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Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived

FEAD and diversity: Towards inclusive interventions

Thematic Dossier 5

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1. INTRODUCTION 2
- 2. THE DIVERSE FACES OF POVERTY AND NEEDS ACROSS THE EU..... 3
- 3. INCLUSIVE IDENTIFICATION AND OUTREACH 4
- 4. INCLUSIVE FOOD AND BASIC MATERIAL ASSISTANCE DELIVERY 7
- 5. INCLUSIVE ACCOMPANYING AND SOCIAL INCLUSION MEASURES 8
- 6. BEYOND TARGET GROUPS: MEETING DIVERSE INDIVIDUAL NEEDS 10
- 7. CONCLUSION 12

1. Introduction

There is no 'one-size-fits-all' policy action that can be taken to support all of Europe's most deprived. As such, an inclusive approach to tackling poverty and deprivation necessarily involves addressing the diverse faces of poverty to ensure that **no one is left behind**.

On the path towards eradicating poverty in the EU, national and local stakeholders must thus rise to some daunting challenges. Among other things, accurately identifying those who are in or at risk of poverty, carefully considering local contexts and facilitating access for hard-to-reach groups are frequently encountered challenges in **ensuring that poverty alleviation measures reach everyone in need with appropriate interventions**.

This is further complicated by the fact that Europe's most deprived are far from a homogenous group. By extension, depending on the context, ensuring an inclusive approach may also require meeting diverse needs by tailoring interventions towards specific target groups or individual needs. Such interventions may be particularly gender sensitive, accommodating to people with disabilities, accessible to people living in remote areas, tailored to different ages including children and older people, or inclusive of EU mobile citizens, for example.

The European Commission therefore introduced the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) as a **flexible fund**. Within this framework, Member States are able to determine whether they adopt an operational programme focused on addressing food and material deprivation (OPI) or social inclusion (OPII), while also having the discretion to tailor their interventions towards specific groups.

As a result, Member States have adopted a range of different **targeting approaches**. A number of Member States, such as Cyprus and the Czech Republic, have tailored food aid interventions for children, for example, or for older people, as demonstrated in Croatia, Slovenia and Slovakia. Other Member States have dedicated their FEAD resources to ensuring that the 'hardest-to-reach' groups are still provided with social inclusion support, despite the possibility that they may not be registered with public administrative services. Examples include newly arrived EU citizens (Sweden and Germany), and/or homeless people (Sweden, Denmark and Germany).

Against this backdrop, the purpose of this thematic dossier is to explore how FEAD interventions **strive to be inclusive**, in order to effectively meet the needs of a diverse European population. In Chapter Two, the diverse faces of poverty and their related needs across the EU are explored. Then, ensuing chapters unpack how FEAD interventions strive to be inclusive at each stage of assistance. More specifically, Chapter Three examines inclusive identification and outreach, Chapter Four presents inclusive approaches to delivering food and material assistance, and Chapter Five touches on inclusive design and delivery of accompanying measures. Lastly, a number of key lessons for future interventions are presented.

2. The diverse faces of poverty and needs across the EU

Poverty and social exclusion take many forms across Europe, and affect a wide range of people. Although the extent to which different groups are at risk of poverty differs from one Member State to another, and may evolve over time, certain general observations can be made about how various groups experience poverty differently in the EU.

Women (23.3%) are more likely to experience poverty or social exclusion, for example, compared to men (21.6%) in the EU.¹ Unequal sharing of unpaid care and housework burdens, part-time work and/or work inactivity, gender roles and gender stereotypes compound to produce unequal life chances for women and men in most member states. The **inactivity** of working-age women is much higher than the inactivity of working-age men in the EU (30% of women and 17% of men). Inactivity is a significant poverty risk, with 29% of inactive persons in the EU in poverty. On the other hand, men are more susceptible to **rough sleeping**, while women are at greater risk of **covert homelessness**, relying on informal support or unwanted partnerships in particular to keep themselves accommodated.² As such, women's homelessness is under-reported and frequently linked to experiences of abuse.³

Similarly, **children and youth** up to 17 years of age (24.9%) were the age group at greatest risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2017.⁴ This was the case in 19 of the 28 EU Member States, as well as in Iceland, Switzerland and all three candidate countries. In the EU-28, the largest gaps between the rates for children and the total population were observed in Romania and Hungary, followed by Slovakia. In the Netherlands, Croatia, Finland, Germany, Poland, Slovenia, Denmark, Latvia and Estonia, the rate for children was below the average for the total population.⁵

The overall percentage of children living in a household at risk of poverty or social exclusion ranged from less than 15% in Denmark and the Czech Republic to more than 40% in Bulgaria (41.6%) and Romania (41.7%). The main factors perceived to affect child poverty were:

- the labour market situation of the parents (linked to their level of education);
- the composition of the household in which the children live;
- the effectiveness of government intervention through income support and the provision of services.⁶

Older people - defined here as persons aged 65 years and over - faced a lower risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2017 (18.2%) than the overall EU population (22.4%).⁷ This lower risk was observed in 20 of the 28 EU Member States. However, the risk of poverty and social exclusion faced by older people in 2017 was significantly higher than for the whole population in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Bulgaria. The differences in the relative situation of older people depend on a number of factors including:

- the characteristics of the pension systems for current pensioners, and;
- the age and gender structure of the population of older people, as the gender pay gap tends to translate into a pension gap for women.⁸

¹ Eurostat, 2018.
<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/news/themes-in-the-spotlight/poverty-day-2018>

² FEANTSA, 2017.
https://www.feantsaresearch.org/download/feantsa-ejh-11-1_a1-v045913941269604492255.pdf

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Eurostat, 2019. *People at risk of poverty or social exclusion, statistics explained*.
<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/pdfscache/22124.pdf>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

Older people also face additional barriers when it comes to accessing available social services and assistance. They are at higher risk of **social isolation**, an important factor that indirectly influences their health status.

As such, among the most common issues are the importance of staying socially included and the barrier posed by a lack of financial resources to going out and meeting people. Other common issues that ageing persons experiencing poverty face include:

- problems with sub-standard housing or rising housing costs, especially in urban areas;
- rising costs for health care because of an increase in insurance prices with age;
- a rise of out of pocket payments for medical examinations;
- social isolation in rural settings due to geographical distance from neighbours and communities;
- social isolation in urban settings resulting from the anonymisation of social relationships;
- social isolation due to the inaccessibility of public environments, including **access to private and public services** once an older person starts losing autonomy.⁹

When looking at household composition, **single parents** faced the highest risk of poverty or social exclusion.¹⁰ Moreover, **mobile EU citizens** are at higher risk than EU citizens living in their countries of origin, but at lower risk than **non-EU migrants**. More specifically, 22% of nationals, 28% of mobile EU citizens and 50% of non-EU migrants faced the risk of being in poverty or socially excluded in 2017.¹¹ Additionally, a higher proportion of the EU-28 population living in **rural areas**, compared with urban areas, faces the risk of poverty or social exclusion (25.5% in rural areas compared with 23.6% in urban areas).¹²

There are also more **vulnerable sub-groups** exposed to intersecting risks of poverty, which require particular attention. At EU-28 level, children with a migrant background, for example, tend to be more exposed to poverty than the total child population. Overall, in 2017, children (aged 0-17) with at least one foreign-born parent were at a much greater risk of poverty than children with native-born parents were. The greatest differences between children with foreign and native-born parents were recorded in Spain, Belgium and Sweden. Similarly, monetary poverty for non-EU migrant women's is much higher than for their male counterparts in a number of EU countries, including Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland.¹³ In Belgium, for instance, this implies that one in two non-EU migrant women is at risk of poverty and social exclusion, as opposed to one in seven native-born women.¹⁴

Against this backdrop, it is evident that poverty and social exclusion take many different forms across Europe, which in turn requires tailored support. The ways in which partner organisations across Europe adopt diverse identification and outreach strategies to reach out to different end recipients of FEAD support will be explored in the following chapter.

3. Inclusive identification and outreach

In implementing inclusive interventions, **identifying and reaching** out to end recipients can be a sensitive process. It is imperative that the identification is designed in a way that casts a wide net across the different sub-groups of the intended target group, while **avoiding discrimination and stigmatisation**. Ineffective and narrow identification practices could unintentionally disregard sub-groups of the broader target group

⁹ AGE Platform Europe, 2018. *Poverty Watch*.

https://www.age-platform.eu/sites/default/files/AGE_Poverty_Watch_2018.pdf

¹⁰ *ibid*

¹¹ Eurostat, 2019. *People at risk of poverty or social exclusion, statistics explained*.

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/pdfscache/22124.pdf>

¹² *ibid*.

¹³ EIGE, 2016. *Poverty, gender and intersecting inequalities in the EU: Report*.

<https://eige.europa.eu/publications/poverty-gender-and-intersecting-inequalities-in-the-eu>

¹⁴ Eurostat, 2018. People at risk of poverty or social exclusion by broad group of country of birth (population aged 18 and over).

who could be equally, if not more, vulnerable. At the same time, perceived stigmatisation could increase the distance between end recipients and social workers¹⁵ and decrease the take-up of social benefits.¹⁶ Some of the key challenges and solutions in implementing effective identification and outreach activities, identified in the FEAD Network discussions, are presented in the following table.

Table 1: Challenges and solutions in implementing outreach strategies identified by the FEAD Network

Challenges	Solutions
At initial contact stage	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target group members do not always identify themselves as in need. Risk of discrimination and stigmatisation of FEAD recipients. Lack of awareness about the scheme among potential end recipients. Distrust of support service providers. Difficulty in locating potential end recipients due to geographical barriers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilise the network of social workers amongst the community and approach potential beneficiaries informally. Proactively reach out to potential beneficiaries (e.g. by visiting places they are likely to frequent). Protect the anonymity of the recipients. Consider mobile logistics options for social workers to reach out to remote areas.
During the engagement stage	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linguistic and cultural barriers between the recipients and social workers. Multiple issues preventing end recipients' re-entry into social life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide services in the beneficiaries' mother tongues. Carry out a comprehensive needs assessment in order to determine the kinds of support required.
During the support stage	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessing people in remote areas. Project implementers do not always have the capacity to provide the relevant social support themselves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider mobile logistics options for social workers to reach out to remote areas. Link up with other organisations to set up a comprehensive support network.

Source: Table updated from FEAD thematic dossier 2.¹⁷

As seen in the above table, reaching out to potential end recipients generally occurs in three phases:

1. making contact;
2. engagement to initiate social change processes, and;
3. providing social support.

To that end, outreach organisations can take a number of steps to make sure that outreach activities - ranging from word-of-mouth to more formal activities - are as inclusive as possible.

<https://bit.ly/2lxkN2o>

¹⁵ EX NOTA Consortium, 2005. *Exit from and non-take-up of public services. A comparative analysis: France, Greece, Spain, Germany,*

Netherlands and Hungary. Co-ord. Ph. Warin, EXNOTA, DG Research, p.54.

¹⁶ Kayser, H. and Frick, R, 2000. *Take it or leave it: (Non-) Take-up behaviour of Social Assistance in Germany.* DIW Discussion Paper Nr. 210.

¹⁷ FEAD thematic dossier 2: Supporting a diverse population through FEAD initiatives.

<https://www.esf.se/Global/Bilder/Bildspel/FEAD%20thematic%20dossier%202%20-%20final.pdf>

Making contact is the most sensitive phase in the process, as outreach workers need to find a suitable approach to identifying and contacting end recipients in order for them to open up. Against this backdrop, initiatives identifying and contacting parents regarding the possibility of their children receiving FEAD assistance provide valuable examples of how such sensitive approaches can be designed. In a **Czech project** ran by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to provide **school lunches for disadvantaged children**, for example, children in need of assistance are **identified anonymously through labour offices** that are responsible for the administration of welfare benefits, such as food assistance. Parents who already receive these benefits are subsequently contacted privately and given the opportunity to take part in the programme.

Similarly, in **Cyprus** the Ministry of Education and Culture aims to prevent malnutrition and early school leaving with a **free breakfast programme**, offered on weekdays to the 2,000 eligible children in 118 participating schools from all education levels (pre-primary, primary and secondary). The programme targets children from disadvantaged families who are at risk of malnutrition. Each school has an **Advisory Committee**, composed of school staff, the School Board and members of parents' associations, **that selects eligible pupils**. To ensure discretion and respect the dignity of the pupils and their families, the management of each school discreetly contacts the parents/guardians for an in-person talk, before giving them the option to take part by completing and signing a statement.

Further down the line during the engagement stage, **linguistic and cultural barriers** between the recipients and partner organisations can become a particularly pronounced barrier to inclusive interventions, hindering access for eligible end recipients of migrant and minority backgrounds. Providing outreach and social services in the recipients' native languages hence proves particularly effective in encouraging inclusion, at this stage, as it facilitates communication and helps beneficiaries' cultural backgrounds to be understood. One of the main challenges at this stage is that establishing contact and gaining the trust of end recipients takes a lot of time, especially in the case of newly arrived citizens.

In **Germany**, the outreach method for the **ACASA in Dortmund project: counselling vulnerable EU mobile citizens** involves staff members, who are native speakers of the relevant languages, reaching out to newly arrived mobile citizens within **their daily environments**. As such, in addition to street based outreach, the staff frequent and initiate conversations with newly arrived citizens in their mother tongues in local cafés, libraries and other public places. Along the same lines, the **Danish Compass** project employs **a multilingual outreach team** to help Denmark's homeless 'navigate' their way through social services. The multilingual team actively contacts groups of homeless EU/EEA citizens in city hot spots throughout Copenhagen. The organisation additionally runs their own emergency and drop-in centres.

Social or physical isolation represents another barrier to outreach and the provision of services. As such, alongside their permanent reception centres, Secours Populaire Français (SPF) in France has also established a mobile outreach service, in order to respond to the specific needs of people who cannot reach their reception centres. This includes homeless people, people with disabilities and those living in rural areas. The organisation provides food support, as well as clothes, cleaning products, cultural items (e.g. books and CDs) and home equipment. With mobility in mind, reaching out to a range of beneficiaries in a **geographically challenging environment** is also a priority of the Greek National Institute of Labour and Human Resources. When the system for distributing food and identifying FEAD end recipients in Greece was developed, the geography of the country was taken into account – particularly the large number of remote, mountainous areas and islands, which are difficult to reach. The system was, therefore, designed to reach these regions and the people living there effectively.

Another crucial factor for success across the identification and outreach cycle is the **availability of a strong supporting network** around the organisation initiating the interventions. For instance, establishing networks with other local organisations can enable partner organisations to get a better lay of the land and identify potential end recipients through direct referrals from partners. In this sense, the support of local community networks and organisations can strengthen the organisation's ability to identify and reach hard-to-reach end recipients. In the **rural area of Kuhmo in Finland**, for example, social workers rely on word-

of-mouth through their extended network within the community, identifying and approaching potential beneficiaries in an informal way to offer them food support. This proves very successful, as target group members do not always identify themselves as in need, since the region has historically lived in deprivation, and inhabitants do not always appreciate that their living conditions are abnormal.

4. Inclusive food and basic material assistance delivery

A number of member countries also choose to tailor the delivery of their food and basic material assistance to particular target groups, in order to ensure that those groups that may be particularly at-risk or hard to reach receive adequate elementary assistance. Here, diverse examples can be found throughout Member States, depending on their assessments of poverty and social exclusion in their national contexts. Vulnerable groups receiving tailored food and basic material assistance through FEAD range from children and young people, older people, people born in a different country than the one they reside in to the unemployed, the homeless and the disadvantaged living in rural areas. Some examples of such FEAD interventions across the EU are outlined below.

Table 2: Examples of inclusive FEAD food and basic material assistance interventions across the EU

COUNTRY	TARGET GROUP	INTERVENTION
Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic	Children	In the 'Grow Up Equally project', FEAD funding is used to distribute daily meals to children in Croatia who are in, or at risk of, poverty in primary schools. Similarly, in Cyprus the Ministry of Education and Culture aims to prevent malnutrition and early school leaving with a free breakfast programme in schools. A Czech project ran by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs correspondingly provides school lunches for disadvantaged children.
Slovenia	Older people	Caritas Slovenia help older people who are unable to leave their homes, personally providing them with food aid delivered directly to their doors. The parcels delivered are personalised according to the needs of the recipients concerning diet, hygienic needs, clothing and personal items.
Belgium	Mothers	In Belgium, the 'Mothers for Mothers' organisation, situated in Antwerp, distributes food parcels tailored to disadvantaged mothers' needs. Items include FEAD food products, as well as hygienic products, diapers, maternity clothes, clothing for babies and children, and toys.
France, Finland	Socially and/or physically isolated recipients	In France, The Red Cross deploys 44 'Red Cross on Wheels' mobile units to visit FEAD end recipients in need in rural areas, semi-urban communities, and 'priority neighbourhoods' in urban areas. This mobile support service provides food and material assistance including clothes, hygiene products, baby products, furniture and more. In Finland in 2010, to tackle the issue of isolation and loneliness, the congregation of Konginkangas Church introduced the concept of a communal breakfast for end recipients.

Slovakia	Homeless beneficiaries	Homeless individuals are particularly vulnerable, and experience significant hardship due to the cold, especially in winter. The Greek Catholic Charity in Prešov, Slovakia provides warm, healthy meals to homeless individuals to help them during these colder months.
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5. Inclusive accompanying and social inclusion measures

An important feature of FEAD is the fund's aim to go beyond the provision of material support by promoting the social inclusion of deprived people across all EU Member States. Accordingly, a key requirement under FEAD is the provision of accompanying measures alongside food and basic material distribution.¹⁸

Accompanying measures are defined in the FEAD regulation as activities provided in addition to the distribution of food and/or basic material assistance, with the aim of alleviating social exclusion and/or tackling social emergencies in a more empowering and sustainable way.¹⁹ In practice, this encompasses a wide variety of activities, from advice and information on available social services or other types of public and private assistance, to basic counselling activities and workshops.

In this context, some FEAD projects use accompanying measures to set up workshops and educational sessions for specific target groups, in order to help instil **particular skills, confidence and a sense of agency** in end recipients in similar circumstances. Such peer-activities may help to create a sense of community and relatability in an otherwise unfamiliar environment for end recipients, while allowing the activities to be as tailored to recipients' needs as possible.

In organising accompanying measures, projects operating under OP1 frequently use the distribution of food and basic material assistance as an entry point to identifying end recipients' more long-term needs and offering additional social services to their food aid recipients. As such, FEAD accompanying measures can bring an innovative approach to inclusion by offering **social inclusion initiatives** to deprived persons who are not typically reached by such initiatives **in education, healthcare and housing**, among other sectors.

In Malta, for example, families are surveyed as part of food distribution about their level of education and their interest in **continuing education**. Based on this assessment, families are referred to relevant service providers, such as the National Literacy Agency. There, they can benefit from services such as the provision of books for home use, guidance on how to read with their children, and the provision of information about available national-level support schemes, such as financial assistance for school uniforms.

For the same reason, recognising that education is key to tackling social exclusion – as well as offering young people an opportunity-filled future – the Slovenian project 'We Are Together' provides school and pre-school children from socially disadvantaged families' with access to a range of **curricular and extra-curricular activities**. The project runs throughout the entire year and offers everything from cultural

¹⁸ European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, 2014. *Regulation 223/2014 on the Fund for European Aid to the Most*

Deprived, Official Journal of the European Union, L 72/1.

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32014R0223>

¹⁹ Ibid.

experiences and social excursions to help with homework and mentoring. Along the same lines, in the case of Lithuania, accompanying measures support the provision of early childhood education and recreational activities through outdoor activities like day camps and short-holidays to the Baltic Sea, with the aim of stimulating the children's **personal development**.

In Poland, an Easter workshop has been set up as an accompanying measure targeting **children with complex social and psychological needs**. The measure particularly targets children from families experiencing financial difficulties, given their acute vulnerability to social exclusion. In order to best respond to the children's specific needs, the local Socio-therapeutic Community Centre hosts the activities.

A number of accompanying measures are also designed to be particularly sensitive to the needs of marginalised women. The Lithuanian 'Women's Health Improvement' project, for example, has enabled 50 disadvantaged mothers from the Pakruojis district to attend a 4-class educational programme. The programme focuses on health and hygiene issues through lectures. It also facilitates access to health services for the women, including setting up appointments with gynaecologists. Such appointments include the option to receive birth control, such as the insertion of an intrauterine device.

In **Greece**, accompanying measures have also focused on **women's empowerment** through workshops and group meetings. These are intended to boost women's self-confidence and feelings of female solidarity, for instance, by advising participants on how to assist another woman if she is a victim of **domestic violence**. Through individual meetings, the psychologist and the social workers further counsel the women on issues such as personal relationships with the members of their families and employment issues.

CASESTUDY: A chance at lifelong learning via workshops

Slovenia: The Srečevalnica project

WHY?

The project 'Srečevalnica' was developed in order to offer additional support to individuals who come to the **Regional Red Cross Association of Ljubljana** for food and material assistance. It was identified that there was a significant number of **long-term, unemployed women and single mothers** among those aid recipients. With this in mind, the Red Cross sought to offer activities that would be of particular interest to this group.

WHAT?

In 2016, around **200 workshops** were carried out, covering topics such as recycling, reusing materials, producing natural household cleaning products and cosmetics, and relaxation techniques. The regular weekly activities provided an opportunity for lifelong learning and the expansion and strengthening of the social networks of the participants. The number of participants per workshop ranged from 4-16, as the organisation believed it was important to have an intimate setting. In order to allow single mothers to participate, **a parallel programme for children** within the same locale was developed.

PARTICIPANT AGENCY

Workshop participants were encouraged to take **an active role** in defining future workshops. At one location, for example, participants indicated that they were interested in learning how to grow their own vegetables, so the Red Cross hired a plot of land and organised sessions. Where possible, the Red Cross also sought to involve participants in running the workshops, as such engagement was considered a good first step to confidence and agency in other areas of their lives. End recipients were therefore encouraged to become volunteers and mentors.

Source: FEAD case study catalogue, 2017.²⁰

In addition, being mindful of the limited abilities of potential FEAD recipients is an important element of promoting inclusion in FEAD. In Poland, this element of inclusion is reflected through accompanying measures to facilitate the transition into employment of **people with disabilities**. Based on the observation that people with disabilities quite often do not receive training tailored to their needs, and hence are at higher risk of long-term unemployment, this individualised training programme is delivered in the form of a four or five day per week programme. Following the training, participants enrol in a three month, paid work placement. Completion of the training is rewarded with a sum of PLN 1024.80, while the placement includes a PLN 1280.66 gross monthly payment. The duration and frequency of both depend on individual needs assessments and take into account the type of disability of each end recipient.

It also deserves mentioning that all four Member States that have adopted OP II have focused on fostering the reintegration and social inclusion of particular groups of deprived individuals in their domestic realm. Sweden, for example, has opted to focus on the social inclusion of EU mobile citizens. To counteract the recent upsurge of anti-gypsyism, the project 'Po Drom' deploys mobile teams to facilitate dialogue and dismantle prejudice towards **Roma people** in the cities of Gothenburg, Malmö and Jönköping. Similarly, a team of 13 Amaro Foro e.V. members, of Roma and non-Roma origin, provide outreach work and counselling in Romanes, Bulgarian and Rumanian languages to particularly disadvantaged newly arrived Union citizens in Germany. End recipients are also accompanied to meetings with local services and authorities.

Conversely, in Denmark the 'Udenfor' project helps the homeless access regular social services. Likewise, in Germany, the 'Frostschutzengel Plus' project is **building bridges between homeless people and service providers** in Berlin. On the other hand, the Netherlands have opted to focus their resources on supporting elderly people with low disposable incomes.

6. Beyond target groups: meeting diverse individual needs

During the first and second FEAD Network Meetings, sessions were organised to allow FEAD stakeholders to actively discuss the main challenges, solutions and success factors in implementing accompanying measures.²¹ Throughout the discussion, participants expressed concerns regarding 'the size and heterogeneity of the target groups', which made it difficult to offer measures suitable for the entire target group of a specific FEAD project.²²

In response to this challenge, a number of partner organisations offer varying levels of individualised support to their FEAD end recipients. In order to provide such tailored support, a crucial factor for success is the **availability of a strong supporting network** around the organisation initiating the social process. This is because, once a needs assessment has been carried out, end recipients often need to be directed towards specific external support services (in entering the job market, receiving psychological support, accessing free medical assistance, and finding beds in homeless shelters and/or temporary housing, for example). In order to effectively refer recipients to many of these services, partner organisations need to have strong partnerships with other local organisations in place. This, in turn, allows the organisation to

²⁰ FEAD case study catalogue, 2017.

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=9038&furtherNews=yes>

²¹ *1st and 2nd FEAD Network Meeting: Delivering accompanying and social inclusion measures*, 2016.

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1207&newsId=2660&furtherNews=yes&furtherNews=yes>

²² European Commission, 2017. Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived: FEAD's contribution to sustainable social inclusion, Thematic

Dossier 1. <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=es&catId=89&newsId=2880&furtherNews=yes>

focus their resources on specific elements of the support process, such as the distribution of food, the provision of healthcare services or the allocation of housing support. An example of this can be found in the following case study.

CASE STUDY: Personalised Support to Disadvantaged Families

Malta: The LEAP project

WHY?

In 2013, nearly a quarter of the population of Malta (equivalent to 99,020 people) were at risk of poverty or social exclusion, and 29,290 households were receiving non-contributory social security benefits. As a result, the national EU2020 target aimed to lift approximately 6,560 people out of poverty and social exclusion by 2020. While FEAD support mainly tackles food deprivation across Malta, the LEAP project acknowledges that in order to help the most deprived out of poverty, tailored social assistance must accompany food distribution.

WHAT?

The LEAP project offers personalised support to families, and uses its **elaborate network to direct them to the relevant social service providers** (housing authorities, social security services, labour market intermediaries, education pathways, childcare facilities and after school programmes, for example). With the consent of the families, staff of the LEAP project spend approximately an hour with them carrying out home visits, which are then used to put together a family profile. A SWOT analysis of the family is conducted to help see which channels are to be followed to effectively help them out of poverty. Some individuals may need support in finding employment, for instance, while others require healthcare services or support in finding suitable housing. A SWOT analysis generally takes approximately 30 minutes, depending on the complexity of the family.

How?

A **social mentor** is assigned to each family in order to build a relationship with its members. The joint work carried out by the social mentor (supported by a multidisciplinary team) and the family members eventually leads to the identification of present and emerging needs. Following this process, an agreed care plan is created, to address the needs of the family through a **holistic approach**.

FEAD case study catalogue, 2016.²³

Similar to the situation in Malta, there are a high number of people at risk of social marginalisation in Verona, Italy. These groups are hard to reach and do not benefit from traditional private or public measures to fight poverty, because they **lack information about the services available, or fear the social stigma** that comes with being labelled as poor. However, if not quickly and adequately addressed, poverty and marginalisation risk becoming chronic. This is what the Caritas Diocese of Verona FEAD project tries to prevent, by combining material support with measures that have a longer-term focus and engage beneficiaries in the design of their own pathway out of poverty.

The families that benefit from the Caritas Verona food assistance hence sign an agreement through which they commit to co-thinking their pathway out of poverty, together with project workers. This agreement specifies goals, opportunities and duties, and requires them to take part in training sessions, actively look for a job and participate in community events for a minimum of six months up to a year. During this period, social workers and volunteers closely assist the beneficiaries in defining what kind of activities they need

²³ FEAD case study catalogue, 2016.

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7947>

to attend to develop the desired skills. These activities include household planning and budgeting, employment related rights and duties, family law, CV checks, sewing and cooking classes.

Applying a different approach, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family in Slovakia distributes food and toiletry packages to **older people** living in villages directly to their homes, thus sparing them the need to travel in order to acquire these products. FEAD aid in Slovakia is directly delivered in 2,554 municipalities (out of 2,933 Slovakian municipalities), which are spread across 79 districts. This distribution intervention allows the Ministry to gain the trust of older individuals who are at risk of poverty, and provide them with further support, ranging from individual counselling about life choices, healthy eating and hygienic habits, to information on how to store and cook the FEAD products provided and how to minimise food waste.

7. Conclusion

As explored in this thematic dossier, poverty is both varied and multi-dimensional, and affects many social groups across Europe differently. As a result, adopting tailored approaches is seen as one of the most efficient ways to support individuals' pathways out of poverty.

In this context, many Member States have opted for their FEAD funds to be channelled to support selected target groups, ensuring their inclusion in broader poverty alleviation efforts. Examples of such specific groups include homeless people, EU mobile citizens, ethnic minorities such as Roma people, and children or older people. In particular, opting for such an approach can help to ensure that the 'hardest-to-reach' are still supported, despite not being registered with public administrative services, being located in geographically challenging environments or possessing low levels of trust in public institutions.

Nonetheless, providing tailored efforts in order to be inclusive also has its challenges. Firstly, as pointed out by FEAD Network members, if partner organisations single out particularly vulnerable groups in an attempt to tailor support specifically to their needs, this may be perceived as discriminatory and create a feeling of stigmatisation. It is hence crucial to adopt sensitive and contextually appropriate outreach strategies, which respect end recipients' dignity in order to establish trust. Secondly, individualised routes out of poverty are still crucial, as beneficiaries' needs rarely fit neatly within a prefixed bundle of support services tailored to a particular target group. For this reason, it is crucial to create strong synergies between social service providers operating in the field. This allows volunteers and social workers (operating both under OP I and OP II) to refer individuals to organisations which specialise in particular support services, in order to best meet individuals' personal needs.

In closing, how FEAD strives to meet the needs of its diverse end recipients will remain an important topic, especially as FEAD celebrates its five year anniversary this year. Accordingly, the FEAD network plans to further explore the lessons that can be drawn from its five years of implementation in the months ahead.

