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Mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund: application EGF/2023/001 BE/LNSA - Belgium

European Parliament resolution of 11 July 2023 on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for Displaced Workers following an application from Belgium – EGF/2023/001 BE/ LNSA (COM(2023)0210 – C9-0194/2023 – 2023/0152(BUD))

(C/2024/4020)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the Commission proposal to the European Parliament and the Council (COM(2023)0210 – C9-0194/2023),

— having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/691 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 on the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for Displaced Workers (EGF) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1309/2013 ([1])("EGF Regulation"),

— having regard to Council Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2020/2093 of 17 December 2020 laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2021-2027 ([2]), and in particular Article 8 thereof,

— having regard to the Interinstitutional Agreement of 16 December 2020 between the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission on budgetary discipline, on cooperation in budgetary matters and on sound financial management, as well as on new own resources, including a roadmap towards the introduction of new own resources ([3]) ('IIA of 16 December 2020'), and in particular point 8 thereof,

— having regard to the trilogue procedure provided for in point 9 of the IIA of 16 December 2020,

— having regard to the opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs,

— having regard to the letter of the Committee on Regional Development,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgets (A9-0228/2023),

A. whereas the Union has set up legislative and budgetary instruments to provide additional support to workers who are suffering from the consequences of major structural changes in world trade patterns or of the global financial and economic crisis, and to assist their reintegration into the labour market; whereas this assistance is made through a financial support given to workers and the companies for which they worked;

B. whereas Belgium submitted application EGF/2023/001 BE/ LNSA for a financial contribution from the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF), following 603 redundancies ([4]) in the economic sector classified under the NACE Revision 2 division 52 (Warehousing and support activities for transportation) in the province Brabant Wallon, within a reference period for the application from 23 August 2022 to 23 December 2022;

C. whereas the application relates to 603 workers made redundant in the companies Logistics Nivelles SA ('LNSA') and SuperTransport SA/NV, a supplier of Logistics Nivelles;

D. whereas the application is based on the intervention criteria of criteria of Article 4(2), point (a), of the EGF Regulation, which requires at least 200 workers being made redundant over a reference period of four months in an enterprise in a Member State, including workers made redundant by suppliers and downstream producers and/or self-employed persons whose activity has ceased;

([1]) OJ L 153, 3.5.2021, p. 48.
([2]) OJ L 433 I, 22.12.2020, p. 11.
([3]) OJ L 433 I, 22.12.2020, p. 28.
([4]) Within the meaning of Article 3 of the EGF Regulation.

E. whereas the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine have reduced economic competitiveness and have a negative impact on economic growth in Belgium;

F. whereas LNSA used to provide logistics services regarding fresh and dry food products, wines and spirits to Carrefour; whereas the redundancies resulted from the decision of LNSA's parent company Kuehne + Nagel to close down its Belgian subsidiary, following financial difficulties of LNSA and significant losses of the company in 2020, which exceeded the total budget for 2020, and in 2021 losses again higher than expected;;

G. whereas Kuehne + Nagel decided to turn its regional distribution into a national distribution and to rely on its subsidiary Kontich NV to supply Carrefour stores across Belgium; whereas Kuehne + Nagel also has facilities in Kampenhout (road logistics); whereas no worker was relocated between logistic centres of Kuehne + Nagel;

H. whereas LNSA, in compliance with the Belgian law on collective redundancies, informed and consulted workers' representatives: whereas this mandatory procedure has secured EUR 1 500 per worker to cover retraining costs;

I. whereas financial contributions from the EGF should be primarily directed at active labour market policy measures and personalised services that aim to reintegrate beneficiaries rapidly into decent and sustainable employment within or outside their initial sector of activity, while preparing them for a greener and more digital European economy;

J. whereas the EGF shall not exceed a maximum annual amount of EUR 186 million (in 2018 prices), as laid down in Article 8 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2020/2093;

1. Agrees with the Commission that the conditions set out in Article 4(2), point (a), of the EGF Regulation are met and that Belgium is entitled to a financial contribution of EUR 2 153 358 under that Regulation, which represents 85 % of the total cost of EUR 2 533 363, comprising expenditure for personalised services of EUR 2 484 363 and expenditure for preparatory, management, information and publicity, control and reporting activities of EUR 49 000;

2. Notes that the Belgian authorities submitted the application on 17 February 2023, and that, following the provision of additional information by Belgium, the Commission finalised its assessment on 6 June 2023 and notified it to Parliament on the same day;

3. Notes that the application relates to 603 workers made redundant in the companies Logistics Nivelles SA (LNSA) and SuperTransport SA/NV, a supplier of LNSA; notes further that 542 of the 603 eligible beneficiaries were displaced during the reference period, while 61 workers were made redundant before or after the reference period but their displacement was triggered by the same event that led to the displacement of the former; welcomes the fact that all the redundant workers are expected to participate in the measures;

4. Takes note that the displacements in LNSA are expected to particularly impact workers that are over 50 years old and/or low skilled, as they are more difficult to re-integrate into stable employment, especially taking into account that the unemployment rate in Brabant Wallon at is 8,4 %, 2,8 % higher than the national level and more than 30 % of registered job-seekers in February 2023 were over 50 years old; points to the fact that 86,3 % of the displaced workers live in province Hainaut, where the number of registered job-seekers has increased by 9,8 % year over year; stresses that 53,3 % of LNSA former workers are older than 45 years and the majority of LNSA workers had a handler profile;

5. Notes that no worker was relocated between logistic centres of Kuehne + Nagel; notes that Logistics Nivelles SA complied with the Belgian law on collective redundancies, which establishes a mandatory procedure for informing and consulting workers' representatives that allows for the exploration of any possibility of avoiding or reducing the number of redundancies;

6. Welcomes the fact that the co-ordinated package of personalised services was drawn up by Belgium in consultation with targeted beneficiaries, their representatives and social partners;

7. Recalls that personalised services to be provided to the workers and self-employed persons consist of the following actions: information services, job-search assistance, including identifying job perspectives in other regions or Member States, occupational guidance and outplacement assistance, training, retraining and vocational training, support towards and contribution to business creation, as well as incentives and allowances;

8. welcomes the inclusion of a module on circular economy and efficient use of resources that was developed for former Swissport workers (EGF/2020/005 BE/Swissport), as part of the Regional Public Employment and Vocational Training Service (Forem) standard training offer, which will be co-financed by the ESF+; reiterates in this context the important role the Union should play in providing the necessary qualifications for the just transformation in line with the European Green Deal; strongly supports the fact that, during the 2021-2027 MFF period, the EGF will continue to show solidarity with persons affected and maintain the focus on the impact of restructuring on workers; calls for future applications to maximise policy coherence;

9. Notes that the digital and green transformation will also have an effect on the labour market, especially in the logistics sector; calls, therefore, for special attention to be paid to qualified education, including vocational training and promoting the so-called dual apprenticeship system, which has proven to be effective in other Member States;

10. Notes that Belgium started providing personalised services to the targeted beneficiaries on 1 August 2022 and that the period of eligibility for a financial contribution from the EGF will therefore be from 1 August 2022 until 24 months after the date of the entry into force of the financing decision;

11. Notes that Belgium started incurring administrative expenditure to implement the EGF on 22 September 2021 and that expenditure for preparatory, management, information and publicity, control and reporting activities shall therefore be eligible for a financial contribution from the EGF from 22 September 2021 until 31 months after the date of the entry into force of the Financing Decision;

12. Stresses that the Belgian authorities have confirmed that the eligible actions do not receive assistance from other Union funds or financial instruments, and that the principles of equality of treatment and non-discrimination will be respected in the access to the proposed actions and their implementation;

13. Reiterates that assistance from the EGF must not replace actions which are the responsibility of companies, by virtue of national law or collective agreements, or any allowances or rights of the displaced workers, to ensure full additionality of the allocation; recalls that the Member States applying for funding support from the EGF must ensure that the requirements laid down in national and Union law concerning collective redundancies have been complied with and that the company concerned has provided for its workers accordingly;

14. Approves the decision annexed to this resolution;

15. Instructs its President to sign the decision with the President of the Council and arrange for its publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union*;

16. Instructs its President to forward this resolution, including its Annex, to the Council and the Commission;

ANNEX

DECISION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL

on the mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for Displaced Workers following an application from Belgium – EGF/2023/001 BE/LNSA

(The text of this annex is not reproduced here since it corresponds to the final act, Decision (EU) 2023/1558)