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Factsheet for case **AT-2020-13/461**

Food helpers online platform

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| Country | Austria, applies nationwide |
| Time period | Temporary, started on 23 March 2020 |
| Type | Recommendation |
| Category | Support for essential services – Specific labour market information |
| Case created | 10 April 2020 (updated 14 April 2020) |

Background Information

Border closures pose great challenges for domestic businesses. Foreign workers or seasonal workers employed in Austria are no longer allowed to enter the country, resulting in a shortage of labour both on farms and in food processing companies (e.g. meat sector). In order to ensure and maintain the food supply, all the work that is now necessary must be carried out on time. The Chambers of Agriculture, together with the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Regions and Tourism, the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber and the machinery ring, are endeavouring to support farmers and processing enterprises in carrying out the necessary work on schedule despite the current situation and thus to continue to ensure the supply of domestic food.

Content of measure

Farmers can register their demand for urgently needed labour via an online platform; interested workers can register likewise. They are paid according to collective agreements, but also voluntary (i.e. unpaid) work is possible. Also persons on short-time work in their regular job may apply (they are allowed to have additional earnings with no upper limit). Students of certain relevant schools or university programmes can have this work credited as internships. Placement is made according to the urgency of the work to be carried out in the companies, including seasonal work. In order to be able to find the right workers for the companies, general conditions such as the type of work, the amount of work and time frame, as well as the required duration of the work on the company etc. are checked and compared with the data of the interested helpers.

Use of measure

Initially, the offer has exceeded the demand by far, but farmers are not entirely content with this initiative. Farmers have called attention to the fact that they would prefer their regular seasonal workers due to their experience (in Upper Austria, it was spoken of preferably 80% foreign seasonal workers (mostly from Romania, Albania and the Ukraine) and 20% domestic workers). They have called upon the government to allow to fly in these workers (response expected in mid-April), similar to what is planned in Germany.

Actors, target groups and funding

| Actors | Target groups | Funding |
|---|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| National government Employers' organisations | Sector specific set of companies | No special funding required |

Social partners

| | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Role of social partners | Agreed (outcome) |
| Form of involvement | Direct consultation |

The online platform was initiated and set up in cooperation between the national government (agricultural and labour ministries) and the Chamber for Agriculture (employer organisation).

Sectors and occupations

This case is sector-specific.

| Economic area | Sector (NACE level 2) |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| A - Agriculture, Forestry And Fishing | A1 Crop and animal production, hunting and related service activities |

This case is not occupation-specific.

Sources

- 10 April 2020: Die Lebensmittelhelfer (www.dielebensmittelhelfer.at)
- 10 April 2020: Why the reporting platform for harvest helpers made a false start (www.nachrichten.at)