

Unconscious Bias

Project BEYUNBI BEYond UNconscious Bias: Empowering inclusiveness in European leadership

Background:

CEC European Managers are the voice of European Managers and leaders. The EU currently counts around 10 million managers who make millions of decisions every day, affecting the sustainability of our economy, society, and environment. Millions of decisions are made daily concerning employees on for instance recruitment, appointments, regulations, and dismissals.

All decisions are made with careful consideration in the interest of the company, the context, and the task at hand. However, no matter how careful, no matter how objective we try to be, a decision is almost always influenced by matters that it is difficult to be aware of. All people have biases, and biases of all kinds are part of our unconsciousness. Unconscious bias is part of the decision-making process.

The question is what we know of the influence of unconscious bias on gender equality, on discrimination on age, sexual orientation, religion, race etc.? How is it possible to learn to be aware of our unconscious bias and create a set of tools relevant for the managerial workforce of Europe to the benefit of the decision-making process and a European labour market closer to the goals of the ESG's.

Purpose and overall actions

The purpose of the project is to **investigate** the level of knowledge of the European managers of the concept of unconscious bias and its impact on managerial practices, to **develop** a training programme to provide managers with the right tools to detect such attitude in their behaviours, and finally to **share** important tools and results to the benefit of European managers.

The project includes the following actions:

- a **survey** of European managers on their approach, knowledge and perception of unconscious bias
- three **training seminars** for approximately 20 selected European managers attending each seminar to illustrate practical examples of tools and techniques to identify and counter bias in their professional practice, including a selection of best practices and a focus on three different "applications" of unconscious bias (gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity)

- a series of communication and dissemination activities, including a final hybrid conference to present the results of the project and share the experiences of trainees and a **project website**.

Needs and general objectives

Needs:

There are several important needs in the European workplaces that make this project important, relevant and necessary:

- We need to make the EU workforce more diverse.
- We need to contribute to reducing discrimination on the workplace.
- We need to increase the participation of minorities into the workforce since this is beneficial for the whole economy.
- We need to make information available on the level of awareness of the European managerial workforce of unconscious bias.

The overall objective of the project is to equip managers, who are responsible for making change happen in companies (and consequently in society) with the right tools and skills to identify and overcome unconscious bias in their professional practice. In this way, managers can contribute to implementing gender equality and fighting discrimination on the workplace, improving working conditions for all by establishing more open and welcoming working environments, while creating quality opportunities for all workers to express their full professional and human potential.

Consequently, this new managerial approach to inclusiveness can be instrumental to increasing the level of diversity of working teams, fostering the inclusion of minorities in and contributing to a more open, diverse, diversity-sensitive and heterogeneous society.

The more concrete objectives of the project are:

- To elaborate, distribute and analyse an **empirical survey** aiming at investigating managers' awareness of the existence of unconscious bias, the different dimensions that compose it and the impact on their professional attitude. The survey will include a section with an introductory review of the existing scientific literature investigating the concept of unconscious bias.
- On the basis of the results of the survey (and the weaknesses/needs highlighted), to define a **training module** for a selected group of managers (members of the organizations that are part of the project). The elements that should be included in the training module should also include clear examples of "positive actions", best practices adopted at national or company level and innovative training methods.
- To organize a series of **3 on-site pilot trainings**, for a limited group of selected managers. The program of the training will focus both on general learning and more specifically on respectively gender equality, discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and on ethnicity. In addition to the on-site trainings, a series of webinars will also be organized that will work as an introduction into the theme, targeting the actual trainees but also other potentially interested managers from involved participating organizations.

- In parallel of the trainings, a series of **public events** will be organized to discuss the issue with a wider range of stakeholders, including – whenever possible – local social partner representatives. These public events will be web streamed to ensure an even bigger public dissemination.
- To organize two in-presence events: at the early stages of the project, **a launch seminar** to present the initiative to representatives of the participating project partners, creating early awareness, and **a final hybrid conference**, where to discuss the conclusions of the report, bring on stage the actual experience of trainees (and illustrate selected best practices) to share their individual story about what the training module has “taught” them.
- To perform a number of **communication activities** – including the development of a **website**, the elaboration of a dedicated **graphic/visual identity** and a distinct presence on **social media** to animate the debate and contribute to disseminating the messages and conclusions of the project to a wider public of stakeholders.

Work plan:

Deliverables

- 3 steering committee meetings (one videoconference)
- 1 study and report on unconscious bias in the EU
- 3 transnational seminars on unconscious bias
- 1 dissemination conference
- 1 project website to share best practices

Project phases

Phase 1: Preparatory phase

In this first phase, a survey will be conducted, and the results will be presented in a study report. Following this, the steering committee shall meet to overview the project activities and methodology, based on the study outcomes.

The steering committee will be responsible for:

- ensuring the overall coherence of the project methodology and deliverables.
- ensuring the design and implementation of the project activities: pedagogical approach, agenda, expert contributions, selection of participants etc.
- monitoring the project activities and adjusting the activities based on feedback.

Phase 2: Unconscious Bias leadership - from skills to systems

The second phase of the project is dedicated to providing trainings for managers and hearing from their experience about unconscious bias. The results of the seminars will be shared in form of best practices on the project website in phase 3.

A total of 20 participants shall participate in each of the seminars. As concerns the target group of the seminar, four quotas are established to ensure a diversity of project participants that is conducive to the project objectives.

The two-day training seminars on unconscious bias will be conducted three times: once in Denmark (Lederne), once in France (CFE-CGC) and once in an EU member state to be decided – the project is presently reaching out to Italy (CIDA).

These seminars aim at providing the participants with:

- understanding the different frameworks and concepts in the domain of unconscious bias with a particular attention to cultural differences.
- understanding the interconnections and multi-dimensionality of unconscious bias dimensions operating at individual, organisational and systemic level.
- personal skills and knowledge to apply the unconscious bias leadership framework to specific application domains (i.e. fair working conditions).
- identifying and promoting strategies to mainstream unconscious bias leadership in the world of work, manager education, VET and through social dialogue.

Phase 3: Sharing conclusions through final conference and project website

After the conduction of the three seminars, the steering committee will meet to evaluate the seminar outcomes and feedback. It will use the conclusions to prepare the conference and the best practice collection for the project website.

Final conference

A final conference will be organised in Brussels to present the project outcomes. The event shall be attended by around 60 participants with different stakeholder views: MEPs, Commission representatives, trade unions, academics in the field of inclusion, inclusion managers and managers responsible for business strategy and civil society active in the domain of diversity development.

The objectives of the conference are to:

- present the conclusion of the seminars.
- raise awareness on the role managers play in contributing to implementing gender equality and fighting discrimination on the workplace.
- raise awareness on the role trade unions play in accompanying the transition to a fair economy.

- share best practices on inclusive leadership promotion strategies at skill-level, business level and systemic level.
- Discuss the development of strategies to mainstream inclusive leadership.

Project website

Finally, the steering committee and the CEC secretariat will contribute to the design and content of the project website. The website shall present the results of the survey, the outcomes of the seminars and provide a knowledge database of best practices in the domain of inclusive leadership. The steering committee will ensure that the project website will be disseminated among key stakeholders.

Subcontracting tasks

The secretariat of CEC European Managers will make use of external experts to conduct the survey and to ensure high quality standards in the programme design, training seminars and pertinence of the project. CEC European Managers has limited skills in conducting trainings by itself and will therefore use external trainers, as well as domain experts during the seminars. Member organisations of CEC have capacities to organise trainings but lack the European perspective and approach. Furthermore, an external service provider will be selected to put in place the project website.

Therefore, experts will be chosen on the basis of following criteria in coordination with the Steering Committee:

- In-depth knowledge on inclusive leadership issues from a technical, scientific and political perspective.
- In-depth knowledge on management methods, leadership skills and related topics.
- Proven track record in conducting European-level trainings.
- Skills In developing and applying different training methods.

Partners of the project

The vision and scope of the project is designed and created by CEC European Managers who are the lead on the project in close cooperation with its member organizations from France and Denmark, CFE-CGC and Lederne, as well as the European Social Partner organization Eurocadres.