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# Manifesto for a competitive, sustainable and efficient **cleaning** and facility management industry

EFCI'S PRIORITIES AHEAD OF THE 2024 EU ELECTIONS

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The voice of the cleaning and facility services industry in Europe

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# ABOUT EFCI

The EFCI is the voice of the cleaning and facility services industry in Europe. It brings together associations representing the industry at national level. Its members represent the companies whose activities are listed under NACE code 81.2: "Cleaning activities".

## EFCI's core objectives

- To communicate the industry's needs and priorities to the policy makers at the EU level and in the European Social Dialogue.
- To promote the industry and enhance the sector's competitiveness and image.
- To foster the exchange of information among EFCI Members and to facilitate capacity building.
- To organise and implement actions and projects at European level (on subjects such as responsible procurement, promotion of services' quality and of vocational training).

EFCI is a European Social Partner organization, recognized by the European Commission as the employers' representative in the European Sectoral Social Dialogue for Industrial Cleaning. In this context, it cooperates actively with its counterpart UNI Europa discussing and advancing on issues of common interest and relevance for the sector.





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## FOREWORD BY THE PRESIDENT



*Dear reader,*

*In a few months, 450 million EU citizens will be called to elect a new European Parliament, kick-starting a process that will bring by the end of this year to the nomination of a new institutional set for the European Union. Besides being an exceptional example of democracy in action, the EU elections represent a privileged moment for all societal actors to share their views and expectations about what is needed from policymakers to ensure that they can continue bringing their contribution to the European economy and society. EFCI, acting as the voice of the European cleaning and facility management industry, is no stranger to this exercise, and I am proud to present to you the following points, which represent the industry's Manifesto for the next European legislative term.*

*The eight priorities mentioned below cover those domains that are relevant to our industry - from the impact of public procurement and the need to review its principles to the contribution cleaning activities can bring in ensuring the green transition - and provide a reference to policymakers to orientate their action. EFCI looks forward to engaging with stakeholders as well as current and future Members of the European Parliament and representatives of the European Commission on the issues raised in this paper, not only in the immediate interest of the sector, but also to the benefit of all those Europeans whose economic prosperity, social integration and personal wellbeing depend on the work we daily provide.*

*Thank you for your attention,*

**Lorenzo Mattioli**  
EFCI President



# PRIORITY 1: THE LABOUR-INTENSIVE SERVICES INDUSTRY CONTRIBUTES TO THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

Among the many events that have shaped the economic and social development during the last five years, the COVID pandemic has demonstrated the incredible contribution of the cleaning industry to the regular functioning of our societies.

As the urgency of the crisis leaves room to the necessity to learn the right lessons and adapt to them, there is a need to transform the attention our work received into a more structural acknowledgment by policymakers that labour-intensive services are not a commodity, but a fundamental component of the overall economic activity.

A shift of paradigm is required, as demography changes and new forms of working and living emerge, to ensure the work we provide - contributing to creating healthy, safe and pleasant environments for people and economies to thrive in - is perceived as equally conducive to economic growth, social stability and global resilience as the rest of the tertiary and the manufacturing sectors.

If we look at its social impact it is clear to see that the cleaning industry represents one of the principal employment opportunities for newcomers to our continent, people with migrant backgrounds and limited skills. In this respect, our industry is a true engine of economic development and social integration for many.

We call the EU political forces to embrace this reality and reflect this shared awareness in the way the next European Commission will be structured by elaborating a distinct, specific portfolio dedicated to the labour-intensive services industry, mirrored in the internal organization of the Commission services.

## FACTS

### The EU industrial cleaning sector in a nutshell:

- net turnover of 120bn €;
- approximately 3.7 million people employed;
- more than 90% of cleaning companies in the EU have between 1 and 49 employees

*(source: Eurostat, 2022)*



## PRIORITY 2: INTEGRATING THE HYGIENE DIMENSION IN THE EU PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY



The Covid pandemic and the necessity to reinforce the capacity of the EU to react rapidly to health threats has led to the creation of HERA, the Agency for health emergency preparedness, and launched a serious debate on the need to advance in creating a European health union. Public health is increasingly becoming a EU competence, with new centralized responsibilities in terms of procurement, disease control and emergency reaction. However, the EU approach is lacking a significant dimension of prevention and epidemics control: the provision of regular cleaning and sanitizing services.

We call the next European Commission to implement this feature in the future update of its public health policy, including by developing a system for ensuring minimum criteria for Member States' health emergency preparedness that integrate the provision of standard sanitization requirements, as well as the inclusion of the cleaning services (and actors) in national contingency and continuity plans.





## PRIORITY 3: NEW RULES FOR PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

For the industrial cleaning sector, and for many other labour-intensive service industries, clients in the public sector make up for a significant share of the turnover, up to 50% in some cases. While procurement provisions are mainly decided at national level, EU rules define the overall framework in which Member States can operate and can thus already be elaborated to make sure that some of the most impactful distortions in procurement practices are excluded from the very beginning.

We call for a revision of the EU public procurement provisions that reflects the specificities of the procurement of labour-intensive services and adequately mirrors the current reality of more volatile, inflation-prone economic and market conditions: principles like the obligation of price reviews in awarded contracts in case of excessive price increases, or following changes in legislation that have an impact on wages, should clearly be included in any proposal for revision of the directive.

Public procurement can be a driver for change, innovation and stronger sustainability of the sector, but to allow for this, the revision of the EU rules must include a clear support to the professionalization of procurement agencies, to increase their capacity to opt for innovative solutions and ensure the structural implementation of the “most economically advantageous tender” principle in a way that guarantees quality in the service provided.



### FACTS

According to a study commissioned by the European Parliament in 2023, 10 EU Member States awarded from 82 % to 95 % of their above EU thresholds tenders solely on the basis of the lowest price or cost; six other Member States awarded from 60 % to 80 % of such tenders solely because the offer was the cheapest one available.

*(source: Caimi, Sansonetti (Oct. 2023): The social impact of public procurement: can the EU do more?)*

## PRIORITY 4: A MORE BALANCED APPROACH TO LAWMAKING AND A PAUSE IN THE BUSINESS REGULATORY FRAMEWORK



If the EU is to continue to represent a model for combining economic growth with social prosperity and fairness, it is of paramount importance that Treaty prerogatives concerning the distribution of competences between the European Union and Member States are fully respected. Against this background, it should be noted that in the course of the 2019-2024 mandate several initiatives have been adopted in the domain of reporting for companies, creating a significant amount of new regulatory obligations whose real impact on business conduct is still unknown.

EU business needs to be given sufficient time to adjust to this new reality – and in general, to all new legislation significantly impacting the economic activity - and policymakers need time to assess the actual consequences (both in terms of effectiveness of the policy measures and burden on companies) of their measures. Especially SMEs, which represent the backbone of the EU economic structure (also in the cleaning and facility management industry) are to be put in the best conditions to ensure that they continue providing their contribution to the EU economy, without creating unnecessary administrative obstacles.

The EU should now adopt a more balanced approach and refrain from introducing legislation evolving the reporting regulatory framework further. From a general perspective, introducing new legislation without first thoroughly assessing the effectiveness of previously adopted measures risks creating a confused business environment, affecting the global competitiveness of the EU as an attractive place to create new opportunities for economic growth and prosperity.



## PRIORITY 5: ADVANCING ON A STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL TRANSITION: ACCELERATING CHANGE WITH BUSINESS-FRIENDLY MEASURES

The effects of climate change and global warming are now a reality that affects our daily lives, everywhere in Europe and in the world. Accelerating our efforts towards a greener, more efficient way of producing and performing our economic activity is a necessity; however, this must be done in full agreement and coordination with the business community, setting stricter environmental standards that are technically feasible and competitiveness-proof.

Also, it is essential that policymakers look with no preconceptions to all technological solutions, and strongly support the research of new ones applying the principle of technological neutrality.

The cleaning industry is part of a chain of value that includes the chemical industry producing detergents and the manufacturers of cleaning machines, and is committed to reducing the overall carbon and resources footprint of its activity, in terms for instance of limiting water consumption, recurring to eco-friendlier cleaning products and adopting new techniques, materials and procedures (including in the organizational and logistical dimension of its work).

The cleaning industry will continue this transition path and demands that its transformational efforts be recognized and supported by policymakers at all levels.



### QUOTE

*"Sustainability is a key concept for all economic activities, and adapting the traditional way of doing business to its reality is a priority for all sectors, including the industrial cleaning one. With the right support and regulatory approach of policymakers, embarking on the green transition will result in a great advancement for our industry and its customers".*

Lorenzo Mattioli,  
EFCI President

## PRIORITY 6: RECOGNIZE THE CONTRIBUTION OF CLEANING AND FACILITY MANAGEMENT TO THE EU POLICY ON EFFICIENT BUILDINGS AND WASTE MANAGEMENT



Intervening on the existing EU building stock to make it more efficient, smarter and greener is one of the blocks on which the European Green Deal is based and will represent in the next political cycle a major field for policy intervention. Several objectives have been set by the European Union, through different pieces of legislation (Energy Performance of Buildings Directive, Renovation Wave, etc..) that concern different dimensions. Cleaning activities offer a privileged operational context for the collection of information on energy efficiency and the general status of buildings and contribute to adapting existing buildings into smarter ones.

Also, the impact of greener and more sustainable cleaning practices on the overall GHG emission performance of buildings can be significant. Last but not least, waste sorting is primarily ensured by cleaning staff, who represent the fundamental link between the consumers producing waste and the waste treatment companies and are essential to ensure that recycling is done properly.

For this reason, we invite the European Commission to integrate this dimension into its future proposals, and regularly consult with us on the most effective solutions to be adopted.



## PRIORITY 7: LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT LEGISLATION CANNOT DISREGARD THE REAL MARKET CONDITIONS FOR BUSINESS ACTORS

In the current political mandate, several important pieces of EU legislation in the social and employment fields were introduced, that have marked a significant increase in the scope of EU action and the *social acquis*. When elaborating its new social policy agenda, we call for the next EU Commission to become even more attentive to the observations raised by social partners, considering them as the most reliable witnesses of the market and employment reality in which the proposed regulation will operate. And as the outgoing European Commission has repeatedly affirmed its strong commitment to the reinforcement of EU social dialogue, we invite the actors of the next political cycle to continue showing such commitment in their practice. Not only by supporting politically, financially, and logistically the exercise of social dialogue between recognized partners, but also by respecting social partners' independence, autonomy and preliminary competence in social and employment-related issues, thus concretely safeguarding the value of collective bargaining.

Also, a social regulatory burden check should accompany every new legislative proposal of the European Commission in the future, to ensure that the actual impacts on companies (with a special attention to SMEs, whose definition at EU level should be reviewed to include criteria more appropriated to the specificity of those active in labour-intensive services) are not forgotten.



## PRIORITY 8: FACILITATE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

Despite being traditionally a labour-intensive sector, the cleaning and facility management industries are undergoing a significant transition towards an ever-higher level of technological development, which calls for the need to acquire new skills and improve training opportunities. Acquiring new competences, especially in the field of the green transition – as our project SK-CLEAN II currently running demonstrates – and facilitating the recognition of skills acquired formally and informally on the job contributes greatly to improving the attractiveness of a sector like ours, which represents for many a first-level opportunity to find stable and legal employment.

Our companies need the right support from policymakers to integrate the training dimension in their labour retention policy, in cooperation with education providers, public and private employment services and workers' organizations.

### FACTS

According to an internal EFCI research, applicants to job positions in the sector do not possess the right digital skills that are requested from them. At the same time, technological development will affect primarily the core functions of the industry – cleaning operations.





# MAIN TAKEAWAYS FROM EFCI'S MANIFESTO



## Priority 1

Recognise the industry's contribution to economic development, social integration, and employment. Create a specific portfolio within the European Commission for the labour-intensive service industry.

## Priority 2

Call for the integration of regular cleaning and sanitizing services into the future development of the EU public health and emergency preparedness policies.



## Priority 3

Propose a revision of EU public procurement provisions tailored to the specificities of labor-intensive services that includes price-revision mechanisms.

## Priority 4

Adopt a new approach to business legislation that supports entrepreneurship and removes unnecessary administrative and regulatory burdens.



# MAIN TAKEAWAYS FROM EFCI'S MANIFESTO



## Priority 5

Accompany the transition of the industry to greener practices within a different, more business-friendly regulatory context that recognizes the efforts made and supports further improvement.

## Priority 6

Recognize the critical role and contribution of cleaning activities in the EU policies on buildings' energy efficiency and waste reduction.



## Priority 7

Reinforce the political commitment to supporting the EU social dialogue and safeguarding social partners' autonomy and initiative in the new social policy agenda.

## Priority 8

Enable the acquisition of new professional skills for all, also via an easier recognition of informal competences and facilitating the access to training opportunities to all actors and support increasing the attractiveness of the sector.









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