



Report on the 21st Meeting of the Contact Persons of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF)

Rome, 15 March 2018

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Overall introduction

The purpose of this document is to report on the presentations and discussions of the 21st meeting of the Contact Persons of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF). The meeting took place on 15 March 2018 in Rome, Italy.

The following report provides a concise summary of the meeting. We refer you to the presentations used during the meeting for an overview of the Commission's key messages. The full agenda of the meeting is available on the EGF website¹.

1. Introduction and adoption of the agenda

Due to the unfortunate absence of Mr Szilárd Tamás, Head of Unit of EGF and Shared Management at the European Commission, the EGF Team Leader, Ms Bistra Valchanova took over his role, welcoming everyone to the 21st Meeting and introducing the agenda. There were no changes to the agenda.

Ms Valchanova explained that at these usually biannual events, the EGF Team present an overview of the developments of the last six months. The current Commission focus on post-2020 discussions for the EGF – which the Member States have been involved in and consulted – including the specification and clarification of some future aspects of the fund still required by the Commission, mean that this meeting would have a slightly different scope and emphasis. Bistra Valchanova added that the EGF Team would elaborate on the post-2020 discussions in more detail later on under the relevant agenda point.

2. Update on the EGF since the last Contact Persons Meeting

Final reports and closures

The Commission presented the EGF updates since the Tallinn meeting on 19 October 2017. Since then, the EGF has received three final reports from Finland, Ireland and Belgium, all from 2015 cases. Nine cases overall have been wound up, from 2014 and 2015.

Recoveries

The Commission has recovered 12 cases. From the €51 704 074 funding granted for these 12 projects, €18 017 249 or 34.85% has been recovered. This is a much smaller percentage than the recovery rate for the previous six months (52.15%), and is mainly due to the very low recovery rate in two cases - Greece and France - where the rate was between 0-2 percent. Overall, the recoveries for the 12 cases range from 1 to over 85%.

¹ The agenda is available under the "Programme" tab:
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=326&eventsId=1305&furtherEvents=yes>

European Commission Implementing Decision – deadline employment status

Next, a Team Member from the Commission spoke about the Implementing Decision deadline for reporting on the employment status of beneficiaries. There had been confusion between cases from the beginning of the programming period, when certain implementation rules were unclear, and cases that followed later. Question 11.4 in the EGF FAQ page explained clearly that Member States must submit information on the employment status of beneficiaries 12 months after submitting the Final Report. This was different from the statute in the previous programming period, when Member States were required to submit this information 12 months after the end of the implementation of the measures.

The change in the new programming period had, however, only been applied in the wording of some of the Implementing Decisions. Out of 43 Implementing Decisions adopted in the new programming period, there were 23 decisions that mentioned that Member States must submit the employment status 12 months after implementation and 20 which reflected the new approach. The EGF Team calculated the new dates for the requested information for the Member States involved and contacted them separately already. This issue currently affects only nine cases as for 11 cases the Commission already corrected the date. For the remaining nine, the 12-month date after the submission of the Final Report has not yet passed. In practice, this amendment means Member States have to submit this information six months later. The speaker mentioned that the EGF Team is happy to discuss this issue further with Member States, should any issues arise.

Applications received

Next, a speaker from the EGF Team reported on the applications received since the October meeting. The Commission has received six applications (not including Technical Assistance for the EGF, which the EGF Team expects the Commission to adopt on 9 April 2018).

Two cases adopted by the Budgetary Authority, but still awaiting a signed decision:

- EGF/2017/006 ES/Galicia wearing apparel
- EGF/2017/007 ES/Ericsson

In assessment by the Budgetary Authority:

- EGF/2017/008 FI/Goodyear - voted in Plenary: 14/03/2018

In assessment by the European Commission:

- EGF/2017/009 FR/Air France – Deadline for adoption: 26/04/2018
- EGF/2017/010 BE/Caterpillar – Estimated adoption: 23/03/2018
- EGF/2018/001 NL/Friesland, Drenthe, Overijssel - Deadline for adoption: 13/07/2018

Planned applications (tour de table)

Next, a speaker from the EGF Team asked Member States to give a short summary of their planned EGF applications:

- Greece was exploring a potential new proposal in the publications sector; if possible, the Member State will apply in the coming months. As the representative explained, there was no application deadline yet.

- The Finnish representative explained that the Member State was preparing another application for the dismissed workers of Nokia (the Nokia 4 application). The application might be ready by end of April. On top of this, another application in the financial services sector was also pending. This case needed more time.
- Portugal mentioned that an application in the textile sector was in the pipeline for the end of April.

Ms Valchanova emphasised that the EGF team would be happy to discuss any potential new applications with the Member States and to answer any questions during the application process, should any arise.

3. Mid-term evaluation and Impact Assessment of EGF

The Commission explained that the mid-term evaluation of the EGF has been an ongoing long process. They said that the Commission already presented the results of the evaluation in Tallinn in October, and that there was no change in this regard.

There were many misunderstandings about the Biennial Report of the EGF (which included evaluations of cases from the former programming period) and the evaluation, which focussed on the new programming period. The comparison of different cases with alternative regulatory frameworks created many problems.

Although it took a long time, the speaker explained that the Commission had finally closed the Inter-Service Consultation. The EGF Team expressed hope that they would be able to send out the final published document soon (in two to three weeks), after receiving the go-ahead from the Commission. All of the Member States would receive a link to this document via email when that happened.

In terms of the Impact Assessment, the speaker said that Member States and the EGF Team already discussed many of the issues at the EGF Working Group consultation in Brussels on 31 January 2018. The contractor who attended the meeting in Brussels was (at the time of speaking) yet to submit the Impact Assessment, although the deadline was 13 March 2018. The open public consultation that many of the Member States participated in was a part of the Impact Assessment. The speaker explained that the EGF would have to submit the Impact Assessment to the Regulatory Scrutiny Board (an authority board, scrutinising the evaluations and impact assessments of the Commission) in two weeks. The adoption is scheduled for 29 May 2018.

It was especially important that the EGF Team receive the report from the contractors, as DG EMPL (Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion) wanted to use the Impact Assessment submitted by the EGF and other funds, to analyse different possibilities, scenarios and developments for merging funds, and for including them (or not) in the Multiannual Financial Framework. These decisions of course would have great implications for the future of the EGF.

The EGF Team Member also spoke about a new OECD Study "Back to Work" (to be officially published soon) which had many interesting policy implications on how to assist displaced workers. The report summarises the re-employment experiences of nine countries. The OECD defined "job displacement" as the permanent involuntary economic dismissal affecting a worker with at least one year of job tenure. Job displacement, according to the report, affected between 1-7% of the workforce annually, and meant a significant loss of income for many of those affected. According to the report, most of these workers would benefit from re-employment assistance and income support. The most effective measures for helping displaced workers included proactive action (preventive measures and early intervention), national

activation strategies (active labour market policies (ALMPs) and income support), as well as broader sets of (indirect) measures that helped to lower the costs of job displacement while contributing to the management of ongoing labour market restructuring.

The speaker next invited the representatives present to reflect on possible new developments for the EGF in the next programming cycle in the post-2020 period, which could include new broader policy measures and a regional approach to restructuring job losses. The Commission explained that this was simply a brainstorming exercise, as the regional strand was not currently a part of the new draft EGF Regulation. The speaker invited attendees to reflect on the possibilities (and problems) of an EGF regional strand, which would tackle restructuring problems in regions and companies.

Member State responses to this question varied from country to country. Some supported the idea of giving aid to SMEs and start-ups in regions in difficulties, as a way to support restructuring-related problems on the ground, especially in severely impacted provinces. This could include supporting the retraining of workers in regions where there were specific skills shortages and a lack of skilled workers that hindered development and job transitioning. Other representatives questioned whether the inclusion of a region was too wide, and whether a smaller (local not regional) approach would be best – including a NUTS-III not NUTS-II focus. Some Member States expressed the view that the EGF should not be extended to include businesses, and should instead continue to focus on workers. Others were reluctant to broaden the EGF, due to lack of funding – other funds were already doing this job at a regional level. Some Member State representatives were also dissatisfied that there was such a lack of clarity in terms of the future of the EGF. Having discussed synergies with more long-term oriented funds (ESF) the day before, this new strand could create confusion about the role of the EGF, created for short-term, fast, reactive measures, and interfere in the work of other funds.

The Contact Person of one Member State whose economy was growing explained that further growth in some regions was hindered by a lack of qualified personnel in those regions. They argued that the scope of the EGF should be extended for such cases, including measures such as training, coaching and mobility packages (in addition to national measures in place already) to help upskill individuals and support development.

The Commission thanked the Member States for their input, and clarified that while it was hard to make forecasts without knowing the specifics of the new EGF post-2020 Regulation, it was important to think of new possibilities for the fund to help restructuring-related displaced workers more effectively. Since funds set aside for the EGF were consistently underspent and restructuring-related displacement would continue to create huge problems for all Member States (and especially certain regions), thinking of new ways to enlarge the scope of the EGF was a beneficial exercise. Since there is large variance between Member States and regions, some Member States or regions might be more in need of restructuring related regional assistance than others.

4. General introduction to the European policies on adult learning by Ms Anna Nikowska, European Commission, DG EMPL

Ms Anna Nikowska, from DG EMPL at the European Commission presented on the topic of career-long learning from the European perspective. Ms Nikowska said that her presentation would have two parts – after the short coffee break she would talk about the latest European initiative to support adults who struggle with literacy, numeracy and digital skills.

As the speaker explained, adult learning in the EU context referred to the “entire range of formal, non-formal and informal learning activities - both general and vocational - undertaken by adults after leaving initial education and training”. Adult learning and life-long learning were not synonyms, as life-long learning was a broader term, of which adult learning formed a part.

Ms Nikowska explained that in times of change and restructuring, upskilling and reskilling were more important than ever. It was no longer an option to cease learning after leaving secondary education. Unfortunately, out of 300 million European citizens between the ages of 25-64, only 10.8% participated in adult learning. The benchmark for 2020 is 15% (still low) however only seven Member States had reached this minimum threshold (Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, France, Luxembourg, and Estonia).

On the EU level, in 2016 one of the main barriers to participation in adult learning was the failure to consider its importance. Other widespread reasons were lack of time, conflicts with work or work obligations, and the high cost of training. This painted a challenging picture of adult learning, as Ms Nikowska explained. Yet the European Union was trying to answer these challenges, especially since adult learning was of crucial importance in a changing employment landscape.

In the EU context, the Treaty of Rome in 1957 already mentioned adult learning. Real work on the topic however started in 2002 when there was an EU Council Resolution on Lifelong Learning, introducing the idea that people should continually participate in education. In 2006 there was a Commission communication titled “It is never too late to learn” which recognised the need for continued learning for employability, amongst other factors. A 2007 communication titled “It is always a good time to learn” followed next.

It was in the 2008-2010 period that Member States for the first time agreed on and identified a general gap in adult learning. An EU Council Resolution on a renewed European Agenda on Adult Learning followed in 2011. In 2015, a joint report between the Council and the Commission (the ET 2020 Joint Report) identified new priorities for European cooperation in education and training. Thereafter the EU Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways in 2016, for the first time, showed Member States in agreement about adults who struggled with basic skills (numeracy, literacy, digital skills) needing support. They also agreed that a framework for how this should be delivered had to be set up. In 2017, the European Pillar of Social Rights reinforced adult and lifelong learning as a cornerstone of a social Europe.

The European Agenda for Adult Learning highlighted important aspects for policymaking. This included the need for better possibilities for all adults to access high-quality learning at any time in their lives, for any purpose, as well as a focus on learning outcomes and learner autonomy. Awareness of the need for learning throughout life was also important, as well as effective lifelong guidance and validation systems, comprehensive high-quality provision of adult learning, with flexible arrangements including at work, greater employer awareness, and better access to higher education institutions. Social partners, civil society and central, regional and local authorities were crucial players in the provision of adult learning. Shared responsibilities, a strong public commitment, and the allocation of resources for adult learning were also important.

In terms of action taken to improve adult learning, Ms Nikowska explained that country specific recommendations through the European Semester, as well as adult learning tools and advice set out in the ET 2020 proposal aimed to support improved adult learning in the EU. For national advice and inspiration the National Coordinators for adult learning in the EU, a network of coordinators from each Member State, could help support adult learning policies in Member States. The EPALE electronic platform for adult learning was a multilingual platform where experts could exchange information, including a lot of material connected to supporting unemployed people and those disadvantaged on the labour market. This was important in the case of implementing EGF measures. Each Member State had a national service for EPALE.

Erasmus+ actions also offered support in terms of what actions to take, as did the ET 2020 'Adult Learning' Working Group. All these sources could give general advice and inspiration to Member States when trying to focus on adult learning.

Ms Nikowska explained that amongst other studies and data collection, Skills Panorama offered information and guidance on skills intelligence where it was possible to compare levels of qualification by occupation. CEDEFOP (the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) had a lot of information on specific issues, for example about different training measures for people who are unemployed. The Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS), the enterprise survey part of the EU statistics on lifelong learning, could provide Member States with information about training, what skills companies required, and what training companies that are hiring 10+ employees offered. The OECD PIAAC (Survey of Adult Skills) provided specific analysis on what was happening in the workforce, how skills influenced what happened on the company level, and other useful information that Member State representatives could use when preparing applications.

In terms of skills assessment, the speaker advised Member States to refer to PIAAC, EPALE and the Erasmus+ project database, as well as the EU Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning. This document included recommendations on the identification, documentation, assessment and certification of adult learning.

Adult learning tools that could offer help and advice on tailored services included EPALE, the database of Erasmus+ projects, the European Qualifications Framework, the 2006 EU Council Recommendation of Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, as well as the European Reference Framework for Entrepreneurship and the Framework for Developing and Understanding Digital Competence in Europe, which followed later. Ms Nikowska also highlighted Europass, a tool that offers tailored support for individual workers in the form of five documents. These can make the workers' skills and qualifications clearly and easily understood across different EU regions (CV, Language Passport - accessible individually; Europass Mobility, Certificate Supplement, Diploma Supplement - available to education and training authorities). The European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) and European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) were two further initiatives that aimed to make it easier for people to have their vocational training recognised EU-wide, and to guarantee the quality assurance aspect of vocational training.

Ms Nikowska summarised her presentation by highlighting the many data sources available for policy advice on adult learning: PIAAC, the Adult Education Survey, the CVTS, the Labour Force Survey, CEDEFOP, and Eurydice. The speaker emphasised once again that adult learning was any type of learning that happened after individuals finished school. Ms Nikowska explained that adult learning was not only about finding a job but also about life quality. There were many tools, experts and instruments available to Member States to improve projects and the quality of adult learning offers available to individuals.

5. Upskilling Pathways by Ms Anna Nikowska, EC DG EMPL Q&A

Ms Nikowska continued with the second part of her presentation after the break. She drew the attention of the attendees to the negative aspects of pushing beneficiaries in EGF projects (and other projects) to take part in trainings before evaluating and assessing their skills. Ms Nikowska explained that skills gained through formal education were one part of ratified skills, but that workers might have many skills they gained through their work, or even privately, even if these skills did not manifest themselves as official qualifications. The speaker explained that it was discouraging for people to have to learn the same thing again, especially if they had not enjoyed formal primary and secondary education. It is very possible that people had the ability to gain an upper secondary diploma without going to school again, because of the skills they had gained elsewhere. Many employed, educated employees have low IT skills and low literacy. (The worst situation in this respect is in the USA, the EU, including PL, SK, while Asia is in a good position).

The focus, as Ms Nikowska explained, had to be on the validation of formal and non-formal education before pushing people into training, and designing training modules. The first step being the individual skills mapping of workers, and then preparing the specific training pathway, evaluating what they had learned, finally certifying the skills they had gained. The speaker emphasised the fallacy of deciding top-down what beneficiaries and workers should learn, without knowing the skills they had already acquired.

Ms Nikowska then moved on to the topic of upskilling pathways. The basic skills of literacy, numeracy and digital skills in the context of adult learning were necessary to progress further in employment and to have a higher quality of life. If people did not have these basic literacy skills, they could not effectively follow a vocational course or prepare a CV, for example. When these foundational building blocks were missing, other training measures were not optimised.

Almost 20% of Europeans had problems with basic literacy skills – higher than in other OECD developed countries. Over 20% of Europeans had problems with basic numeracy – only the US was worse than the EU in this regard. In terms of digital skills, almost 25% of Europeans lacked the basics. Interestingly, the speaker highlighted that there were many people with higher education qualifications, who had problems with basic skills. The majority of the people lacking basic skills were in employment and not in unemployment.

The solution, according to Ms Nikowska, was evident – to upskill low-skilled workers. However, many low-skilled but qualified people did not participate in education or training. Out of 64 million low-skilled people, only 4.3% participated in educational training to upskill themselves. Limited participation was due to both structural and situational obstacles, which were closely interlinked. Low-skilled people in low-skilled jobs were not included in the training and learning strategies of companies.

The EU had a new target of 15% for the participation of low-skilled and low-qualified adults in education and training, by 2020. Ms Nikowska, emphasised that to reach this target, Member States had to tackle the issue of equal access. Structural obstacles, present in varying degrees in all Member States, included the limited provision of outreach guidance and individual support for workers, the limited tailored provision of upskilling training and measures, and the limited flexibility of access and provision of training and education. Member States could boost the participation of adults in education by validating and qualifying informally acquired skills. Although the setting

up of validation arrangements in different EU countries was a positive development, a skills audit system was still not in place in 15 Member States.

Ms Nikowska explained that flexible learning pathways (including distance learning, blended learning and modular learning) further encouraged adults' participation in education, and could help overcome some structural obstacles. However, in many Member States the provision available did not meet the needs individuals. Situational obstacles related to the specific individual problems of low-skilled individuals, which prevented them from accessing upskilling measures, including family responsibilities, conflicting time schedules, costs, lack of employer support, distance, as well as a lack of motivation (due to an absence of awareness of their lack of skills or the benefits of upskilling, or an unwillingness to recognise their weaknesses).

Ms Nikowska explained that amongst the ten actions of the Commission's skills agenda was a legally non-binding Recommendation on "Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults". Targeting adults with a low level of skills, knowledge and competences, it made different recommendations to Member States on how to help this group acquire or progress towards EQF level 3 or 4 qualifications.

The process of creating upskilling pathways had to start with Member States setting priorities, identifying beneficiaries and identifying measures (for which EU funds are available). After that, outreach (especially developing ways to target and reach those that are most disadvantaged and least likely to get involved in measures), guidance and support were the next steps. Assessing the skills of the targeted individuals, providing them with learning opportunities, and validating that learning through qualifications followed from this. In the next step, it was important to evaluate policy. Partnership, cooperation and coordination between and the mobilisation of many different stakeholders (including the social partners, EU, regional and national administrations, etc.) were crucial in realising individuals' upskilling pathways.

Ms Nikowska concluded the presentation by emphasising four key elements of upskilling pathways. Firstly, the challenge of basic skills touched everyone, including employed and highly qualified people. Secondly, basic skills were important in increasing the effectiveness of other programmes. Third, for a successful training outcome the three steps (assessment of skills, learning stage, and validation) had to be implemented. Finally, Ms Nikowska explained that the audience should consider all these elements in connection to one another.

6. SFC developments and Member States feedback

An EGF Team Member next presented on the new module for sharing the employment status of beneficiaries on SFC (EU System for Fund Management). Member States are obliged to submit this information 12 months after submitting the final report on SFC.

The speaker explained that this module became operational in January 2018. Overall, there are thus three modules for the EGF in SFC – application, final report and now employment status. The Team Member said that the system would send notification emails to the officials in charge six months after they submitted the final report. SFC calculated the updated deadline for the notification email.

For the moment, if the Member State decided to update the employment status on the final report at the end of the implementation period, SFC did not update the figures on the employment status module. The Member State should thus create a new employment status, to which the system will then automatically copy the figures from the updated final report.

The speaker explained that Member States would also have the benefit of a new national overspending option on the EGF SFC system, when Member States decided to spend above the 40% share on measures.

As the Commission explained, the EGF Team sent Member States tables with the updated deadlines for when the employment status information for their cases was due. As explained under the second agenda point, some Implementing Decisions had given 12 months after the end of the implementing period as the deadline for the employment status information (instead of 12 months after the final report), according to guidelines in the previous programming period.

The speaker asked via email Member States who had submitted the employment status of their cases before the new module became operational, to introduce the information into the SFC system.

The Commission confirmed that the withdrawal option for the SFC system had not yet been finalised.

A few Member States commented on this agenda point, some expressing worry that because project managers and staff involved in EGF cases were no longer involved after 12 months, it would be difficult to gather the data for current cases on the employment status of beneficiaries. They agreed that they could implement changes and new approaches more easily going forward, however. A Member State commented that they used the national labour agency data on whether beneficiaries are already out of the unemployment system or not, to determine their employment status.

7. The Omnibus Regulation – state of play and EGF implications

Ms Bistra Valchanova, the EGF Team Leader, explained that much like the EGF mid-term evaluation (mentioned in a previous agenda point), the adoption of the Omnibus Regulation was also delayed. As Ms Valchanova explained, the Omnibus would be in effect retroactively – from 1 January 2018. In small labour markets, or in exceptional circumstances, particularly in regions where predominately SMEs operate, Member States would be able to apply for EGF support for cases combining dismissals in different NACE Revision 2 divisions. With regards to NEETS, the Omnibus stipulated that youth unemployment had to be at least 20% regionally (lower than the previous 25%) for NEETs to be included in EGF measures. The Omnibus Regulation also included a small change in the wording of the technical assistance paragraph, and a change in the wording of the paragraph of the regulation relating to budgetary procedure (to speed up the approval process slightly).

The delay with the Omnibus Regulation had unfortunately had implications for two EGF cases, because of the involvement of NEETs. Ms Valchanova assured the Member States that whenever the European institutions would adopt and publish the Omnibus Regulation, it would be enacted retroactively, and thus provisions for NEETs would be protected.

8. EGF post-2020 – recent developments

The EGF Team explained that the adoption date of the draft EGF post-2020 Regulation in the Commission is currently May 2018. At present, the Commission is only able to present on the intended changes to the Regulation, since the new Regulation has not been finalised. The EGF Team emphasised that these changes were not set in stone

and that although the information was valid at the time of speaking, there may still be further changes.

The intended changes to the Regulation included an extended scope for the EGF (so that any event that triggers mass redundancies would be eligible), a lower threshold (300 not 500 dismissed workers), a faster decision-making process, more support for the self-employed (by increasing the current €15,000 ceiling), and digital skills as a mandatory measure in all projects. In addition, the Commission was still debating how to include higher technical assistance for Member States in the new programming period as a part of the new EGF Regulation.

The EGF Team and DG EMPL had not included the regional strand in the current offer of the new draft Regulation. The results-based approach, which was discussed at the EGF Working Group, was not included as well.

9. Communication

Communication updates

The EGF Team distributed handout sheets for each of the Member States, asking them to fill in the most up-to-date information about their country-specific EGF Contact Persons. The Commission urged the representatives to keep the EGF Team up-to-date with functioning links to national EGF websites, emails, phone numbers, and so forth.

The Commission also presented the new look of the “application” section of the EGF website, and explained that EGF videos could be embedded in national websites for informational purposes without restrictions. The speaker from the EGF Team also referred the Member States to the Commission copyright terms and conditions², and to the EGF 10th anniversary videos³.

The EGF Team shortly explained how to embed videos in national websites. The embed codes for all the videos were available when clicking on the </> icon on the top right corner of the player – this was where the appropriate language could also be selected for the videos.

10. Forthcoming EGF related events

Next EGF Contact Persons meeting and Networking Seminar, October 2018

The Commission was planning to hold the next EGF seminar in Spain, Galicia – provisionally on 17 and 18 October 2018. The EGF Team was working together with representatives from the Member State to finalise the details.

Update on EGF related events planned in Member States

The representative of Sweden stated that they had arranged the final conference for the 2016 Ericsson EGF case for the 25 October 2018.

The representative of Germany explained that they would hold the official inaugural opening of the Goodyear EGF case in the beginning of May 2018.

11. Any other business

² <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/copyright/index.cfm?&sitelang=en>

³ <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?sitelang=en&ref=1145817>

One Member State representative asked that for future Networking Seminars and Contact Persons Meetings a preparatory package be included about the host country and their EGF cases – who were the stakeholders, how was the project organised, who was responsible for EGF in that country. This way the participants could get more out of the site visits. Another suggestion by a Member State was to have tour de table-type country presentations on specific measures and problems used in EGF cases, to facilitate better communication and the sharing of best practices amongst the Member States.

The representatives of Sweden and Germany also mentioned that they would like the Commission to consider the two Member States as possible new locations for hosting the next EGF conference (after October 2018 in Spain).

Ms Bistra Valchanova, on behalf of the EGF Team and the Commission, thanked all of the representatives for attending and participating in the intense conference over the two days, and the Italian colleagues for hosting the event. The speaker encouraged Member States to email the EGF Team if they had any further questions, ideas or suggestions.

The seminar ended at 13.00.