

**To:** Secretary-General Klaus Welle

**Concerns:** Massive dismissal of EP catering personnel, right before Christmas

Dear Mr Welle,

What about the Christmas spirit? Much to our horror, we have learned that 60 colleagues working in the catering services within the European Parliament have received their dismissal as of January 2021. This makes up to 80% of all the catering personnel. Especially in such a difficult year for so many people, we do not comprehend why they have been fired, right before Christmas. We cannot let this happen. We count on you to do the utmost to keep these people into their work.

We cannot plunge the catering personnel into such uncertainty, after they stood ready for us day and night. Moreover, a number of them have been working within the Parliament's premises for decades. They cannot be left with a destitute Christmas and a harsh outlook for the New Year.

It is to our surprise therefore, only this month, you have prided yourself on how the European Parliament stood ready to be solidary in an interview you gave to the December edition of the Bruzz magazine.<sup>1</sup>

You extensively elaborated on the example how the catering personnel of the Parliament cooked around 2000 meals per day for the homeless people in Brussels, during the lockdown. We off course cheer for this noble cause, and it certainly is doing a lot of good to the reputation of our institution with the greater public. However, it now leaves a nasty sour taste, in the light of this massive dismissal of the very people who made this possible.

Clearly, budgetary reasons cannot be an argument from the side of the Parliament to let the dismissal occur. The catering services have been accounted for in our budget already. Moreover, the Parliament will most probably even have a positive balance by the end of this year.

Even in the future, when matters will return to normal again, we will still be needing the catering personnel. For the moment, as you have already done so during the first lockdown, we can and should think of alternative initiatives how the catering could make themselves of use for society. We should pull the catering personnel through the Christmas recess and through the forced working from distance situation.

The European institutions have been working hard to keep as many people as possible in work, via short-time work schemes through the SURE mechanism and the funds made available under React-EU. Belgium has a short-time work scheme in place ("tijdelijke werkloosheid" / "chômage temporaire") too, for which the catering company could qualify. What kind of message do we give when we asks thousands of companies in Europe to hold on to their employees, and we ourselves simply fire 80% of the catering personnel - without any reason?

We therefore call upon you to take action, are you willing to:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bruzz.be/politiek/europees-parlement-investeert-brussels-patrimonium-europa-meer-dan-regeltjes-2020-12-04>

- Elaborate which decisions the European Parliament made regarding the continuation of the catering services within our premises, when it comes to our tenders?
- Urgently discuss with the catering company Compass if *chômage temporaire* could be applied to the catering personnel working in the European Parliament?
- Take steps ensure that another catering company will take over the labour contracts of the current catering personnel and guarantee their jobs, in case the Compass group is reluctant to continue doing so;
- To consider if the European Parliament could guarantee these workers job security by directly hiring the catering personnel, following the good example of EP car drivers;
- And to guarantee the same working hours and conditions as before the pandemic crisis?

We cannot let the people who have made our coffee, prepared our lunches, and cooked our dinners down. Especially with Christmas on our doorstep, the European Parliament should set the example.

Best regards,

Agnes Jongerius  
 Marc Botenga  
 Alicia Homs Ginel  
 Kathleen van Brempt  
 Cindy Franssen  
 Kira Peter-Hansen  
 Dennis Radtke  
 Nikolaj Villumsen  
 Marc Tarabella  
 Leïla Chaïbi  
 Eric Andrieu  
 Konstantinos Arvanitis  
 Özlem Demirel  
 Sandra Pereira  
 María Eugenia Rodríguez Palop