

## President Maxime Legrand

Opening Speech - Advisory Committee, 24 March 2026

Dear colleagues, dear friends,

Thank you all for being here today.

When we met one year ago, I started by saying that we had entered a different world. Looking at where we stand today, I think we can say something even stronger: we are not only in a different world – we are in a moment where the direction of that world is still being shaped.

And this is precisely why this Advisory Committee matters. Because what we are discussing here is not only the future of our organisation – it is also the role that managers can and must play in shaping Europe itself.

Over the past year, we have seen a clear acceleration of geopolitical, economic and technological tensions. Competitiveness, security, sovereignty – these are no longer abstract concepts. They are driving political decisions, industrial strategies, and social expectations across Europe .

But in this movement, one question remains central – and I believe it is our responsibility to raise it:

Who benefits from these transformations?

Because investing in Europe's strength is necessary. But if the benefits are not shared, if people do not see the meaning of these efforts in their daily lives, then we weaken the very foundations we are trying to protect.

And this is where the role of managers becomes absolutely essential.

Managers are not only implementers of decisions. They are the ones who translate complexity into action. They are the ones who make strategy real in organisations. They are the ones who maintain cohesion when uncertainty increases.

In short, they are a key part of Europe's capacity to act.

But let me also say something very clearly.

At a time when Europe is redefining its economic and social priorities, social dialogue must not be treated as an adjustment variable.

We are currently engaged in important discussions at European level. And we see that there can sometimes be a temptation to move faster – to simplify – or even to bypass consultation in the name of urgency.

This would be a mistake.

Because social dialogue is not a constraint. It is a condition for legitimacy, for efficiency, and for stability.

And CEC, as a recognised European social partner, has a responsibility to make that voice heard – clearly and constructively.

In the same spirit, I would like to say a word about the discussions around a possible "28th social regime".

The idea, as you know, is to create a simplified European framework alongside national systems – with the objective of facilitating mobility, innovation and investment.

But here again, we must be vigilant.

Because the question is not only how to simplify. The question is also what kind of model we are building.

We must ensure that such initiatives do not lead to fragmentation, or to forms of social competition between systems.

Europe cannot be built on a race to the bottom.

It must be built on convergence, on fairness, and on trust.

And this is exactly where the perspective of managers is essential – because they are at the intersection between economic performance and social reality.

This is why today's discussion is so important.

As you have seen in the agenda, this meeting is designed as an advisory exchange .

We are not here only to present updates. We are here to listen, to challenge, and to clarify together:

What is the role of managers in a more united Europe?

What are the real priorities of your organisations – today, and in the years to come?

And very concretely: what do you expect from CEC?

Because if we want to remain relevant, we must not assume what our members need – we must understand it clearly.

Over the past year, we have also learned some important lessons as an organisation.

We have demonstrated that we can deliver strong projects, that we can create value, and that we can increase our visibility.

But we have also seen our vulnerabilities.

Our financial model still depends heavily on European projects. And even when our projects are recognised as valuable, they are not always funded.

This tells us something important:

quality is not enough – we must also strengthen our strategy, our positioning, and our capacity to influence.

At the same time, we are moving forward.

On AI, on the future of work, on diversity, on climate – we are addressing the key transformations that are reshaping our societies.

But we must go further.

We must ensure that CEC is not only reacting to change – but helping to shape it.

And this brings me to my final point.

In a time of fragmentation – economic, social, political – our role is also to create links.

Between countries.

Between organisations.

Between levels of decision.

And perhaps most importantly:

between strategy and reality.

So today, I would like to invite you to speak openly.

To share not only your positions, but also your doubts, your expectations, your priorities.

Because the strength of this committee is precisely this: it is a place where we can think together – honestly, constructively, and strategically.

Thank you very much.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'M' followed by a horizontal line.

**CEC European Managers President**

**Maxime Legrand**