

Joint Social Partner Statement: Daytime cleaning, a pillar for social rights in the Cleaning Sector

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 sector is one of the largest service industries in Europe, made up of over 297,000 companies employing more than 4.2 million people. With employment steadily increasing over the last 20 years, (+14.8 % in the period 2014-2018) the sector is contributing directly to Europe's economic and social growth.

The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the cleaners' and cleaning companies' crucial role in preventing the spread of the virus by providing cleaning, disinfection and sanitisation services through all economic sectors, contributing to safe working, travelling, healthcare, commercial, cultural or touristic environments. Cleaning and hygiene are key factors to ensure safe and quality jobs and living environments.

Despite the above, the focus in the selection of cleaning services providers is still put on price, while leaving aside other considerations, such as social aspects, environmental sustainability and innovation. The long-standing call by the sector's European and national social partners for a focus on quality and not in price as the way to ensure high social standards in the provision of cleaning services has therefore become as relevant as ever.

One of the key recommendations by the Social Partners in the sector, both at European and national levels, is the extension of the application of daytime cleaning (i.e. cleaning that occurs during normal office hours, and therefore diminishing split hours and allowing for continuous shifts) in the contracting practices of both public and private buyers. In 2007, UNI Europa and the EFCI already called for a shift towards daytime cleaning in a Joint Declaration which content remains completely relevant. This call is renovated today given that:

- (i) The engagement with sustainability by governments of all levels and private and public organisations must have a strong focus on social sustainability. The responsible selection of cleaning services must be embraced as a key factor for the advancement towards the improvement of the working conditions of cleaners. The opening towards daytime cleaning and continuous shifts is a central instrument in the path towards socially responsible selection of cleaning services;
- (ii) The industrial cleaning sector is one of the main employment creators in Europe and, as such, a vector for the integration of people with migrant background. In many countries, moreover, the workforce of the sector includes a high proportion of women in many European countries. Daytime cleaning enhances the integration of cleaners by enhancing interpersonal relations, language learning and skills development.
- (iii) (iii)At the heart of the Green Transition and the European Green Deal lies a more efficient use of energy, infrastructures and buildings. Cleaning them outside working hours (i.e. early in the morning, late in the evening) clearly clashes with other environmental sustainability measures;
- (iv) The digital transition is increasingly facilitating a more efficient organisation of the cleaning work and shifts organisation (i.e. alerting when offices are occupied or not, when

meetings are scheduled, when cleaning is necessary), while innovation on the side of the suppliers ensure increasingly silent cleaning operations;

- (v) The long-standing experience of the sector shows that daytime cleaning does positively affect the quality of services provided and enhances the client-provider relation, improving communication and interaction and not increasing the costs of services.
- (vi) While flexibility in the time schedule constitutes one of the fundamental characteristics of all activities of the sector and remains essential for many of its clients, offering continuous shifts and working in daytime may help overcome the growing staff shortages and attractiveness issues. Daytime working hours and continuous shifts would allow for increased family life conciliation, opportunities for training and for longer hours or full-time contracts. This would positively impact the capacities to fulfil client's demands, as better staff availability would diminish recruitment difficulties and staff turnover would tend to decrease.
- (vii) Daytime cleaning and continuous shifts visibilize the cleaning activity and increase the social awareness of the sector and its relevance for the society.

On this basis, the EFCI and UNI Europa call to policymakers and to the industry clients (both private and public) to:

- (i) Understand and promote daytime cleaning as a tool for socially responsible selection of cleaning services, as well as an environment-friendly solution for the administration of buildings and infrastructures, in order to integrate daytime cleaning as a normal setting in all work environments;
- (ii) Consider the option for daytime cleaning and enhanced continuous shifts to be reflected in tenders. By working in partnership with social partners throughout the procurement process, and especially in the preparation phase, the best technical approach for the design of the specificities of each tender can be chosen;
- (iii) Practically engage, especially in the event of contract renewals, to conduct a prior study to evaluate the possibility of implementing daytime cleaning according to the new site configurations.

Further, the Social Partners specifically call the European Institutions to:

- (i) Explicitly include references to daytime cleaning and continuous shifts in their legislative guidelines and recommendations and procurement tools ;
- (ii) Privilege daytime cleaning on its own selection of cleaning services, and to the principles of the Best Value Guide to their process of selection of cleaning services.

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