



European Cleaning and Facility Services Industry

Brussels, 27.03.2020

## **The EFCI calls upon public authorities to define cleaning as an essential activity, to ensure the provision of PPEs and to maintain employment in industry**

Employing over 3.9 million people in more than 270.000 companies, the Cleaning and Facility Services sector is at the forefront of the fight against the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). Its **role is crucial in the provision of sanitization operations**, currently undergoing across Europe, **and the maintenance of hygiene and cleanliness in hospitals, nursing homes, and all kinds of buildings and infrastructures.**

In the unprecedented circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 outbreak, the EFCI calls on national authorities to **take consideration of the cleaning sector's relevance and of the needs and difficulties cleaning agents and companies are undergoing in the current context.**

### **Cleaning services must be recognized as essential activities**

The services provided by our companies **are essential to prevent the spread of the virus as well as to enable the continuity of other essential activities.** In order to ensure the continuity in the provision of sanitization<sup>1</sup> and cleaning services, national authorities and European institutions must recognize them as **essential activities, and cleaning agents as key workers.**

This recognition shall ensure:

- (i) The access of agents to the relevant premises and geographic areas, including accessing confined areas and crossing borders;
- (ii) The provision of necessary protective equipment (PPEs);
- (iii) The possibility for cleaning agents to benefit from measures such as daycare and schools for their children;
- (iv) The continuity of cleaning companies' activity, which are ready to continue providing their services to their respective communities, particularly relevant in the current context.

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<sup>1</sup> Sanitization operations are "all proceedings and operations aiming at making certain environments healthy by cleaning and / or cleaning disinfection and / or disinfestation or through the control and improvement of microclimate conditions regarding temperature". They need to be differentiated from other services carried out by the sector - including cleaning, disinfestation, disinfection and rat extermination.



European Cleaning and Facility Services Industry

That has been already the case in Member States like Italy, France, Belgium or Spain, by direct or indirect legislative measures or government decisions. It is urgent that all Member States follow the same path and that this is considered in any other future decision affecting the activities of the sector.

### **Cleaning agents must be provided with the necessary protective equipment (PPEs)**

In order to continue performing their activities under the necessary safety conditions, it is urgent that cleaning professionals have access to PPEs.

Cleaning agents are exposed to contagion not only when working in healthcare facilities, but also when providing their services in all other environments, and cleaning companies are struggling to have access to such equipment. This urgency needs to be immediately resolved by implementing the necessary measures in all administration levels. European and national authorities must ensure an organized and fair access to the PPE market, including private operators that currently struggle to provide employees with the necessary equipment.

### **Maintaining employment to ensure cleanliness and hygiene after the crisis**

The industrial cleaning sector is directly affected by the temporary closure of offices, leisure and education facilities, which together represent more than 54% of the sector's market segments.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, their services are as relevant as ever in hospitals and industrial sites – which represented in 2016 at least 16,8% of the overall operations.

Further, as the industrial cleaning sector provides a high level of employment, which has steadily grown during the last 20 years reaching nearly 4 million employees across the Union, the sector will be key to sustain the economic recovery after the crisis.

Ensuring the **continuity of cleaning companies** is paramount in the current context but even more so when taking into account the relevance cleaning, hygiene and disinfection operations will have in the near future and immediately after the crisis, when public and private buildings and infrastructures, including schools, will reopen. Therefore, the EFCI calls upon European and national authorities to **ensure that the special aid measures they are designing consider this reality and sustain employment in the industrial cleaning sector.**

To this end, and regarding the relevance of public contracts for the industry, **the EFCI calls on public institutions to ensure the protection of employment by (i) not suspending or**

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<sup>2</sup> As of data of 2016; see page 2016 of EFCI'S 2019 Trend Report "The European Cleaning Industry 1995-2016": <https://www.efci.eu/wp-content/uploads/flipbooks/1/>



European Cleaning and Facility Services Industry

**terminating contracts with cleaning services suppliers or (ii) assuming the labour costs related to the contracts during the duration of their suspension.**<sup>3</sup>

We also welcome measures such as those included in the so-called Decree "Cura Italia"<sup>4</sup>. In it, among others, it is envisaged that, in the framework of urgent public procurement measures, **advanced payments** of 20% of the total prize of the contract shall be paid by the contracting entity within 15 days from the beginning of the provision of the services. Further, it disposes that, in case of breaches of contract due to the containment measures (such as, among others, lack of PPEs) **immediate penalties will not be triggered** but rather assessed on a case-by-case basis by the competent judicial authorities. Measures like these can be of great help to sustain employment in the sector.

### **The European Cleaning and Facility Services ready to continue the fight against COVID-19**

The industrial cleaning sector reiterates its availability to authorities and private clients to cooperate in the fight against this collective emergency by providing its know-how and expertise. Further, it engages to continue providing its services with the utmost **responsibility and professionalism**.

The EFCI also expresses its **solidarity** with the people suffering the effects of the crisis and reiterates its **commitment with its employees and fellow citizens**.

### **The EFCI**

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 270,000 companies employing nearly 4 million people. To know more, visit [EFCI's website](#) and consult [EFCI's political priorities](#).

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<sup>3</sup> Measures in this line have already been adopted by some national or regional governments (see, for instance, the [Spanish Royal Decree-Law 8/2020](#) (Article 34) or the [Decree-Law 7/2020 of 17 March of the Catalan Regional Government](#)).

<sup>4</sup> [Italian Decree n.18 from 17/3/2020](#) (Article 91).