



European Cleaning and Facility Services Industry

European Commission's consultation "Have your say on reinforcing Social Europe" EFCI's CONTRIBUTION

A sector fully committed with the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

The cleaning and facility services sector is one of the major services industries in Europe, employing more than 4.1 million people in over 283,000 companies. With steadily increasing employment numbers (+14.8 % in the period 2013-2018)¹ the sector is consistently growing in Europe, directly contributing to its economic and social growth.

Our sector is a gateway into the labour market for many workers in risk of social exclusion. In particular, the nature of the qualifications required in the industry allows it to offer employment, financial independence and social protection to a wide spectrum of vulnerable population groups such as non-EU citizens and people with disabilities. To facilitate this, our sector offers training in basic and sector-related skills (including languages training, safe use of products and others) necessary for the professional development of workers. Importantly, our sector has proven to be essential in safeguarding public health during the current pandemic. Nonetheless, it has been hardly hit by its consequences, both in terms of loss of business and increased costs, and especially by a lack of recognition that diffculted access to PPEs and mobility of workers. For this, the EFCI and its members work to achieve the full recognition of the sector's essential role at all levels as a key condition to ensure quality of services, protect employment, offer quality training and guarantee the full protection of workers. Ultimately, a shift towards quality criteria in the acquisition of services is the only viable way to protect the adequate working conditions in the sector.

For our sector, the following are the expected key points of action in terms of social policies at EU level, to which we are ready to contribute through the coming years:

Adequate working conditions

- Protection through Social Dialogue: First and foremost, the promotion of a robust social dialogue and collective bargaining is the most adequate instrument to guarantee the adoption of adequate conditions in the sector. For this, a new approach to capacity building of Social Partners is essential, especially with a sector-specific approach. This will require of increased EU support for national social partners to ensure that they can sufficiently engage both in national and European social dialogue and dynamize the sector in their respective countries. In this sense, as explained in EFCI's replies to the Commission's public consultations² and as publicly stated³, the EFCI considers that no direct EU legislative action is to be taken in the area of minimum wages as any binding measures would disrupt social dialogue at all levels and hinder the competitiveness and flexibility of the European labour market. In parallel, to ensure adequate levels of pay in labour-intensive services sectors, a shift in the conception of public tenders from price-focused purchasing to quality-based tendering needs to be consolidated. To this end, it is essential that:
 - i. Any wage measures are preceded by the necessary guidance for an optimal implementation of the 2014 public procurement directive, putting an accent in the shift towards quality criteria.
 - ii. Legislation ensures that changes in collective agreements during the life of contracts are not solely borne by contractors, but that services purchasers assume the adequation of wages.
 - iii. Abnormally low tenders are excluded as choices driven by price, common in our sector, undermine the effectiveness of procurement. Unrealistic price offers are often made at the expense of workers' rights and quality of services.

¹ The cleaning industry in Europe - EFCI's report 2020. Available [here](#).

² EFCI's reply to the [first](#) and [second](#) phase consultations on fair minimum wages in the EU.

³ EFCI's views on the Commission's proposal for a Directive on adequate minimum wages in the EU, available [here](#).



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- Health and safety at work: worker' health and safety is a top priority for the industrial cleaning and facility services sector. Given the nature of the employees' tasks, the sector has developed all necessary tools and training programmes focused mainly on ergonomics, safe usage of chemicals, usage of protective equipment and risk prevention procedures. Nevertheless, the sector keeps struggling with unforeseen costs related to sudden changes in protection needs or legislation (as seen with the PPE difficulties during the current pandemic). For this, contractual legislation should be flexible enough to make possible that these increases in costs linked to such an important topic are not borne only by employers.
- Work-life balance: The EFCI strongly advocates for the promotion of daytime cleaning⁴. Its introduction in all private and public facilities, would directly improve the employee's work-life balance and guarantee safer working hours. In addition, all services sectors require immediate recognition and an adequate legal framework for adaptable forms of work⁵ as an instrument to offer working arrangements better tailored to the worker's needs and ensure better flexibility in the workforce management.

Fostering employment

- Secure and adaptable employment: recognising and protecting the contribution of diverse forms of work to dynamic and inclusive labour markets is essential. EU institutions should work with national governments to promote more flexible labour markets and lower the administrative burden on companies, especially SMEs. In particular:
 - i. Diverse forms of work are a steppingstone for individuals into the labour market and a pathway to future career opportunities, and they must be fully included in Social Dialogue.
 - ii. Their recognition would also ensure social protection to all workers, guaranteeing their integration into the labour market and improving the adaptability of economies.
 - iii. Further, public institutions must help upskill and reskill the workforce through different EU funding opportunities and ensure that the workers are ready to face the challenges of the digital age and willing to adopt more sustainable behaviours.
- Active support to employment: As a growing and inclusive industry, the industrial cleaning and facility services sector is ready to offer secure and quality employment to the young and unemployed. For this, the recognition of the sector is as an essential way to promote it as valid career option through programmes such as the Youth Guarantee. For this, it is necessary to adopt an especial focus on breaking the false pre-conceptions of the sector and collaborating with employers in the design and recognition of training programmes.
- Predictable working conditions: Following the introduction of the Directive on transparent and predictable working conditions, the EFCI considers that there is no need for further EU legislative action in this area. However, any measures must be accompanied by a reduction of the bureaucratic burden on employers, with a focus on assisting the sector through the digitalisation process by offering the necessary tools and subsequent training.
- Transfer of undertakings - TUPE: Workers' protection in a dismissal can only be guaranteed by ensuring the viability of all companies. For this, a revision of TUPE's implementation needs to be considered. Indeed, a problem frequently faced by our sector is the prohibition of dismissal of those workers refusing to be transferred to the overtaking company. This is then translated into unsustainable costs that will ultimately force the original employer to lay-off employees not directly involved in the lost contract.

⁴ Social Partners joint declaration on daytime cleaning, available [here](#).

⁵ Diverse forms of work: fostering employment, economic resilience and work-life balance in Europe, available [here](#).



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Education, training, and life-long learning.

Adequate working conditions and secure employment can only be achieved through the promotion of quality services. In turn, a fundamental element of the quality in services is the professionalism of their workforce. For this, the recognition and promotion of training are essential for the industrial cleaning and facility services sector, which shall result in the recognition of the relevance of the sector. To achieve it:

- i. there must be an increased focus on basic skills across Europe, through targeted actions and fostering investments in high-quality vocational education and training at tertiary level.
- ii. in the framework of a European digital and green transition, the employability of workers can only be ensured by promoting continued training on basic, digital and green skills. The EFCI's SK-Clean project⁶, funded by the European Commission, is a good example of how to accompany the sector through the digital and green transformation in the sector by providing the tools necessary to identify the needs that will have to be supported by policy actions in the coming years.

The EFCI also welcomes steps in the right direction such as the recognition of professional cleaning in the new ESCO Skills classification.

Inclusion and social protection

- Inclusion and equality: the industrial cleaning and facility services sector plays an essential role in the inclusion of sectors in risk of social exclusion. Specifically, the fact that a 72% of the 4.1 million+ employees in the sector are women and a 30% of the workforce has a migrant background, shows the key role the sector has as a gateway into the labour market. However, to foster its key role in this area, the sector requires an increased focus on basic skills in all training systems across Europe to facilitate and prepare the integration of lower-skilled population, migrant workers, and persons with disabilities into the sector's workforce. Particularly, the sector requires basic education systems to provide digital skills, support to life-long learning to ensure the acquisition of the necessary skills by non-digital native generations, and linguistic skills for migrant workers.
- Social protection: social protection instruments such as unemployment benefits and pensions can only be guaranteed through the full contribution of workers and employers to public social funds. For this, the EFCI proposes three main action areas:
 - i. Intensify the fight against undeclared work⁷, with especial focus on controlling platforms offering bogus self-employment in order to save costs such as social contributions.
 - ii. Promote the application of the principles of the Selecting Best Value guide⁸ in public and private areas to ensure the provision of quality employment.
 - iii. Recognise diverse and adaptable forms of work to ensure social contributions and eligibility for these benefits.

The European Cleaning and Facility services Industry (EFCI) brings together 14 European associations representing the industry at national level, in a sector employing over 4.1 million people in over 283,000 companies.

The EFCI is an international non-profit association and the recognised Social Partner by the European Commission for the sector. It is the employer's representative in the European Social Dialogue for Industrial Cleaning. It is an observer member of the European Platform for tackling undeclared work and an active member of the European Business Services Alliance (EBSA).

⁶ More information on the SK-Clean project is available [here](#).

⁷ Social Partner's joint Statement for the European Campaign for Declared Work 2020, available [here](#).

⁸ Selecting Best Value guide by the European Social Partners in the industrial cleaning sector, available [here](#).