

1) What is the Services Directive about?

The Services Directive aims to improve the free flow of services around the EU in an effort to boost growth and the creation of new jobs in the EU.

Today national authorisation and licensing regimes often prevent the provision of services across borders or the establishment of service providers in another country.

The proposal is part of the EU's Lisbon economic reform agenda, agreed in 2000. About 70% of the EU's GNP is created in the services sector.

If adopted, the directive will be implemented in steps until 2010.

2) What are the main instruments used in the directive?

The directive relies mainly on two instruments:

- The evaluation and prohibition of a number of entry requirements and licensing regulations that are deemed discriminatory.
- The introduction of the principle of mutual recognition in the form of the 'country of origin principle': A provider that is legally registered in one country will be able to offer his service throughout the EU, even if some of the Member States might have different regulations.

3) What is the scope of the directive?

Currently the directive aims to include the entire services sector with only a few exceptions, concerning the provision of services provided by public authorities without remuneration, so called non-economic services.

4) What are the implications for policing?

With this global approach the directive would also apply to private security services – a highly sensitive type of economic activity that requires close public control and strict regulations in order to protect their citizens against abusive practices and the formation of private militia.

While no European standards on private security regulations exist, a number of EU Member States have enacted national legislation. It is national legislation alone that protects citizens against abusive practices by private security providers.

The level of regulation however differs considerably among EU Member States. Differences concern highly sensitive issues, such as:

- Licensing and control regimes
- Firearm regulations
- Education requirements

5) What will the effects of the 'country of origin' principle be on private security providers?

The country of origin principle stipulates that services can be provided across the EU based on the conditions set by the country of origin of the provider: A security service from Ireland would consequently be able to provide its service in for example Germany based on Irish regulation.

The comparatively high level of regulation in Germany would thus be replaced in practice by the comparatively low level of regulation prevailing in Ireland.

This mechanism will automatically lead to a distortion of competition between service providers in a market that is already characterized by tough competition already: Providers from states with low regulation will have a comparative advantage. In the end providers will move to countries with low social and professional standards in order to survive.

Regulative protection of citizens against abuse in the private security sector will be reduced to the lowest common denominator.

6) What are EuroCOP's demands in relation to the services directive?

The EuroCOP Executive Committee has called upon the EU institutions to exempt the private security sector from the scope of the directive. In the absence of a comparable level of regulation of private security services in the member states the application of the country of origin principle would have disastrous consequences and would open the door to abusive practices and the creation of private militia.

7) How can the process be influenced on the national level?

Member organisations can influence the process on the national level by bringing these issues to the attention of their governments and parliamentarians.

In the end the directive will have to be approved by the Council of the European Union – a body composed exclusively of national ministers.