



EUROPEAN MANAGERS

**Unconscious bias in the workplace**

**20**  
**Recommendations**  
**to managers**

---

Practical advice

# 20 Recommendations for managers

Position paper on unconscious bias  
Published by CEC European Managers, January 2025

Hashtag: #BeyondBias

Written with the contributions of the of CEC European Managers Executive Board:

Maxime Legrand (President)  
Torkild Justesen (Secretary General)  
Silvia Pugi (Deputy Secretary General)  
Ebba Öhlund (Treasurer)  
Olga Molina Tomey (Director)

This position paper is the result of the conclusions of the survey and research carried out by the University of Southern Denmark through the European project Beyond Unconscious Bias - Beyunbi, in addition to the reflection shared by several managers and leaders who have participated in a training program coordinated by the Giacomo Brodolini Foundation.

From CEC European Managers:  
Pere Vilanova, Belgium - Communications Officer







**EUROPEAN MANAGERS**

[cec-managers.org](http://cec-managers.org)

The Voice of European Leaders  
and Managers. Since 1951

**#UseYourLeadership**



# TABLE OF CONTENT

---

1. What is unconscious bias?

2. How strong are unconscious biases among European companies and among European managers?

3. 20 recommendations to managers

4. #BeyondBias Posters





**TORKILD JUSTESEN**  
Secretary General, CEC European Managers

“

Inclusiveness is not just about doing good—it's about competitiveness and leveraging the full potential of our shrinking workforce.





The Confédération Européenne des Cadres - CEC European Managers, is the organisation responsible for representing leaders' interests in the European Social Dialogue and is an official social partner of the European Commission.



This position paper is the result of the research and trainings carried out during 2022-2024 through the European project Beyond Unconscious Bias - Beyunbi ([beyondbias.eu](http://beyondbias.eu)) by the University of Southern Denmark.





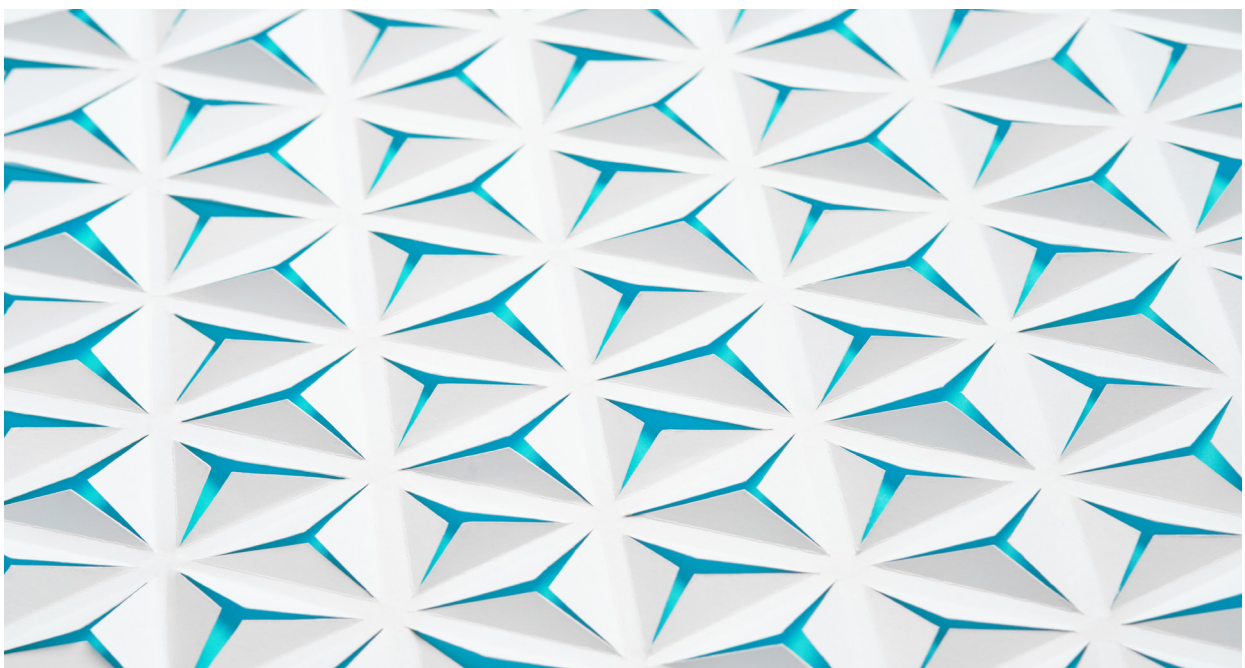
# 1. What is unconscious bias?

For leaders and managers, unconscious bias in the workplace, involves hidden and irrational assumptions about individuals based on social categories like gender, race, age, or sexual orientation, rather than merit or abilities.

These biases, rooted in cultural and social influences, unconsciously shape managers' decisions and actions, often leading to discrimination.

Biases can perpetuate workplace inequalities by favoring majority group members and marginalizing minorities.

Managers may overestimate their objectivity, exacerbating the issue. Addressing unconscious bias requires self-awareness, challenging cultural norms, and implementing structural reforms, such as bias training, to foster equitable decision-making and an inclusive organisational culture.





## 2. How strong are unconscious biases in European companies and among European managers?

“

If you have a brain you have a bias. Bias is inherent, but awareness and training can mitigate its effects.



---

### BARBARA DE MICHELI

Beyond Unconscious Bias  
training coordinator.  
Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini

All people have biases, and biases of all kinds are part of our unconsciousness.

Every day in Europe, 10M managers make millions of decisions.

These decisions affect the sustainability of our society, the competitiveness of our economy, and the viability of our environment.

It's crucial to recognize that unconscious processes invariably shape these decisions.

CEC European Managers has highlighted the importance of enhancing the quality of decision-making processes in leadership by coordinating the EU project Beyunbi.

CEC European Managers conducted a project across several European countries to examine whether and to what extent biases exist in the workplace, aiming to equip managers with tools to create more inclusive, equitable, and constructive work environments.

To drive organisational change, diversity-related challenges must first be made visible and then recognized as a worthwhile challenge to tackle.

Only in this way can sustainability be effectively promoted, resulting in organisational well-being.

The project, called Beyunbi – Beyond Unconscious Bias, and funded by the EU Commission, focused on analyzing:

- ♂♀ Gender biases (against women, but sometimes also men),
- 👤 Racial biases,
- ♂♀ Biases against LGBT+ individuals,
- 👤 Age-related biases (e.g., “You’re too old/young to...”)

## 1. Training for Managers

Training was led by Barbara de Micheli from the Brodolini Foundation, engaging a diverse group of European managers in Copenhagen, Paris, and Rome.

The goal was to recognize and understand unconscious mechanisms that sometimes lead to easy but inequitable choices. This training combined theoretical knowledge with practical exercises and exchanges.

While in theory, everyone supports inclusion and opposes discrimination, ingrained mental patterns—conscious or unconscious—often influence decision-making.

Processes like recruitment, evaluation, and promotion reflect these biases, which are further amplified by artificial intelligence.



## 2. Market Research Among Managers

Conducted by the Centre for Gender and Diversity at the University of Southern Denmark in 2024, the study surveyed 1,003 managers from Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, and Central European countries.

### Key findings:

- 👤 Organisational diversity impact: A higher percentage of men in an organization correlates with higher bias scores in gender, racial, and LGBT+ categories.
- 👤 Racial diversity: Lower racial diversity is associated with increased age-based discrimination.
- 👤 Overall bias scores: Men generally show higher bias scores than women, indicating greater difficulty identifying bias issues and less motivation to address them.
- 👤 Country-specific findings: Danish respondents displayed higher gender and LGBT+ biases, while Italian respondents showed lower racial and LGBT+ biases.
- 👤 Managerial level: Senior managers showed fewer age-related biases.
- 👤 Support and resistance to interventions: There is significant resistance to interventions addressing bias, with some denying the existence of biases or perceiving the interventions as unnecessary or counterproductive.

Proponents of gender interventions emphasized the need for more women in leadership, combating sexual harassment, and closing the gender pay gap.

### 3. Bias Scores (1-5 scale):



#### GENDER BIAS



**Men**



**Women**

#### RACIAL BIAS



**Men**



**Women**

*Note: Other gender category was not included in the University of Southern Denmark study because of too few participants.*





## LGBT+ BIAS

**2,95**

**Men**

**2,61**

**Women**

## AGE BIAS

**2,57**

**Men**

**2,72**

**Women**

*Note: Other gender category was not included in the University of Southern Denmark study because of too few participants.*

## 4. Conclusion

Managers set the tone for workplace environments.

To harness the value of minorities and diversity and create fairer, more inclusive workspaces, they must invest time and resources in rethinking and restructuring their organizations.

This investment is both profitable and essential because of:

1. Increasingly diverse populations,
2. The universal need for positive and trusting work environments,  
and
3. The fast-evolving economy, which demands innovation that diverse teams are more likely to deliver.



As a result of 18 months of training and research, EU managers have produced a series of recommendations to tackle unconscious bias and enhance decision-making in the workplace.



## 3. 20 Recommendations to managers

1  
Reshape your organisational culture rather than solely train minorities to adapt.



SEE ALL RECOMMENDATIONS

2  
Educate all employees, particularly those in leadership, about implicit biases and their impacts.



SEE ALL RECOMMENDATIONS

3  
Implement anonymized CV screening to minimize gender, race/ethnic, or age biases.



SEE ALL RECOMMENDATIONS

4  
Avoid diversity metrics; ensure minority employees are empowered and included.



SEE ALL RECOMMENDATIONS

Collect insights from departing employees, especially minorities, to improve.

5



SEE ALL RECOMMENDATIONS

Ensure equitable distribution of men and women in leadership roles.

6



SEE ALL RECOMMENDATIONS

Categorize tasks based on career advancement opportunities.

7



SEE ALL RECOMMENDATIONS

Encourage all employees to contribute equally in meetings.

8



SEE ALL RECOMMENDATIONS



Establish clear organisational norms against sexism, racism, ageism, and LGBT+ discrimination.

9



SEE ALL RECOMMENDATIONS

Create spaces for employees to discuss challenges related to biases and discrimination.

10



SEE ALL RECOMMENDATIONS

Actively seek candidates from underrepresented groups to enhance diversity.

11



SEE ALL RECOMMENDATIONS

Develop clear, safe, and anonymous channels for reporting harassment or discrimination.

12



SEE ALL RECOMMENDATIONS

Track and balance task assignments to ensure women aren't disproportionately given roles that don't lead to promotions.

13



SEE ALL RECOMMENDATIONS

Identify and address power imbalances, particularly in male-dominated or majority-white settings.

14



SEE ALL RECOMMENDATIONS

Measure perceptions and experiences of biases within the organisation to guide interventions.

15



SEE ALL RECOMMENDATIONS

Recognize and act on the full spectrum of sexism, from subtle biases to overt harassment.

16



SEE ALL RECOMMENDATIONS



Disseminate the business benefits of diversity and inclusion.

17



SEE ALL RECOMMENDATIONS

Conduct pay equity analyses and ensure equal pay for equal work across genders.

18



SEE ALL RECOMMENDATIONS

Inclusivity training must be an integral part of leadership programs.

19



SEE ALL RECOMMENDATIONS

Pair younger employees with senior team members to foster mutual learning.

20



SEE ALL RECOMMENDATIONS

## 4. #BeyondBias Posters

**#BEYOND BIAS** Every day in Europe, 10M managers make millions of decisions.

It's crucial to recognize that unconscious processes invariably shape leaders and managers decisions.



**SHE'S NOT LOOKING FOR A HIGH-PRESSURE POSITION ANYWAY.**

Biased management

**SHE IS ASSIGNED ROLES THAT FOSTER CAREER GROWTH AND LEAD TO PROMOTIONS.**

Non-biased management

[cec-managers.org](https://cec-managers.org)





**#BE  
YOND  
BIAS**

Every day in Europe,  
10M managers make millions  
of decisions.

It's crucial to recognize  
that unconscious processes invariably  
shape leaders and managers decisions.

cec-managers.org

**IF THEY'RE  
LEAVING,  
THEIR OPINIONS  
DON'T MATTER.**

Biased  
management

Non-biased  
management

**WE COLLECT  
INSIGHTS  
FROM DEPARTING  
EMPLOYEES,  
ESPECIALLY  
MINORITIES,  
TO BE MORE  
COMPETITIVE.**



**CEC**  
EUROPEAN MANAGERS



**#BE  
YOND  
BIAS**

Every day in Europe,  
10M managers make millions  
of decisions.

It's crucial to recognize that unconscious  
processes invariably shape leaders and  
managers decisions.

**THIS ISN'T  
YOUR PROJECT,  
SO IT'S NOT  
YOUR PLACE  
TO COMMENT.**

Biased  
management

cec-managers.org

**LET'S  
ENCOURAGE  
ALL EMPLOYEES  
TO CONTRIBUTE  
EQUALLY  
IN MEETINGS.**

Non-biased  
management



**CEC**  
EUROPEAN MANAGERS

**#BE  
YOND  
BIAS**

Every day in Europe,  
10M managers make millions  
of decisions.

It's crucial to recognize  
that unconscious processes invariably  
shape leaders and managers decisions.

**WE NEED  
TO KNOW  
THEIR AGE  
TO GAUGE  
THEIR EXPERIENCE  
LEVEL**

cec-managers.org

Biased  
management

Non-biased  
management

**WE  
IMPLEMENT  
ANONYMIZED  
CV SCREENING  
TO MINIMIZE GENDER,  
RACE/ETHNIC,  
OR AGE BIASES.**



**CEC**  
EUROPEAN MANAGERS

**#BE  
YOND  
BIAS**

Every day in Europe,  
10M managers make millions  
of decisions.

It's crucial to recognize  
that unconscious processes invariably  
shape leaders and managers decisions.

[cec-managers.org](http://cec-managers.org)

**WE'RE HERE  
TO MAKE MONEY,  
NOT FOCUS  
ON INCLUSION.**

Biased  
management

Non-biased  
management

**INCLUSION  
DRIVES INNOVATION  
AND KEEPS US  
AHEAD OF  
THE COMPETITION.**



**CEC**  
EUROPEAN MANAGERS



**#BE  
YOND  
BIAS**

Every day in Europe,  
10M managers make millions  
of decisions.

It's crucial to recognize  
that unconscious processes invariably  
shape leaders and managers decisions.

**TALKING ABOUT  
DISCRIMINATION  
WILL ONLY  
BRING UP  
OLD WOUNDS.**

Biased  
management

Non-biased  
management

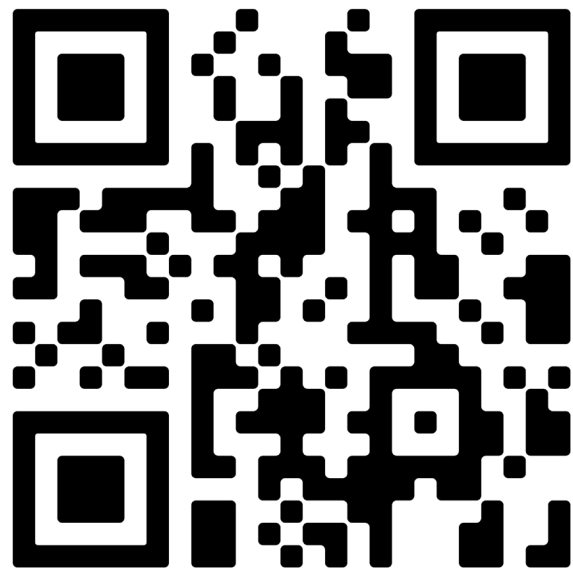
**PROVIDING SPACES  
FOR EMPLOYEES  
TO OPENLY DISCUSS  
CHALLENGES  
RELATED TO BIASES  
AND DISCRIMINATION  
FOSTERS HEALING  
AND GROWTH.**



cec-managers.org

**CEC**  
EUROPEAN MANAGERS





**Find more information here.  
Download & Print all the materials.**





**EUROPEAN MANAGERS**

[cec-managers.org](http://cec-managers.org)

The Voice of European Leaders  
and Managers. Since 1951

**#UseYourLeadership**