

Mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund: redundancies in warehousing and support activities for transportation in Belgium

2023/0031(BUD) - 14/03/2023 - Budgetary text adopted by Parliament

The European Parliament adopted by 592 votes to 25, with 3 abstentions, a resolution on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) to assist displaced workers following an application from Belgium.

Parliament approved the proposal for a decision aiming to mobilise **EUR 1 956 397** in commitment and payment appropriations to assist Belgium in supporting displaced workers made redundant in the company TNT Express Worldwide (Euro Hub) SRL in Belgium (TNT Belgium).

This contribution represents 85 % of the total cost of EUR 2 301 644, comprising expenditure for personalised services of EUR 2 270 644 and expenditure for preparatory, management, information and publicity, control and reporting activities of EUR 31 000.

Link between the redundancies and a global financial and economic crisis

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.

It is recalled that TNT Belgium had to downsize its workforce in reaction the decision to use Liège airport as a secondary hub, with links to only some European airports, while Paris-Charles de Gaulle became the primary hub of its parent company FedEx, which has resulted in a decreased workload and a reduced number of flights at Liège airport. The changes aimed to strengthen FedEx's position within its highly competitive sector at European and national level.

Beneficiaries

The application relates to 548 workers made redundant in the company TNT Belgium. In addition, **559 workers** will be eligible beneficiaries in total, as the EGF should also support 11 displaced workers whose activity ceased between the end of the reference period and the day before the adoption of the proposal by the Commission.

A large proportion of the former workforce of TNT Belgium are disadvantaged groups, as 60 % of the displaced workers held low-qualified jobs and almost half of them (47 %) are over 50 years old.

Members recalled that the unemployment rate in Wallonia at 8.7 % is 2.8 % higher compared to the national level and that the employment market in the province of Liège, like that of Hainaut, is particularly disadvantaged compared to other provinces in Wallonia.

Personalised services

The personalised services to be provided to the workers and self-employed persons consist of the following actions: information, job-search assistance, including identifying job perspectives in other

regions of the Member State concerned or in other Member States, occupational guidance and outplacement assistance, trainings, (inter alia horizontal competencies, reskilling, upskilling and internships), retraining and vocational training, and support towards and contribution to business creation, as well as incentives and allowances.

Parliament welcomed:

- the provision of specialised professionals to provide particular assistance to vulnerable people, irrespective of their nationality, in situations of psychological distress, indebtedness, or recognised disabilities;
- the inclusion of a module on the circular economy, which was developed for former Swissport workers as part of the standard training offer by the Regional Public Employment and Vocational Training Service (Forem), which will be co-financed by the ESF+;
- the fact that Belgium drew up the co-ordinated package of personalised services in consultation with targeted beneficiaries' representatives, including trade unions (FGTB and CSC) and social counsellors who accompanied the workers.

Parliament recalled the important role that the EU should play in providing the necessary qualifications for the **just transformation** in line with the European Green Deal. Given that the digital and green transformation will also have an effect on the labour market, especially in the transport sector, Members believe that special attention should be paid to qualified education, including vocational training, and promoting the so-called dual apprenticeship system, which has proved to be effective in some Member States.