EUROPEAN
COMMISSION

Brussels, 2.3.2026
COM(2026) 4 final

2026/0066 (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/2025/008 BE/Liberty

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# 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 13 November 2025, Belgium submitted an application EGF/2025/008 BE/Liberty for a financial contribution from the EGF, following displacements in Liberty Galaţi Belgian Branch[2] 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/2025/008 BE/Liberty |
| Member State | Belgium |
| Region(s) concerned (NUTS[3] level 2) | Province Liège (BE33) |
| Date of submission of the application | 13 November 2025 |
| Date of acknowledgement of receipt of the application | 27 November 2025 |
| Date of request for additional information | 27 November 2025 |
| Deadline for provision of the additional information | 18 December 2025 |
| Deadline for the completion of the assessment | 10 March 2026 |
| Intervention criterion | Article 4(2), point (a), of Regulation (EU) 2021/691 |
| Enterprise | Liberty Galaţi Belgian Branch |
| Sector(s) of economic activity (NACE Revision 2 division)[4] | Division 24 (Manufacture of basic metals) |
| Reference period (four months): | 24 April 2025 – 24 August 2025 |
| Number of displacements during the reference period (*a*) | 507 |
| Total number of eligible beneficiaries | 507 |

[1] OJ L 153, 3.5.2021, p. 48.
[2] 'Liberty Galaţi Belgian Branch' is the commercial name of the Belgian branch of the Romanian-registered joint-stock company Liberty Galaţi.
[3] 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.
[4] OJ L 393, 30.12.2006, p. 1.

| | |
|---|---|
| Total number of targeted beneficiaries | 507 |
| Budget for personalised services (EUR) | 2 358 922 |
| Budget for implementing EGF[5] (EUR) | 33 866 |
| Total budget (EUR) | 2 392 788 |
| EGF contribution (85 %) (EUR) | 2 033 869 |

## ASSESSMENT OF THE APPLICATION

### Procedure

4. Belgium submitted application EGF/2025/008 BE/Liberty 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 13 November 2025. The Commission acknowledged receipt of the application and requested additional information from Belgium on 27 November 2025. Such additional information was provided within 15 working days of the request. The deadline of 50 working days of 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 10 March 2026.

### Eligibility of the application

*Enterprises and beneficiaries concerned*

5. The application relates to 507 displaced workers whose activity has ceased in Liberty Galaţi Belgian Branch (Liberty). The enterprise operated in the economic sector classified under the NACE Revision 2 division 24 (Manufacture of basic metals). The redundancies made by Liberty are mainly located in the NUTS 2 region of Province Liège (BE33).

*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 over a reference period of four months in an enterprise in a Member State, including workers displaced in suppliers and downstream producers and / or self-employed persons whose activity has ceased.

7. The reference period of four months for the application runs from 24 April 2025 to 24 August 2025.

8. There were 507 job displacements in Liberty 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 of Regulation (EU) 2021/691, the number of all 507 workers affected by job displacement 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 507.

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

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

11. The investment of more than EUR 40 million made by GFG Alliance[6] after the acquisition of Liberty Steel Liège from ArcelorMittal in July 2019, was hampered by the weak steel market in 2019, the supply chain disruptions caused by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the high energy prices that followed Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

12. Liberty Steel Group's galvanizing lines in Belgium remained idle since December 2021 because of the lack of raw materials triggering a restructuring operation which resulted in the legal transfer of Liberty Steel Liège to Liberty Galaţi (a Romanian subsidiary of GFG Alliance through Liberty Steel Group) in 2023.

13. Despite Galaţi's takeover of Liberty Steel Liège, production activity did not resume. Therefore, workers were placed in short-time work schemes. After a long period without engaging in any production, Liberty was declared bankrupt by Liège's Commercial Court on 22 April 2025[7].

14. Liège was not the only facility in difficulties. Liberty Steel plants in Czechia, Poland, Italy, Romania, and Luxemburg also experienced difficulties because of the combination of adverse steel market conditions, and GFG Alliance Group's dramatic lack of liquid capital that followed the bankruptcy of Greensill Capital. Since this private financial services company provided short-term financing to many entities of the GFG Alliance Group, its bankruptcy endangered the viability of Liberty Steel, leading to its gradual decline.

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

15. In Belgium, the ratio of steel jobs[8] per inhabitant[9] is high, which highlights the importance of the sector in the country's economy. Furthermore, Liberty's bankruptcy represents a major social shock for Wallonia, as it occurs in a labour market already weakened by other restructuring events such as TNT-FedEx[10] or Makro[11] for which Belgium also applied for EGF support.

16. In October 2025, unemployment rate for Belgium as a whole was 6,4%, 0,6 percentage points (pp) increase year-on-year, and 0,5 pp higher than the EU average unemployment rate (5,9%)[12]. However, the unemployment rate in Walloria rises up to 7,8%[13].

17. In the second quarter of 2025, the employment rate in Wallonia (62,7 %)[14] was 13 pp lower than the EU average (76,2%)[15]. Older workers are facing more barriers to employment. The national employment rate for the age group 25-49 is 82%. It falls

6 The conglomerate GFG Alliance owns Liberty Steel Group,
7 Moniteur Belge 28.04.2025, 45387
8 Steel jobs ratio is the proportion of direct steel jobs per 100,000 inhabitants.
9 European Steel Association (EUROFER). European steel in figures 2025.
10 COM(2023) 69
11 COM(2023) 470
12 Eurostat.
13 Statbel. Emploi et chômage (9.9.2025)
14 Statbel. Emploi et chômage (9.9.2025)
15 Eurostat

down to 68,2% for people aged 50 or more[16]. One in four registered job seekers in Wallonia was aged 50 or more, in August 2025[17].

18. Despite their high specialization in metallurgy, galvanizing and heavy industrial maintenance, the job transitions of Liberty's workers are challenged by their advanced age (52% of the workers are aged 55 or more and one in two in this group is aged 60 or more) with many years of seniority in the same enterprise (more than 70% of the workers have between 24 and 40 years of seniority). Therefore, these workers need personalised help to overcome these difficulties.

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

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

20. Belgium has reported that national labour law on the active management of restructuring[18] 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 legal obligation does not apply in the event of bankruptcy. Therefore, the outplacement and vocational guidance services included in the package of measures described below in paragraph 24 replace the counseling and outplacement services that these displaced workers do not receive and expand them.

21. Wallonia's regional legislation[19] provides for specific support for redundant workers, in the form of a redeployment unit (*cellule de reconversion*)[20] by the Regional Public Employment and Vocational Training Service (Le Forem), at the request of workers' representative organisations. The redeployment unit does not constitute an obligation for the employer, nor for Le Forem. The implementation of the EGF co-financed measures will be managed through such a redeployment unit.

22. Regarding the activities undertaken to assist the displaced workers, Belgium has reported that the redeployment unit was set up on 1 June 2025, shortly after the first redundancies.

*Complementarity with actions funded by national or Union funds*

23. 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.

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

16 Statbel. Employment rate by age group.
17 Le Forem. Photo locale de la demande d'emploi (aout 2025)
18 The Royal Decree (*Arrêté Royal*) of 10 November 2006 amending the Royal Decree of 9 March 2006.
19 Wallonia Government Decree of 29 January 2004, as amended by the Decree of 30 April 2009.
20 Le Forem. Restructuring event: redeployment units.

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

25. Belgium has indicated that the co-ordinated package of personalised services has been drawn up in consultation with trade unions, in compliance with Article 7(4) of Regulation (EU) 2021/691.

26. In a meeting held on 14 July 2025, the General Federation of Labour of Belgium (FGTB)[21] and the Confederation of Christian Trade Unions (CSC)[22] were consulted particularly on the workers' needs regarding upskilling and reskilling. Input from the workers representatives was also sought on how to better provide the EGF support.

**Targeted beneficiaries and proposed measures**

*Targeted beneficiaries*

27. All 507 displaced workers are expected to participate in the measures. 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 beneficiaries | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender: | Men: | 468 | (92,3 %) |
| | Women: | 39 | (7,7 %) |
| | Non-binary | 0 | (0,0 %) |
| Age group: | Below 30 years: | 4 | (0,8 %) |
| | 30-54 years: | 242 | (47,7 %) |
| | Over 54 years: | 261 | (51,5 %) |
| Educational level | Lower secondary education or less[23] | 70 | (13,8 %) |
| | Upper secondary[24] or post-secondary education[25] | 280 | (55,2 %) |
| | Tertiary education[26] | 157 | (31,0 %) |

*Proposed measures*

28. 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:

[21] Fédération générale du travail de Belgique.
[22] Conféderation des syndicats chrétiens.
[23] ISCED 0-2
[24] ISCED 3
[25] ISCED 4
[26] ISCED 5-8

– Outplacement and vocational guidance: These services are provided by a team of vocational advisors specialised in restructuring events and social support workers generally drawn from the company's employee representatives.

The advisors provide outplacement services and guidance, training, and professional reintegration support through individual and collective counselling and coaching sessions, while the social workers provide support with the administrative procedures when changing employment status and help maintain relationships among workers the way these were while in Liberty.

– Training, retraining and vocational training: Specific training will be offered to cater for the identified needs of the workers, after the profiling and agreement of individual projects with the vocational counsellors. Such training complements the standard training offer of Le Forem and its partners. Two specific IT modules to gain and to strengthen digital autonomy are offered to the workers as well.

– Support towards business creation: The measure aims at workers who wish to launch their own business. It will include a diagnosis and guidance phase, awareness-raising actions on entrepreneurship, information sessions on the potential for business creation through territorial economic diagnoses and networking with relevant entrepreneurs and with certified coaches in business creation.

– Contribution to business start-up: The workers who start a business or a self-employed activity will receive a contribution up to EUR 15 000. The contribution will be paid in two instalments, after proving the start and development of the business activity with supporting documents.

– Incentives and allowances: **(1) Job-search allowances.** Workers will receive EUR 2 per hour of effective participation in job-search activities entitled to the allowance. **(2) Return-to-school allowance.** A monthly allowance of EUR 350 will be granted to workers who embark on full-time secondary and tertiary studies, or qualifying training to acquire the necessary skills for jobs that are in demand and for which recruiting is difficult or linked to critical functions[27]. **(3) Allowance towards business creation.** To support workers during setting up business, a monthly allowance of EUR 350 will be granted for a maximum of 12 months or up to 18 months under certain conditions.

29. The training to gain and to strengthen digital autonomy mentioned above, that complements Forem's standard training to develop digital skills, together with a module on circular economy and efficient use of resources 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. The module on circular economy and efficient use of resources developped for former Swissport workers (EGF/2020/005 BE)[28] is now part of Le Forem's standard training offer co-financed by ESF+. Therefore, it is not budgeted in this proposal. The circular economy module is complemented by a module on social economy also developed within the framework of an EGF case[29].

[27] List of jobs in demand and difficult to be covered or linked to critical functions. « Métiers en tension de recrutement en Wallonie. Liste des métiers/fonctions critiques et en pénurie ». Le Forem 2025.

[28] COM(2021) 212.

[29] EGF/2022/002 BE/TNT. COM(2023) 69

30. 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.

31. 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*

32. The estimated total costs are EUR 2 392 788, comprising expenditure for personalised services of EUR 2 358 922 and expenditure for preparatory, management, information and publicity, control and reporting activities of EUR 33 866.

33. The total financial contribution requested from the EGF is EUR 2 033 869 (85 % of total costs).

34. 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 Région Wallone and Le Forem.

| Measures | Estimated number of participants | Estimated cost per participant *(EUR)*[30] | Estimated total costs *(EUR)*[31] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Personalised services (measures under Article 7(2), second subparagraph, point (a), of Regulation (EU) 2021/691) | | | |
| Outplacement and vocational guidance *(reconversion:accompagnement/orientation/ mobilisation)* | 507 | 2 329 | 1 180 583 |
| Training and retraining *(formations et modules spécifiques)* | 250 | 1 801 | 450 170 |
| Promotion of entrepreneurship (*Accompagnement entrepreneuriat)* | 50 | 1 231 | 61 569 |
| Contribution to business start-up *(bourse de lancement)* | 32 | 10 000 | 320 000 |
| Sub-total (a):<br>Percentage of the package of personalised services | – | | 2 012 322<br>(85,30 %) |
| Allowances and incentives (measures under Article 7(2), second subparagraph, point (b), of Regulation (EU) 2021/691) | | | |

30 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.

31 Totals do not tally due to rounding.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Allowances<br>(*allocation de recherche d'emploie, de reprise d'études et d'entrepreneuriat)* | 507 | 684 | 346 600 |
| Sub-total (b):<br>Percentage of the package of personalised services: | – | | 346 600<br>(14,69 %) |
| Activities under Article 7(5) of Regulation (EU) 2021/691 | | | |
| 1. Preparatory activities | – | | 0 |
| 2. Management | – | | 13 260 |
| 3. Information and publicity | – | | 5 000 |
| 4. Control and reporting | – | | 15 606 |
| Sub-total (c):<br>Percentage of the total costs: | – | | 33 866<br>(1,42 %) |
| Total costs (a + b + c): | – | | 2 392 788 |
| EGF contribution (85 % of total costs) | – | | 2 033 869 |

35. The costs of the measures identified in the table above as measures under Article 7(2), second subparagraph, point (b), of Regulation (EU) 2021/691 do not exceed 35 % of the total costs for the coordinated package of personalised services. Belgium confirmed that these measures are conditional on the active participation of the targeted beneficiaries in job-search or training activities.

36. In accordance with Article 7(2), fourth subparagraph, of Regulation (EU) 2021/691, Belgium confirmed that the costs of investments for self-employment, business start-ups and employee take-overs will not exceed EUR 22 000 per beneficiary.

*Period of eligibility of expenditure*

37. Belgium started providing the personalised services to the targeted beneficiaries on 1 June 2025. The expenditure on the measures will therefore be eligible for a financial contribution from the EGF from 1 June 2025 until 24 months after the date of the entry into force of the Financing Decision.

38. Belgium started incurring the administrative expenditure to implement the EGF on 22 April 2025. The expenditure for preparatory, management, information and publicity, control and reporting activities shall therefore be eligible for a financial contribution from the EGF from 22 April 2025 until 31 months after the date of the entry into force of the Financing Decision.

**Management and control systems**

39. 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 and controlled by the same bodies that manage and control the ESF+ in Wallonia.

**Commitments provided by the Member State concerned**

40. 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

41. 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[32] amended by Council Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/765 of 29 February 2024[33].

42. 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 2 033 869, representing 85 % of the total costs of the proposed measures, in order to provide a financial contribution for the application.

43. 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 management, as well as on new own resources, including a roadmap towards the introduction of new own resources[34].

### Related acts

44. 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 2 033 869.

45. 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[35]. 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.

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32 OJ L 433 I, 22.12.2020, p. 11.
33 OJ L, 2024/765, 29.2.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/765/oj.
34 OJ L 433 I, 22.12.2020, p. 28.
35 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, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/2509/oj26.9.2024.

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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/2025/008 BE/Liberty**

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[36], 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[37], 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[38] amended by Council Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/765[39], and Article 16 of Regulation (EU) 2021/691.

(3) On 13 November 2025, 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 Liberty Galaţi Belgian Branch 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[40].

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36 OJ L 153, 3.5.2021, p. 48.
37 OJ L 433 I, 22.12.2020, p. 28
38 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).
39 OJ L, 2024/765, 29.2.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/765/oj.
40 COM(2026) 4.

(4) The EGF should, therefore, be mobilised in order to provide a financial contribution of EUR 2 033 869 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 2026, the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for Displaced Workers shall be mobilised to provide the amount of EUR 2 033 869 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*
*The President*

*For the Council*
*The President*

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