboration with employment agencies in order to have access to trained, operational staff immediately,
- use of technical unemployment when demand drops.

Non-standard forms of working time, such as night and weekend shifts, inevitably leads to difficulties in organising and combining professional, private and family life. These working conditions are regularly used to explain the levels of staff turnover in company surveys. They are also often the subject of union interest in collective negotiations.

Making considerable improvements in these working conditions represents a major challenge for companies and social partners. Some examples clearly demonstrate attempts by some

companies to ensure that shifts are more stable : they provide the employee with the schedule 1 week before the beginning of a four week working period (Dutch example).

8. IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION

When new forms of information and communication technology are linked to safeguarding goods and people, the spectre of Big Brother is never far away.

In truth, although the private security sector has, like other sectors of course, invested heavily in new technologies, electronic security in the 6 countries continues to be third in terms of turnover after manned surveillance and cash in transit operations. It cannot be denied, though, that this area has experienced the most growth in recent years and that this technology will become more and more prevalent in the kinds of services offered both by companies and by individuals.

Our fieldwork showed up a triple use of new information and communication technology in companies :

- in the services offered and marketed,
- in the work organisation,
- in human resources management

Throughout our interviews, most of those involved expressed the opinion that a winning strategy for the present and the future involves combining electronic security with manned surveillance. Today, the drop in costs of IT material and the digitalisation of techniques enable security companies to offer competitive prices for integrated man and machine services. For employers, the greater the cost of employing workers, the greater the effects of man-machine substitution. Although unions express legitimate fears concerning employment – electronic surveillance could perhaps replace manned operations - it seems that the opinions of those consulted showed that the growth in this market and the wider access for new customers like very small companies, the retail trade or even the self-employed have managed to contain this risk.

Everybody questioned agreed that nothing could replace the human presence and its ability to intervene directly. Some examples showed that customers who completely replaced manned surveillance with electronic systems rapidly returned to a mix of services after some incidents occurred.

On the other hand, some companies which only offered manned surveillance up to the present are aware of the need to develop alarm centre management also in order to offer the customer an integrated service.

In terms of practical work organisation, new IT software has contributed to the improvement of schedule planning and therefore to planning working time in advance. The importance of this variable in the organisation of the relationship between professional and private life is well known.

Some companies envisage being able to communicate schedules directly to employees through intranet in 2 years' time.

Human resource management is also taking advantage of technological innovation.

Thus, the internet provides a communication tool for the company and the job applicant : job offers posted on the company website, mailing of applications with CVs to the same site, distribution of information on the company and its activities, . .

IT tools have also been developed for staff selection and applicants can even do a selection test on the computer.

Some companies use IT for training either in specially adapted classrooms or in distance learning using internet connections. These courses are usually on learning languages or about IT programmes.

Many of those surveyed stressed the contribution of new forms of technology for guards' safety. speed of communication, efficient detection of irregularities and less exposure to attacks. The unions raised the point, though, that checks on employees have increased, leading to greater pressure on the worker.

Have new forms of technology had an impact on recruitment, training, and security guards' tasks ?

Only the Danish companies interviewed attach importance to meeting qualification and specialisation requirements in this area when recruiting new guards. They explain that interest in the job increases and the profession becomes more attractive as a result. They point out that staff turnover has dropped and productivity has gone up.

In the other countries in the study the presence of technology is less prevalent and therefore requirements on hiring are minimal : basic knowledge of computers, data capturing and interpretation, sending e-mails,...

As a result, training has focused on acquiring basic techniques.

Apart from Denmark, where technology is more integrated in the job, the tasks of the security guard have not been greatly affected by technological developments.

The constant, increasing use of new technology brings with it new qualifications and new security functions, as was the case with scanner operators in airports.

Today, the major challenge lies in the transformation and adaptation of security guard functions with the support of new technologies. This approach follows the general shift towards a greater degree of professionalism in the security trade and towards an improved image of the sector, particularly in the area of guarding.

9. SOCIAL DIALOGUE

There are three levels in terms of social dialogue and collective relationships :

- the European level : in the opinion of social partners, social dialogue is centred on common interests, harmonisation, professionalism and eliminating “pirate companies”
- the sector or branch level in each country : social partners generally see dialogue as a positive thing. Aims for dialogue are similar to those on the European level.
- company level : on this level, the situation presents more contrasts and changes depending on the country and the company.

Belgium

Collective negotiations are more laborious in companies than at sector level, in spite of the impression of those involved in social dialogue that there has been a marked improvement for several years.

The points of contention regularly motioned are as follows : schedules which are not respected and last-minute assignments (a guard is not theoretically required to accept an assignment less than 48 hours before it is due to start), accidents at work and appropriate time off.

We would also like to point out union concern over certain guards (for example on reception duties) being moved from the Equality Committee for guarding (CP 317) to a more general Equality Committee less beneficial for employees (in fact CP 218 National Auxiliary Equality Commission for Employees – CPNAE).

Some of the difficulties of union work described are also highlighted : difficulty in reaching stationary guards, often spread out and isolated on sites, refusal of union representative access to certain sites by customers. Sometimes the terms and conditions even stipulate this last point or include a clause which breaks the contract in the case of a strike.

Denmark

Social dialogue seems to have a positive image, both for national and company level negotiations and for employers and unions (with greater reservations on the part of the unions).

Collective agreements, and also technological changes, are considered as the driving force behind improving working conditions in recent years.

Spain

In Spain, in private security, collective labour relations have existed for the past 20 years and take place mainly at sector level. When local level problems cannot be solved, they are passed up to a higher level in the company structure. Employers describe the atmosphere as good, but the unions are more critical of their relationships. Topics dealt with include schedules, working hours and accident prevention.

France

Negotiations take place particularly at national branch level. Some medium-sized companies complain, nevertheless, of an excessive influence exerted by multinational companies in branch consultation bodies.

In some companies, collective relationships seem to have evolved well over the last five years, in others they are not seen to be constructive. Mention was made of rivalry and settling of scores between unions.

For their part, union organisations complain of problems with “in-house” unions. They also insist on the difficulties of union work in the sector : difficulties of reaching isolated workers on sights (some guards only come to the company offices occasionally for administrative purposes) ; refusal to allow unions on-site by the customer (who is sometimes even advised by the security company management to prohibit union presence).

The Netherlands

High quality social dialogue takes place, especially on a sector level. It seems, from our interviews, that union presence is quite low in a series of companies. According to the unions, this leads to distancing between the workers and the regional and national company management.

The problems dealt with are as follows : schedules, overtime, illness, staff turnover, quality of employment and quality of work.

United Kingdom

The social dialogue situation is in keeping with the lack of cohesive sector structure : it is generally underdeveloped.

The unions would like to see social dialogue along the lines of the European model, with national recognition and negotiation. However, they do not feel that the new Law of 2001

will allow this to happen. They point out that some multinational companies have very stringent norms in continental Europe, but not in the United Kingdom.

The BSIA (British Security Industry Association) does not seem to be opposed to the development of the European model of social dialogue.

10. PERSPECTIVE

We have analysed the perspective of the private security sector from the point of view of new markets and European harmonisation.

New markets

We have already touched on sector development and the stiff competition, notably in urban areas where the market is close to saturation point.

Most of the sector's large companies have already opted for a specific diversification strategy through the creation of subsidiaries outside the private security sector. These groups present themselves as offering a range of services, such as reception staff, conference hostesses, mail distribution, shuttle bus operation, logistics and organisation on show premises,...

At the same time and to differing degrees in the six countries, depending on the state of legislation, companies are trying to extend their area of operations. They offer their services within the current dynamic of refocusing, which is going on in terms of private security activities and the shedding of certain assignments in private security.

Some examples of these new kinds of possible activities are :

- train station surveillance
- museum surveillance,
- monitoring and security services in airports
- football stadiums and bicycle races,
- some administrative police work and/or recording of traffic accident details, monitoring parking meters,
- car park surveillance,
- some activities related to prisons and escorting prisoners.

In the new markets, the growth in alarm systems and electronic security is also worthy of note. As we have already stressed, the drop in IT costs has boosted demand and enabled companies to reach out to a wider customer base.

Those who took part in this study stressed the potential of this development, which will entail new qualifications, but also lead to a drop in manned guarding operations.

European Harmonisation

Companies in countries with solid forms of legislation, like Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands and Spain are concerned about norms being revised downwards. These companies fear the adoption of minimum standards which might imperil the correct functioning of the private security market by triggering unfettered price competition.

They point out the imbalances which exist in national legislations and the difficulties inherent in a proposal for harmonisation of European legislative frameworks. In their own countries, they regularly criticise the lack of checks on companies suspected of unfair competition through the exploitation of legal loopholes or simply through non-compliance with the regulations.

Legitimately enough, they extend this concern over monitoring capabilities to a European level.

In the United Kingdom, social partners expect a great deal from European harmonisation. Unlike their counterparts in other countries, they hope that these minimum norms will result in an upward revision of legislation, particularly with regard to vocational training and working time.

But the need for harmonisation is not necessarily dependent on European motivation. One multinational has already begun a consultation process among its different European headquarters to harmonise insurance, trade contracts, training and staff recruitment norms. Most of those involved in the study are also seeking higher degrees of European recognition. However, harmonising working conditions and modernising work organisation is a tall order. This can be seen in : The difficulties in harmonising the European cash in transit sector. Risk of competition may hinder training development.

The adoption of minimum European norms ensuring a high level of quality and professionalism in security services is the key factor in harmonisation.

11. TYPOLOGICAL COMPARISON

It seemed a good idea to us to carry out a comparison of the different countries in the study on a typological basis.

Some authors ⁷ have put forward a country classification according to legislation in force for private security services.

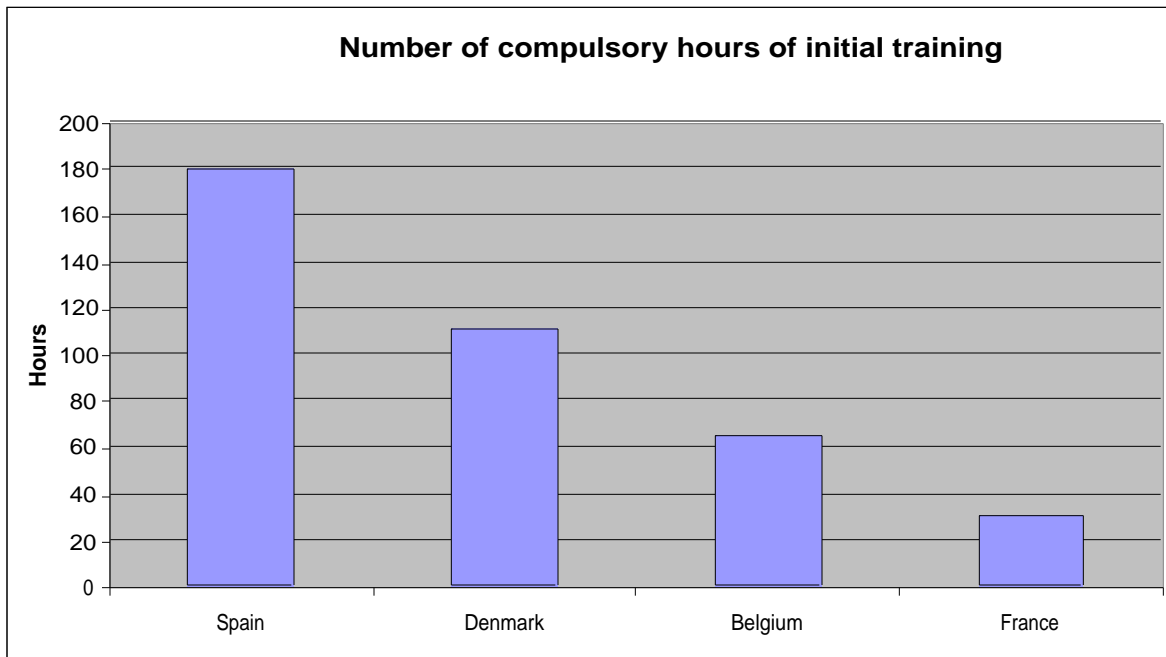
The countries are divided into three levels of regulation :

- countries with the strictest legislation (Belgium, Spain and Denmark). We have included the Netherlands since training organisation has been tightened up,
- Countries with moderate legislation (France), Brion and Kaminski feel that these countries have a clear legal framework but their forms of implementation are unsatisfactory.
- countries with little legislation, such as the United Kingdom, even if the new law on security services is progressively integrated.

Apart from the United Kingdom, all the countries have a collective sector agreement.

What do we find, then, if we apply this classification to two important aspects of work organisation and working conditions, namely training and remuneration ?

The following table shows the classification of the countries according to the number of compulsory hours of initial training.



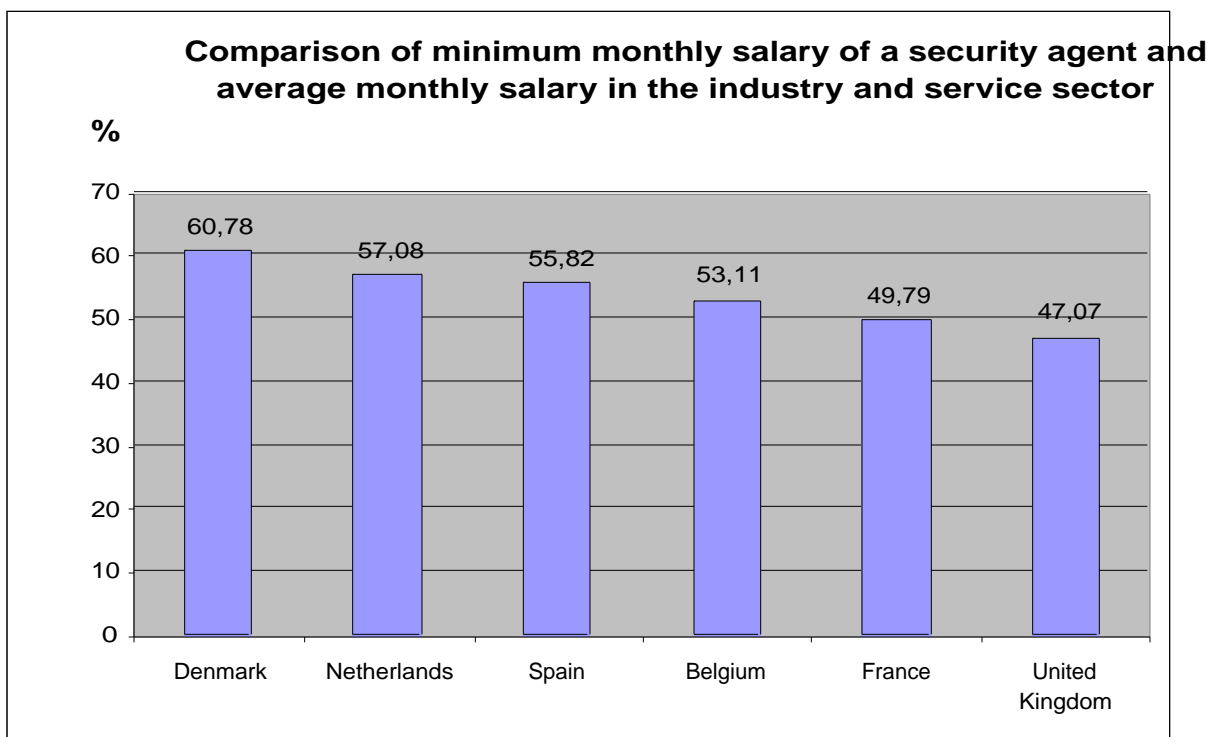
Two countries have not been included in the table for directly contrasting reasons. The United Kingdom has no specific compulsory provisions in the area of basic vocational

⁷ Brion F., Kaminski D. Carteret M. et Smulders P., Etude de droit comparé sur la réglementation du secteur de la sécurité privée, Rapport final, Université Catholique de Louvain – Unité de Recherches en Criminologie, août 2001 (*Comparative law study on private security sector regulation, Final report, University of Louvain, Criminology Research Unit, August 2001*)

training area, whilst the Netherlands has recently adopted an extremely rigid intensive training system based on study (security guard's certificate) or on block release vocational training lasting for a maximum of 1 year in-house with a work contract. (security guard trainee). In the light of the classification on regulations, it can be seen that the countries with a solid legal framework are also the countries which require an appropriate form of vocational training.

The following table sets out the comparison between the basic security guard wages and the basic average monthly salary in industry and in services. We have drawn out these results based on Eurostat information which we have updated using standard indicators for changes in labour costs.

In actual fact, the intention is not to compare wages between the different countries, but to compare the relative value of these wages between themselves.



The table shows us percentages for basic wages compared to average salary, which explains why, for example, the lowest basic salary in absolute terms, that of a Spanish security guard, comes out third in relative value.

Even if wages have risen considerably in recent years, generally speaking, the basic wage is still a good way off the average wage.

Once more, in analysing this classification, we can see that it is the countries with strong legislation which come out best in comparison to the average gross wage.

Denmark is in first place with more than 60%, followed by the Netherlands, Spain, and Belgium. France and the United Kingdom are below the 50 % mark.

Legal protection and requirements are shown to be the best guarantee against downward price pressures and the fraudulent and unfair practices used by some companies. In this respect, it is necessary to increase checks on compliance with legislation if these aims are to be achieved.

From a point of view of European harmonisation of legislation and working conditions, echoing the views of those involved in the study, we consider it important to stress the benefits of maintaining strict regulations. It is within such regulatory frameworks that the private security sector can grow and develop through specially adapted training, higher professional standards, and quality service provision linked to a fair market remuneration.

12. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Work organisation and disparities

The comparison between the 6 countries considered in the study has shown the differences and disparities in terms of work organisation :

- weekly working time ranges from 35 to 48 hours, even if the work schedule is based around a 12 hour shift,
- non-standard work is paid differently
- normal wages and overtime are paid in different ways
- both initial and continuing training varies in terms of duration and recognition,
- recruitment qualification criteria are different in the different countries,
- systems for classifying functions and career advancement do not exist everywhere.

In a striking contrast, next to these differences there are a series of similarities in the 6 countries studied, for example the dynamic changes in the private security sector, high staff turnover, and workers' profiles. They are generally young, aged between 30 and 35, with few qualifications. Women are under-represented (although their numbers are on the rise) as are workers over the age of 50.

As a consequence, the issues of modernisation of work organisation and a European harmonisation of working conditions are extremely important and show similar difficulties to those inherent in harmonising legislative frameworks.

Most of those involved in the study, both employers and unions, are interested in such a harmonisation given the need to take into account the European dimension and sector regulation. However certain doubts were expressed over the way and the forms of implementation : downward revision, adoption of minimum norms which are too low and loss of professional achievements in the sector.

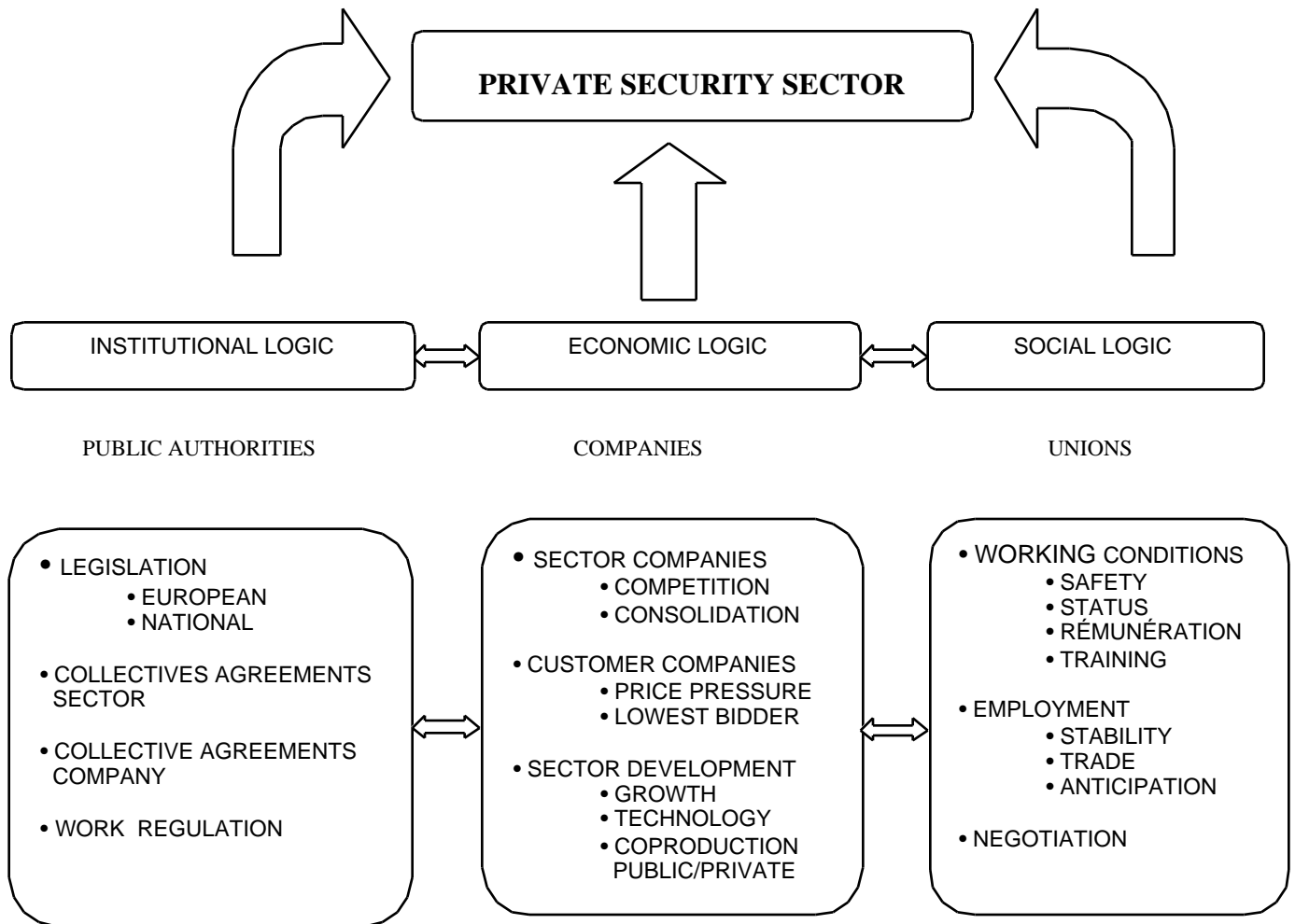
2. Sector developments

The private security sector has changed a great deal over the last 20 years in the 6 member states dealt with in the study, taken as a whole.

This development has been marked by an increase in activity, which is reflected in increased turnovers and strong employment growth.

The activities concerned are mainly surveillance and stationary and mobile guarding, followed by cash in transit and alarm systems. The last of these has seen steadier growth in recent years.

In the process of change, the convergence of three perspectives, which are at the same time complementary and contrary, can be distinguished.



These three perspectives also show the inherent role played by the three actors in the process of change in the sector. Each of these actors is the main bearer of a perspective

which does not exclude the others. Thus, the company focuses on the economic perspective but is not disconnected from the social one.

And the economic perspective complements the social perspective in the framework of constructive social dialogue, but if difficulties arise in this dialogue process, these two perspectives may turn out to be opposed.

This analysis encourages uniting all those involved in order to gather more information on the sector and its process of change and thus forestall unfair practice and lowest price contracts which affect service quality. In this respect, the role and attitude of public bodies deserve special attention.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- To promote consultation among sector partners and key actors (public authorities, employers' federations of the most important customers, banking, large scale retail, insurance,...) in order to involve all the players more fully, notably in the area of meeting service and employment quality norms,
- To improve the profile and thus sector credibility through an obligation to produce a branch report and publish key economic data for the sector,
- To continue projects on a code of good practice.

3. Vocational training

Initial, and certainly continuing, vocational training is a key element in increasing professionalism in a trade. Without a doubt, its existence, form and development are a prior condition for improving quality standards in a company, acquiring qualifications and skills and for improving chances of career advancement for workers.

Vocational training and its organisation are very different in the six countries studied. Some states have developed training courses which are solid in terms of structure and content, others do as little as necessary, if not less.

In terms of financing this training, there are several scenarios for consideration : financing by the education system, by a training or sector fund, by companies themselves and by the individual worker.

Recognition of training also poses problems : apart from in the Netherlands and Spain, the job title of security guard is not officially recognised.

In terms of initial training and following the Dutch example, we think that training for jobs in security should fall within a standard form of course for learning a trade in the same way as other professions. Some of those from France who took part (where a CAP⁸ exists) and in Belgium feel that this is an interesting proposal. This has to be communicated to the relevant authorities. The obvious advantage is the conferral of a recognised qualification.

Next to this training option, block release training offers a beneficial mechanism for the worker and the firm. After a basic short-term training course, the worker, on a contract, can go out into the field under the wing of a practical trainer.

There should be further study on the creation of a tutoring system based on the Dutch model.

The aims of continuing training should be :

- updating qualifications and skills
- an understanding of the development of the profession in connection with new forms of technology
- access to promotion and diversification of functions

Achieving these aims should have an effect on staff turnover through the recognition of professional achievements.

⁸ CAP, Certificate of vocational skill

In order to guarantee high quality training and to make the profession more attractive with respect to the labour market, it would be interesting to test the theory of an integrated training and employment plan in the private security sector.

- Applicant selection by the company and placing of the applicant on a work-training contract. (Status and scales to be defined)
- If possible, use of sector funds for the joint creation and management of training centres approved by the relevant ministry. These centres are responsible for training content, on consultation with the ministry and in accordance with the law (coherence and homogeneity in content and duration). This training could also be approved through a certificate conferred after passing an exam assessed by a panel of examiners. Using sector funds (each company would contribute depending on the total wage bill) would also mean that smaller companies “which do not respect competition” paid their share.
- Training expenses related to the management of training centres for companies which have them would be externalised and covered by the sector fund. This would also reduce the risks attached to external mobility of workers who are “trained for nothing”.
- Training would be on a block release basis, i.e. with time spent in the training centre and working time in the field accompanied and directed by a tutor. The tutor would be an experienced worker who could beneficially pass on his or her acquired expertise to the new worker. In the case of workers over 50, this is an excellent mechanism for making adjustments in view of the end of their working life.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- To include the training for security sector jobs in study courses for learning trades,
- To encourage the development of a block release option,
- To examine the interest and timeliness of a tutoring system
- To promote continuing training, especially in connection with changes in security sector jobs,
- To try to homogenise a European training system based on a European manual drawn up on the initiative of CoESS and Uni-Europa, especially in terms of durations and recognition.

4. Working time and flexibility

Working time and flexibility is subject to serious pressure from the customer company. The response, often restricted due to the nature of competition, prevents security companies from improving the conditions related to non-standard scheduling. However, the importance and the role played by night and weekend work with respect to staff turnover is well known.

Recruitment difficulties, the round-the-clock nature of guarding and the factual nature of some assignments can favour the use of overtime. Other types of flexibility are also used by companies to address the problem of demand : the creation of a labour reserve, which can be called on as necessary, and collaboration with employment agencies.

In spite of everything, companies try as much as possible to restrict the use of overtime because of additional expenses. In some countries, companies are already under a legal obligation to do this in the shape of quotas.

The fact that wage levels push some workers to apply for overtime cannot be forgotten. This makes the union position more difficult in terms of their demands (for example 35 hours in France). Union activity is focused therefore on making sure flexibility is paid for and, depending on the national situations, on demanding wage increases or adjustments for non-standard hours.

But this approach does not provide specific solutions to the problems posed by time management in combining personal and professional life. Some of those questioned also added that the increased workload due to overtime entails a drop in service quality and can even endanger the guard on the job.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- To improve the organisation of working time through the use of longer range schedules,
- To promote job-rotation to break down the geariness of work and bring an answer to the absenteeism problem
- To eliminate the unexpected nature of the job as much as possible,
- To use a combination of new technology and manned surveillance, new markets should compensate for possible job losses.

5. Social dialogue

Social dialogue is generally considered by the sector social partners to be one of the essential driving forces for change, both in terms of increasing professionalism, improving the organisation of work and working conditions and with respect to the European harmonisation. However, there are three levels with different forms. Although in general progress is being made on a sector level, (obviously with differences between the countries) and on a European level, the collective labour relation situation poses more problems and presents more disparities on a company level.

It is likely that at this level change will depend on a bottom-up and top-down dynamic. European and sector social consultation bodies can play a motivating role, but lack information on the complex and varied situations which exist in companies. This information must be gathered from the field and particularly from smaller companies in order to put forward measures for progress and practical solutions, firstly on a sector, and then on a European level.

It is within the context of European social dialogue that the reference framework for modernising work organisation must be drawn up and negotiated.

On the basis of the results of this study, the researchers are able to make a series of suggestions or a summary of good practice detected during their work. However, they alone cannot formulate guidelines. The social partners can play this policy role with all the necessary nuances and also take into account specific national characteristics. In this way, special attention will be given to the market limits, work organisation and to companies' forms of operating and the focus will be placed on improving service quality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- To analyse and improve depending of the cases, the conditions of union activity at the enterprise level in order to start a bottom-up dynamics,
- To stress the lobbying role of social partners on the competent authorities in order to obtain better means of controlling enforcement of legislation
- To set up a working group within the framework of European social dialogue with a calendar. Its meetings would be attended by the researchers :
 - to determine the proposals for the reference framework,
 - to evaluate feasibility and extension to other member states
 - to define the progression in the different stages of the implementation process

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