Council of the European Union

Brussels, 26 March 2025
(OR. en)

7464/25

Interinstitutional File: 2025/0061(BUD)

FIN 344
SOC 170

PROPOSAL

From:	Secretary-General of the European Commission, signed by Ms Martine DEPREZ, Director
date of receipt:	26 March 2025
To:	Ms Thérèse BLANCHET, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union
No. Cion doc.:	COM(2025) 1 final
Subject:	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/2024/003 BE/Van Hool

Delegations will find attached document COM(2025) 1 final.

Encl.: COM(2025) 1 final

EUROPEAN
COMMISSION

Brussels, 26.3.2025
COM(2025) 1 final

2025/0061 (BUD)

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/2024/003 BE/Van Hool

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

CONTEXT OF THE PROPOSAL

1. The rules applicable to financial contributions from the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for Displaced Workers (EGF) are laid down in 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].

2. On 29 October 2024, Belgium submitted an application EGF/2024/003 BE/Van Hool for a financial contribution from the EGF, following displacements in Van Hool NV in Belgium.

3. Following its assessment of this application, the Commission has concluded, in accordance with all applicable provisions of Regulation (EU) 2021/691, that the conditions for awarding a financial contribution from the EGF are met.

SUMMARY OF THE APPLICATION

EGF application	EGF/2024/003 BE/Van Hool
Member State	Belgium
Region(s) concerned (NUTS[2] level 2)	Provincie Antwerpen (BE21)
Date of submission of the application	29 October 2024
Date of acknowledgement of receipt of the application	29 October 2024
Date of request for additional information	17 December 2024
Deadline for provision of the additional information	9 January 2025
Deadline for the completion of the assessment	3 April 2025
Intervention criterion	Article 4(2), point (a), of Regulation (EU) 2021/691
Primary enterprise	Van Hool
Number of enterprises concerned	1
Sector(s) of economic activity (NACE Revision 2 division)[3]	Division 29 (Manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers)
Reference period (four months):	8 April 2024 – 8 August 2024
Number of displacements during the reference period (*a*)	2 411

[1] OJ L 153, 3.5.2021, p. 48.

[2] Commission Delegated Regulation 2019/1755 of 8 August 2019 amending the Annexes to Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a common classification of territorial units for statistics (NUTS). OJ L 270, 24.10.2019, p. 1–56.

[3] OJ L 393, 30.12.2006, p. 1.

Number of displacements before or after the reference period (*b*)	0
Total number of displacements (*a* + *b*)	2 411
Total number of eligible beneficiaries	2 411
Total number of targeted beneficiaries	2 397
Budget for personalised services (EUR)	9 034 607
Budget for implementing EGF[4] (EUR)	376 000
Total budget (EUR)	9 410 607
EGF contribution (85 %) (EUR)	7 999 015

ASSESSMENT OF THE APPLICATION

Procedure

4. Belgium submitted application EGF/2024/003 BE/Van Hool within 12 weeks of the date on which the intervention criteria set out in Article 4 (2), point (a), of Regulation (EU) 2021/691 were met, on 29 October 2024. The Commission acknowledged receipt of the application on the same date. The Commission was in possession of the translation of the application on 3 December 2024 and requested additional information from Belgium on 17 December 2024. Such additional information was provided after an extension of the deadline by 10 working days at the duly justified request of Belgium. The deadline of 50 working days from the receipt of the complete application within which the Commission should finalise its assessment of the application's compliance with the conditions for providing a financial contribution expires on 3 April 2025.

Eligibility of the application

Enterprises and beneficiaries concerned

5. The application relates to 2 411 displaced workers whose activity has ceased in Van Hool NV. The enterprise operated in the economic sector classified under the NACE Revision 2 division 29 (Manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers). The redundancies made by Van Hool are located in the NUTS 2 region of Provincie Antwerpen (BE21).

Intervention criteria

6. Belgium submitted the application under the intervention criteria of Article 4(2), point (a) of Regulation (EU) 2021/691, which requires the cessation of activity of at least 200 displaced workers or self-employed persons over a reference period of four months, in an enterprise in a Member State, including workers displaced in suppliers and downstream producers. .

7. The reference period of four months for the application runs from 8 April 2024 to 8 August 2024.

8. There were 2 411 displaced workers in Van Hool during the reference period.

Calculation of displacements and of cessation of activity

9. Pursuant to Article 6, first paragraph, point (a), in conjunction with Article 5, first paragraph, point (c), of Regulation (EU) 2021/691, the cessation of activities of the

[4] In accordance with Article 7(5) of Regulation (EU) 2021/691.

displaced workers during the reference period has been calculated as from the date of the de facto termination of the contract of employment or its expiry.

Eligible beneficiaries

10. The total number of eligible beneficiaries is 2 411.

Description of the events that led to the displacements and cessation of activity

11. The displacements in Van Hool are related to various factors such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on coach demand and the impact of the war in Ukraine on cost structure.

12. Between 2012-2019, Van Hool's average sales in Europe were 427 units per year. Sales declined to 287 units in 2020 and further to 128 in 2021[5] due to the impact the pandemic had on the demand for coaches. Profits consequently fell sharply. Rising inflation and disrupted supply chains further increased pressure on the enterprise's margins. Sales recovered in 2022 and 2023, but remained at levels close to or below those of 2020. Pre-pandemic sales levels were never regained.

13. Van Hool was declared bankrupt by the Commercial Court of Mechelen on 8 April 2024. As a consequence, 2 411 workers were made redundant.

Expected impact of the displacements as regards the local, regional or national economy and employment

14. According to the Federation of Belgian Enterprises (VBO), the Belgian industry is currently at a low ebb. In the first half of 2024, more than 5 000 jobs were lost in the industrial sector due to restructuring and bankruptcy of companies such as Decathlon, Pfizer, Barry Callebaut, Audi and Sappi.

15. The industrial sector has traditionally played an important role in Lier (Mechelen district in the Region of Antwerp), which is why the industrial decline is having a significant impact on Lier's labour market. More than 25 % of the jobs in Lier were linked to industry in 2020. Three years later, in 2023, the percentage had dropped more than three percentage points. This downward trend is confirmed by a decrease in the number of vacancies reported to the Flemish employment services (VDAB[6]) in relation to Lier. In 2023, vacancies in the industrial and non-industrial sectors decreased by 13% and 14% respectively compared to 2022.

16. Most of Van Hool's former workers live in Lier and the surrounding municipalities. The enterprise's closure has led to a significant disruption to the local labour market. According to VDAB, in April 2024 — the month in which Van Hool filed for bankruptcy —, unemployment rose by 32 % in Berlaar, 23 % in Heist-op-den-Berg, 17 % in Nijlen and 14 % in Lier, leaving one in ten working-age residents unemployed in Lier and Berlaar.

17. While technically qualified workers are returning to work relatively quickly in the region, low skilled and older workers have far fewer opportunities to re-enter the labour market. The redundancies in Van Hool hit these vulnerable groups the hardest. One in three dismissed workers is over 50 years old and eight out of ten have secondary education or less, and outdated skills. Targeted assistance focusing on upskilling and retraining is needed to increase the chances of workers returning to work.

---

5 Source: Sustainable Bus.

6 Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding (VDAB).

Application of the EU Quality Framework for anticipation of change and restructuring (QFR)

18. Belgium has described how the recommendations set out in the EU Quality Framework for anticipation of change and restructuring have been taken into account.

19. Belgium has reported that national labour law[7] on the active management of restructuring requires enterprises undergoing restructuring to set up an employment unit, whose purpose is to provide workers laid off in the context of collective redundancies with 30 hours of outplacement services in a period of three months (60 hours in six months for workers aged 45+). However, this requirement does not apply in the event of bankruptcy.

20. Regarding the activities undertaken to assist the displaced workers, Belgium has reported that the first measures to support the workers (information and registration sessions) were launched on 22 April 2024, two weeks after the bankruptcy. Outplacement services and a job fair[8] were organised shortly afterwards.

Complementarity with actions funded by national or Union funds

21. Belgium has confirmed that the measures described below receiving a financial contribution from the EGF will not also receive financial contributions from other Union financial instruments.

22. The coordinated package of personalised services complements actions funded by other national or EU funds.

Procedures for consulting the targeted beneficiaries or their representatives or the social partners as well as local and regional authorities

23. Belgium has indicated that the co-ordinated package of personalised services has been drawn up in consultation with targeted beneficiaries, their representatives, and the social partners, in compliance with Article 7(4) of Regulation (EU) 2021/691.

24. Aiming to prepare a sound package of tailored measures to support the efforts of former Van Hool workers to return to work, the workers representatives General Labour Federation of Belgium (ABVV)[9], ABVV Metaal, Confederation of Christian Trade Unions (ACV)[10], and General Confederation of Liberal Trade Unions of Belgium (ACLVB)[11] were consulted in meetings held on 29 March and 5 April 2024.

Targeted beneficiaries and proposed measures

Targeted beneficiaries

25. The estimated number of displaced workers expected to participate in the measures is 2 397. Pursuant to Article 8(7), point (f), of Regulation (EU) 2021/691, the provided breakdown of these workers by gender, age group and educational level is as follows:

Category	Number of expected

7 The Royal Decree of 10 November 2006 amending the Royal Decree of 9 March 2006
8 The job-fair took place in the Nekkerhal in Mechelen, on 28 May 2024
9 Algemeen Belgisch Vakverbond.
10 Algemeen Christelijk Vakverbond.
11 Algemene Centrale der Liberale Vakbonden van België.

		beneficiaries	
Gender:	Men:	2 145	(89,5 %)
	Women:	252	(10.5 %)
	Non-binary	0	(0,0 %)
Age group:	Below 30 years:	159	(6,6 %)
	30-54 years:	1 354	(56,5 %)
	Over 54 years:	884	(36,9 %)
Educational level[12]	Lower secondary education or less[13]	568	(23,7 %)
	Upper secondary[14] or post-secondary education[15]	1 483	(61,9 %)
	Tertiary education[16]	346	(14,4 %)

Proposed measures

26. Pursuant to Article 8(7), point (h) of Regulation (EU) 2021/691, the personalised coordinated package to be provided to displaced workers consists of the following measures:

– Social Intervention Advisor (SIA) and workers registration: Information sessions in which social intervention advisors inform workers about the support available to facilitate their transition to employment and worker registration are the first services offered to all laid-off workers.

– Outplacement: In Belgium, the personalised packages of measures co-financed by the EGF complement the legal obligation for employers described in paragraph 19. However, since the redundancies occurred as a result of the enterprise's bankruptcy, former Van Hool workers do not receive such services. This outplacement measure will provide all redundant workers, regardless of their age, with 60 hours of outplacement services. Services include administrative and psychological support, personal assessment sessions (what can I do, what do I want to do, etc.), digital skills assessment, job search assistance or assistance towards self-employment, advice on negotiating employment contracts, etc.

  Digitally illiterates will receive basic ICT training and additional support through digibanks, where workers can borrow a laptop, receive training on how to use it and get answers to their digital questions. Webinars and other online tools, such as 123digit.be, will help those who already have some digital skills to improve them.

12 For 346 workers the educational level was not known at the time of application.
13 ISCED 0-2
14 ISCED 3
15 ISCED 4
16 ISCED 5-8

– Job-search support and job placement: Along with job-search support and help to prepare for future job applications, this measure includes organising job search events, like job fairs, and job scouting to locate potential job vacancies that may suit former Van Hool workers.

– Vocational guidance: Various vocational guidance services are on offer to cover general guidance needs or shortcomings such as not having a realistic job goal, not meeting labour market requirements or having a poor knowledge of Dutch.

– Training, retraining and vocational training: Upon agreement of individual projects with the vocational counsellor, specific training will be offered to cater for the identified needs. Workers will also have access to a wide range of training that includes the training offered by VDAB or by training providers.

– Training at the workplace: Workers receive on-the-job training at the enterprise that will employ them after training. Depending on the needs of the worker, the training can last between 4 and 26 weeks. Training is followed by an employment contract, either permanent or fixed term of at least the same duration as the training.

27. The ICT training and additional support foreseen within the outplacement services caters for the dissemination of the skills required in the digital industrial age and in a resource-efficient economy, as required by Article 7(2) of Regulation (EU) 2021/691.

28. The proposed actions, here described, constitute active labour market policy measures within the eligible actions set out in Article 7 of Regulation (EU) 2021/691. These actions do not substitute passive social protection measures.

29. Regarding the activities already undertaken for the assistance of the displaced workers, Belgium informed that the employer's legal obligation to provide outplacement services to the redundant workers does not apply due to the enterprise's bankruptcy. However, support to the workers started two weeks after the redundancies, as described in paragraph 20.

30. Belgium has provided the required information on measures that are mandatory for the enterprise concerned by virtue of national law or pursuant to collective agreements. In accordance with Article 9(1) of Regulation (EU) 2021/691, Belgium has confirmed that a financial contribution from the EGF will not replace such measures.

Estimated budget

31. The estimated total costs are EUR 9 410 607, comprising expenditure for personalised services of EUR 9 034 607 and expenditure for preparatory, management, information and publicity, control and reporting activities of EUR 376 000.

32. The total financial contribution requested from the EGF is EUR 7 999 015 (85 % of total costs).

33. Pursuant to Article 8(7), point (m), of Regulation (EU) 2021/691, Belgium has specified that the national pre-financing and co-funding is provided by VDAB.

Measures	Estimated number of	Estimated cost per participant	Estimated total costs

	participants	*(EUR)*[17]	*(EUR)*[18]
Personalised services (measures under Article 7(2), second subparagraph, point (a), of Regulation (EU) 2021/691)			
Social Intervention Advisor and workers' registration (*SIA, Inschrijving bij VDAB*)	2 397	84	200 741
Outplacement (*Bemiddeling en begeleiding naar werk: Outplacementbegeleiding SIF)*	2 397	1 252	3 000 000
Job-search support and job placement (*Actieve bemiddeling en begeleiding naar werk, organisatie jobbeurs)*	1 000	937	937 083
Vocational guidance (*Bemiddeling en begeleiding naar werk via tenderpartners)*	100	4 500	450 000
Training, retraining and vocational training (*Aanbod opleidingen in eigen beheer, aanbod erkende opleidingen bij partners, opleidingen ikv SIF budget*)	450	9 839	4 427 583
Training at the workplace (*Opleiding in de onderneming (IBO))*	20	960	19 200
Sub-total (a): Percentage of the package of personalised services	–		9 034 607 (100 %)
Activities under Article 7(5) of Regulation (EU) 2021/691			
1. Preparatory activities	–		50 000
2. Management	–		160 000
3. Information and publicity	–		8 000
4. Control and reporting	–		158 000
Sub-total (b): Percentage of the total costs :	–		376 000 (4,00 %)
Total costs (a + b):	–		9 410 607
EGF contribution (85 % of total costs)	–		7 999 015

Period of eligibility of expenditure

34. Belgium started providing the personalised services to the targeted beneficiaries on 22 April 2024. The expenditure on the measures will therefore be eligible for a financial contribution from the EGF from 22 April 2024 until 24 months after the date of the entry into force of the Financing Decision.

[17] To avoid decimals, the estimated costs per worker have been rounded. However, the rounding has no impact on the total cost of each measure, which remains as in the application submitted by Belgium.

[18] Totals do not tally due to rounding.

35. Belgium started incurring the administrative expenditure to implement the EGF on 14 March 2024. The expenditure for preparatory, management, information and publicity, control and reporting activities shall therefore be eligible for a financial contribution from the EGF from 14 March 2024 until 31 months after the date of the entry into force of the Financing Decision.

Management and control systems

36. The application contains a description of the management and control system required under Article 23 of Regulation (EU) 2021/691, which specifies the responsibilities of the bodies involved. Belgium has notified the Commission that the financial contribution will be managed by VDAB. The payments will be made by VDAB's financial service. The Department of Finance and Budget - Audit Unit of the Flemish Audit Authority for the European Structural Funds is the audit authority for the EGF.

Commitments provided by the Member State concerned

37. Belgium has provided all necessary assurances regarding the following:

- the principles of equality of treatment and non-discrimination will be respected in access to the proposed measures and their implementation,
- the requirements laid down in national and EU legislation concerning collective redundancies have been complied with,
- any double financing will be prevented,
- the financial contribution from the EGF will comply with the procedural and material Union rules on State aid.

BUDGETARY IMPLICATION

Budgetary proposal

38. The EGF shall not exceed a maximum annual amount of EUR 30 million (in 2018 prices), as laid down in Article 8 of Council Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2020/2093 of 17 December 2020 laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2021 to 2027[19] amended by Council Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/765 of 29 February 2024[20].

39. Having examined the application in respect of the conditions set out in Article 13(1) and (2) of Regulation (EU) 2021/691, and having taken into account the number of targeted beneficiaries, the proposed measures and the estimated costs, the Commission proposes to mobilise the EGF for the amount of EUR 7 999 015, representing 85 % of the total costs of the proposed measures, in order to provide a financial contribution for the application.

40. The proposed decision to mobilise the EGF will be taken jointly by the European Parliament and the Council pursuant to Article 15(1), first subparagraph, second sentence, of Regulation (EU) 2021/691 and, as laid down in point 9 of 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

[19] OJ L 433 I, 22.12.2020, p. 11.
[20] OJ L 2024/765, 29.2.2024, p 4.

management, as well as on new own resources, including a roadmap towards the introduction of new own resources[21].

Related acts

41. At the same time as it presents this proposal for a decision to mobilise the EGF, the Commission will present to the European Parliament and to the Council a proposal to transfer to the relevant budgetary line the amount of EUR 7 999 015.

42. At the same time as it adopted this proposal for a decision to mobilise the EGF, the Commission adopted a decision on a financial contribution that constitutes a financing decision within the meaning of Article 110 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509[22]. That financing decision will enter into force on the date on which the Commission is notified of the approval of the budgetary transfer by the European Parliament and the Council pursuant to Article 15(2), first subparagraph, of Regulation (EU) 2021/691.

[21] OJ L 433 I, 22.12.2020, p. 28.

[22] Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2024 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (recast), OJ L, 2024/2509, 26.9.2024.

2025/0061 (BUD)

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/2024/003 BE/Van Hool

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

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[23], and in particular Article 15(1), first subparagraph, 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[24], and in particular point 9 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the European Commission,

Whereas:

(1) The European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for Displaced Workers (EGF) aims to demonstrate solidarity and promote decent and sustainable employment in the Union by providing support for workers made redundant and self-employed persons whose activity has ceased in the case of major restructuring events and assisting them in returning to decent and sustainable employment as soon as possible.

(2) The EGF is not to exceed a maximum annual amount of EUR 30 million (in 2018 prices), as laid down in Article 8 of Council Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2020/2093[25] amended by Council Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/765[26], and Article 16 of Regulation (EU) 2021/691.

(3) On 29 October 2024, Belgium submitted an application to mobilise the EGF in accordance with Article 8(1) of Regulation (EU) 2021/691, in respect of worker's displacements in Van Hool in Belgium. It was supplemented by additional information provided in accordance with Article 8(5) of Regulation (EU) 2021/691. That application is considered to comply with the conditions for providing a financial contribution from the EGF as laid down in Article 13 of Regulation (EU) 2021/691, on the basis of the assessment made by the Commission in the Proposal for a mobilisation decision of the European Parliament and of the Council[27].

---

23 OJ L 153, 3.5.2021, p. 48.

24 OJ L 433 I, 22.12.2020, p. 28

25 Council Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2020/2093 of 17 December 2020 laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2021 to 2027 (OJ L 433 I, 22.12.2020, p. 11).

26 OJ L 2024/765, 29.2.2024, p 4.

27 COM(2025) 001

(4) The EGF should, therefore, be mobilised in order to provide a financial contribution of EUR 7 999 015 in respect of the application submitted by Belgium.

(5) In order to minimise the time taken to mobilise the EGF, this decision should apply from the date of its adoption,

HAVE ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1

For the general budget of the Union for the financial year 2025, the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for Displaced Workers shall be mobilised to provide the amount of EUR 7 999 015 in commitment and payment appropriations.

Article 2

This Decision shall enter into force on the day of its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union. It shall apply from [*the date of its adoption*][*].

Done at Brussels,

For the European Parliament	*For the Council*
The President	*The President*

[*] Date to be inserted by the Parliament before the publication in OJ.