European Cleaning and Facility Services Industry

EFCI's Contribution to the Consultation on the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy

31 October 2025

The European Cleaning and Facility Services Industry (EFCI) welcomes the initiative to establish an ambitious EU Anti-Poverty Strategy (APS). As the representative organisation of the labour-intensive cleaning sector, employing more than 4 million workers across Europe, we **represent one of the largest entry points to employment for low-skilled workers, women, migrants, and other vulnerable groups**.

Our sector plays a vital role in promoting social inclusion by providing accessible employment opportunities. We are committed to prevent and reduce poverty through decent work, fair wages, and inclusive labour markets. In this context, EFCI wishes to make several recommendations to ensure that the APS effectively supports quality employment, skills development, and social advancement in labour-intensive service sectors.

1. EFCI's contribution to reduce poverty

EFCI and its members are fully committed to social dialogue at both national and EU level, and have long played a key role in:

- Negotiating collective agreements that provide above-minimum wages, health and safety protections, and additional social benefits.
- Participating in EU projects that support skills development, digital transition, and quality jobs.
- Promoting socially responsible procurement practices.

However, the cleaning sector is sometimes misrepresented in discussions on in-work poverty. We wish to underline two important realities:

- **Above minimum pay:** In the vast majority of Member States, sectoral collective agreements are establishing wages above statutory minimum rates. This reflects the joint commitment of social partners to guarantee decent working conditions.
- **Part-time work by choice:** A significant share of cleaning work is performed on a part-time basis. However, this is often linked to the personal choice of workers who combine cleaning with care responsibilities, studies, or other activities. While involuntary part-time exists, the perception that the sector systematically imposes precarious contracts is misleading. Where possible, companies increasingly provide full-time or higher-hour contracts, but this must remain compatible with client demands and workers' preferences.

2. Recommendations

To further reduce in-work poverty and strengthen the sector's contribution to social inclusion, EFCI recommends:

- **Ensuring fair competition and compliance**

- Ensuring a level playing field through proper enforcement of labour law and collective agreements, allowing price review in public procurement.
- Encourage socially responsible procurement that rewards quality and compliance rather than low cost.

- **Supporting skills, training, and career development**
  - **Supporting upskilling programmes** that open career progression and new roles (e.g. digital or environmental services linked to facility management).
  - **Recognised certificates and qualifications**: promoting EU-wide recognition of skills certificates (including micro-credentials) in cleaning, hygiene, and facility management. It would give workers portable and transparent qualifications that improve mobility between employers and across Member States.
  - **Upskilling in digital and green competencies**: As facilities adopt robotics, smart systems, and sustainable practices, workers should be trained and certified according to their abilities for emerging roles (e.g. cobot supervisors, sustainability coordinators).
  - **Career pathways**: Link qualifications to clear progression frameworks, enabling movement from entry-level to supervisory or specialised positions (e.g. health & safety, infection control, digital systems).
  - **EU and national funding**: EU and national instruments (e.g. ESF+) should prioritise certification and upskilling schemes, ensuring SMEs can invest in workforce development.