

CEC European Managers — Response to the European Commission’s Consultation on the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy (APS)

(Brussels, October 2025)

CEC European Managers welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the European Commission’s consultation on the future EU Anti-Poverty Strategy (APS). As a recognised European social partner, we represent the voice of managers and executives who are committed to responsible leadership, quality employment and social cohesion.

Managers are not typically among those at risk of poverty, yet they play a crucial role in shaping the European labour market. They recruit and support workers, design inclusive workplaces and balance economic performance with social responsibility. Because of this position, they are directly involved in the conditions that determine whether work truly helps people out of poverty.

CEC therefore strongly supports the Commission’s initiative to make poverty prevention a shared European priority. We believe that effective poverty reduction depends on investing in people, promoting quality employment and empowering responsible management.

I. The challenge: connecting social inclusion and job quality

CEC European Managers shares the Commission’s view that poverty is a complex and multidimensional challenge that demands both preventive and inclusive solutions. Employment is the most effective protection against poverty, but only when it offers stability, recognition and fair conditions.

Too many Europeans remain in unstable work or outside the labour market altogether because of skills mismatches, care duties, health problems or economic transitions. Managers often stand at the intersection of these challenges. Their decisions on hiring, training, work organisation and wellbeing directly influence whether employment becomes a pathway out of poverty or a source of insecurity.

Responsible management and decent work are therefore essential conditions for any credible strategy to fight poverty.

II. Access to the labour market: inclusion through skills and leadership

CEC believes that access to work must be based on dignity and opportunity. To bring people who are distant from the labour market back into employment, the APS should focus on skills, inclusion and cooperation between companies and public actors.

CEC recommends that the APS should:

- Promote skills-based pathways that combine requalification, guidance and partnerships between employers, training providers and local authorities.
- Support leadership training for managers so that they can accompany vulnerable workers and prevent exclusion in the workplace.
- Improve coordination between employment, health and social policies, especially to help people return to work after illness, disability or caring responsibilities.
- Encourage mentoring and intergenerational cooperation that allows experienced professionals to help younger or disadvantaged people gain confidence and access stable employment.

Such approaches can transform workplaces into inclusive environments where personal development and professional participation go hand in hand.

III. Combating in-work poverty through job quality and fair value sharing

CEC strongly agrees with the Commission that in-work poverty remains a serious problem. Around one in twelve workers in the EU live in poverty even though they are employed. This shows that having a job is not, by itself, a guarantee of social inclusion. The quality of work is what makes the difference.

CEC recommends that the APS should:

- Encourage stable and full-time employment contracts that give workers predictable income and social protection.
- Strengthen collective bargaining on workload, work-life balance and psychosocial wellbeing so that decent work is understood in its full sense.
- Promote fair value-sharing within companies through profit-sharing, employee participation or share ownership, ensuring that productivity gains benefit everyone.
- Include job quality indicators in the European Semester so that Europe measures not only how many jobs are created but also how good those jobs are.

Fighting working poverty means improving wages, but also ensuring that people have autonomy, purpose and healthy working conditions. Managers have a direct role in achieving this balance.

IV. The role of managers and social partners in implementation

CEC welcomes the emphasis the Commission places on social dialogue and partnership. Managers are essential actors in the implementation of labour market and social policies. They translate European principles into everyday company decisions and are often the ones who ensure that inclusion and job quality are put into practice.

CEC recommends that the APS should:

- Recognise managers as actors of social policy who have a direct impact on inclusion and wellbeing at work.
- Involve social partners, including CEC, in the governance and monitoring of the APS, with a focus on quality employment and social investment.
- Promote structured dialogue on poverty prevention in the workplace, linked to the Quality Jobs Roadmap and the Union of Skills initiative.
- Create a European platform for sharing examples of inclusive and responsible management that can inspire positive change across sectors and countries.

Such measures would help the APS move from principle to practice and would strengthen Europe's ability to deliver real results for people.

V. Conclusion: dignity, responsibility and shared prosperity

For CEC European Managers, eradicating poverty by 2050 is not only an economic goal but also a moral commitment. The dignity of work goes beyond income. It is about stability, recognition and the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to society.

A culture of responsible management, supported by public policy and social dialogue, can turn workplaces into spaces of empowerment rather than exclusion.

Europe's competitiveness and social cohesion depend on the same foundation: investment in human potential. Training, requalification and occupational health are social investments that build resilience, productivity and trust.

Without quality management, there can be no quality work.

Without quality work, there can be no sustainable path out of poverty.