

Joint Statement on the Covid-19 impact to the Industrial Cleaning and Facility Services sector and the necessary measures to protect it

UNI Europa and the EFCI (European Cleaning and Facility Services Industry) are the Social Partners in the European Sectoral Dialogue Committee for Industrial Cleaning (the “Industrial Cleaning SSDC”).

In view of the current events related to the Covid-19 in Europe, the EFCI and UNI Europa would like to acknowledge the efforts that employers and employees in the sector are currently making to safeguard public health. As social partners we welcome the recognition and praise that cleaning agents are receiving in this period.

The COVID-19 outbreak has underlined the cleaning industry’s and cleaners’ crucial role in preventing the spread of the virus by providing cleaning, disinfection and sanitisation operations, that ensure the maintenance of hygienic conditions and cleanliness in hospitals, nursing homes, and all other essential buildings and infrastructures. Too often national authorities do not take into consideration that cleaning agents are often working under hazardous and difficult circumstances, that can put their own health at risk.

Our sector is in a double bind. On the one hand, closed-down buildings put cleaners at the risk of redundancy and cleaning companies in very difficult economic situations, which is neither of their will nor of their responsibility. On the other hand, those buildings and sites which remain open require higher hygiene standards and specialised sanitisation services that demand quick adaptation and training by staff and companies.

To help the sector overcome the negative effects of the outbreak, ensure the continuity of its activities during the lockdowns and phase-out the containment measures, the Social Partners request national and European authorities to:

- (i) recognize cleaning, disinfection and sanitisation as essential and crucial activities, deserving of special consideration by respective governments, and provide cleaners in healthcare, supermarkets, public transport and all other infrastructures with the necessary supply of personal protective equipment (“PPEs”) to protect them against the spread of the disease. Granting the essential status to the cleaning sector must also ensure the cleaners’ freedom of movement and access to childcare services during the lockdowns;
- (ii) contribute to maintaining employment and income security so that cleaning and disinfection activities can be ensured also during the phasing-out of containment measures. To this end, social partners call upon on public institutions to actively support cleaning companies and agents. Hereby, it is essential that public institutions uphold their contracts with cleaning services suppliers. Best practices already adopted in some Member States include, for instance, the assumption of labour costs associated with suspended contracts.

With the above, the EFCI and UNI Europa call to ensure that the cleaning and facility services sector can continue providing its essential services while ensuring the security of those undertaking these crucial tasks. Considering this, the social partners are ready to assist public authorities in stepping up and applying safety guidance that ensures clients', workers' and the general population's health and safety.

Further, the EFCI and UNI Europa call on public and private buyers of cleaning services to apply the principles and methodologies set in the [Best Value Guide](#), jointly developed in the framework of the European Social Dialogue and co-funded by the European Commission. Applying the principles set in the Guide will ensure high social standards as well as the service quality in the selection of cleaning services, as relevant as ever in this period.

The above requested measures are particularly important given that in the aftermath of the COVID-19 outbreak, our sector can become one of the fastest-growing employment areas and actively contribute to economic and social recovery across Europe.

UNI Europa and the EFCI believe that social dialogue and collective bargaining can ensure equitable and sustainable solutions for business and workers during the crisis and in its aftermath.

Brussels, 22 April 2020

About the EFCI & UNI Europa:

The **EFCI** is the voice of the European cleaning and facility services industry in Europe, bringing together associations representing the industry at national level. The cleaning and facility services sector is one of the major services industries in Europe, representing more than 283,000 companies employing 4.1 million people.

UNI-Europa is the European Trade Union Federation for 7 million service workers. It speaks for the sectors that constitute the backbone of economic and social life in Europe. Headquartered in the heart of Brussels, UNI Europa represents 272 national trade unions in 50 countries, including: Commerce, Banking Insurance and Central Banks, Gaming, Graphical and Packaging, Hair and Beauty, Information and Communication Technology Services, Media, Entertainment and Arts, Postal Services and Logistics, Private Care and Social Insurance, Industrial Cleaning and Private Security, Professional Sport and Leisure, Professionals/Managers and Temporary Agency Workers.