



FEAD Network

Fund for European Aid

to the Most Deprived

Meeting report

**FIRST FEAD NETWORK MEETING:
Sustainable integration:
Challenges, solutions and good
practices from the accompanying
measures under OP I**

European Conference

26 September 2016

Pentahotel, Chaussée de Charleroi
38, 1060, Brussels

Social Europe

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The first FEAD Network Meeting

On 26 September 2016, the European Commission hosted the first Network meeting in which the EU-wide network of actors involved in the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) came together to discuss issues related to the accompanying measures. The meeting, entitled **Sustainable integration: Challenges, solutions and good practices from the accompanying measures under OP I**, was the first Network Meeting following the Launch conference earlier in June.

The conference was organised by Ecorys on behalf of the European Commission. With an attendance rate of 100%, 90 delegates from across the EU attended the event held at the Pentahotel in Brussels, including representatives from nearly all Member States. The participants represented a range of stakeholders, including: Managing authorities (MAs); partner organisations; other local, regional and national actors; European Commission representatives; EU level partner organisations; the wider EU community, as well as academic and research organisations.

Sessions 1-2 – Welcome

The plenary sessions throughout the conference were moderated by **Jan Aulehle, Director of Communications of Ecorys' Programme Management and Communications Unit**. He opened the meeting with an introduction of the different components of the agenda.

Participants were subsequently welcomed by **Loris Di Pietrantonio, Head of the Commission's unit "ESF & FEAD: Policy and Legislation" at DG Employment**, who addressed the importance of building and engaging the ever-growing FEAD Network. He stated that in order to successfully tackle the prevailing issue of poverty and deprivation in Europe it is important that insights from the ground are shared both among practitioners and policymakers on every level. It is for this reason that the Commission seeks to organise regular face-to-face meetings to discuss concrete issues. The topic of accompanying measures is particularly relevant, as a significant difference between FEAD and its predecessor the MDP, is the fact that FEAD recognises that deprivation is multifaceted and cannot be addressed through food or material aid alone. As a result, Member States are required to include accompanying measures to sustainably help Europe's most deprived become independent and self-sufficient.



Loris Di Pietrantonio

Session 3 – The FEAD Network: Objectives, key features and thematic focus'

An overview of the main developments in the FEAD Network was given by **Jan Aulehle, Director of Communications, Ecorys**. He reiterated the main objectives of the Network as well as the various strategies employed in order to make the Network effective and sustainable. Recalling the manner in which the original Network was established, particularly the creation of a database of contacts, the survey of FEAD stakeholders and several national consultations, it was noted that the current Network consists of 827 stakeholders (and is constantly growing).

Network meetings

Following a successful two-day Network launch conference in June 2016, participants were asked to contribute suggestions for shaping the three subsequent Network meetings for 2016. Under the overarching theme of 'sustainable integration' the three Network meetings cover the following thematic areas: accompanying measures under OP I (26 September), social inclusion measures under OP II (18 October) and the potential synergy between FEAD and ESF (7 November). From 2017 onwards there will be five annual Network meetings in which participants will have the opportunity to discuss operational and thematic issues, identify challenges, share good practices and network with other FEAD stakeholders. For those Network members unable to attend a particular event, live chats on Yammer will be organised through which they can ask questions to the guest speakers and discuss issues related to the thematic area of the respective Network meeting.

Case study and good practice catalogue

To complement the various face-to-face events, case studies and good practices of FEAD implementation are being gathered to create a bank of examples of FEAD initiatives. Each year a catalogue of 28 case studies will be published and disseminated across the Network. The examples of the practices will be wide-ranging and can include different fields, such as for instance the selection procedure of food products, partnerships between organisations, volunteer engagement, accompanying measures, outreach activities, food waste, gender issues and more.

The online FEAD Network platform

The latest developments with regard to the online FEAD Network were presented by **Karen Hayer, Digital Communications Manager, Ecorys**. In creating an online platform, the Commission aims to engage the FEAD Network as well as reaching out to those not yet involved through online communication tools. The online tools consist of several pages (including country profiles) on the Europa website, a quarterly newsletter, Facebook and Twitter pages as well a Yammer network. These channels allow stakeholders to exchange experiences, learn from the successes and challenges of other stakeholders, as well as maintain the relationships and connections made at face-to-face events. To date, 175 FEAD stakeholders have become members of the Yammer group. A 'live chat' will furthermore be hosted on the platform following each Network Meeting where speakers from the event will be on hand to answer questions and continue the conversation on the topics highlighted in the Network Meeting.

Session 4 – Case study presentation and debate: Referral to social services

The first case study presentation of the meeting highlighted the way in which FEAD end recipients are referred to social services in Belgium. **Alexandre Lesiw, Director General of**

the Federal Public Service for Social Integration, Anti-poverty Policy and Urban Policy (FPS SI), the Belgian Managing Authority, started by presenting the structure of FEAD in the Belgian context and highlighted two good practices in offering accompanying measures in addition to FEAD food aid. The perspective of a FEAD implementing partner was subsequently offered by **Bart Cassauwers, a representative from the Belgian social welfare centre (PSWC), OCMW Antwerp**, who explained how his organisation seeks to engage and activate FEAD end recipients through a range of initiatives.

Overview of how FEAD works in Belgium with regard to the referral of end recipients to appropriate social services – Alexandre Lesiw

Under OP I, Belgium has opted to dedicate its budget of €88,216,046.30 (2014-2020) predominantly to the provision of food aid (and to a lesser extent to the provision of material aid for children living in poverty). Accompanying measures are not covered by the budget of the programme. The target group is all individuals living under the poverty threshold (including people without valid documentation and recent migrants). Notably, in Belgium a decentralised approach to FEAD implementation is employed, which entails close collaboration between the Belgian Managing Authority, public social welfare centres (OCMW/CPAS), food banks and other partner organisations. There is a close network of the nine food banks, 358 public social welfare centres participating in FEAD activities (of the total 589 PSWCs in Belgium) and 420 NGOs involved in the implementation of FEAD.

Once a year the Managing Authority purchases the food via a public procurement procedure. The list of products is predetermined with inputs from food banks, the PSWCs and nutritional experts. The food is subsequently distributed in intervals to the food banks and the PSWCs. Food banks distribute the food packages to other partner organisations (as they never interact with end recipients) and the PSWCs are responsible for handing out food packages at their social centres. It should be noted that all partner organisations distributing FEAD food aid are required to formally sign an agreement with the PSWC of their area. Among other things, this partnership agreement states that in addition to food aid, partner organisations are required to refer their end recipients to the local PSWC (who in turn can support them through public social welfare schemes).

The presentation was closed with two good practice examples of cases that implement accompanying measures particularly effectively: *Horizons Nouveaux*¹ and *SOREAL*.

Food distribution and accompanying measures at the OCMW Antwerp – Bart Cassauwers

OCMW Antwerp is the largest public social welfare centre of Belgium. It is estimated that in this multicultural city, approximately one in four children grow up in an underprivileged family. There are currently 29 organisations that distribute FEAD products alongside the 23 PSWC social centres. Following a brief description of the organisation OCMW Antwerp, a good practice on the involvement of FEAD end recipients in the logistical centre PAX was presented. Under the management of OCMW employees, FEAD end recipients receive work experience (and a minimum wage) by working at the PAX distribution centre. They regularly rotate jobs in order to acquire a range of skills. As a result, end recipients learn, for instance, how to be an order picker, operate a forklift, how to professionally paint, become a handyman, professionally clean or how to restore donated furniture. As a result, alongside

¹ <http://horizons-nouveaux.be/hn/>

regular FEAD food aid, end recipients are able to gain the relevant work experience to potentially re-enter the labour market.

This is a good example of pulling together funding from different sources in order to achieve better results.



Session 5 – Overview of accompanying measures in OP I

In order to help Europe's most deprived take their first steps out of poverty, it is recognised that more has to be done than providing only food or material assistance. As a result, Member States have to accompany the provision of food and basic material assistance with measures to promote the social inclusion of the end recipients. In her presentation, **Alessandra Cancedda, Senior Consultant Social Affairs, Ecorys**, described the various ways in which accompanying measures can take shape, including: the provision of information and referring of beneficiaries to relevant social services; training and counselling services to improve financial literacy and assist in debt mediation; information about maintaining a healthy and balanced diet; supporting access to health and education services; and offering psychological support and empowerment.

Upon review of the annual implementation reports 2014-2015, it became apparent that there has been an increase in the offer of accompanying measures alongside food or material aid across Member States. The most frequent type of accompanying measure offered by Member States are the provision of information on (and referral to) existing services or the provision of social counselling services. At present, there is still limited support in terms of offering housing advice or literacy/language programmes.

Session 6 – Case study presentation and debate: Counselling services

Presenting the way in which counselling services are offered alongside regular FEAD food aid were **Jožica Ličen and Andreja Urh, volunteers, Caritas Slovenia**. They stated that they have been distributing food since 2006, and since that time have been offering simultaneous accompanying measures. In their presentation they described the process through which they direct FEAD food recipients to other services. Firstly, Caritas volunteers engage with end recipients and offer a listening ear. This is one of the more difficult parts of the process as end recipients are generally hesitant to open up and share their stories. The conversations gradually increase in length until the volunteers are able to make an individual assessment of the end recipient. The volunteers subsequently direct the end recipients to professionals within the Caritas network.

Examples of counselling services include: help from social workers at Mother's homes and safe houses; professional advice on childrearing; home visits for the elderly and the sick and professional help for drug and alcohol addicts. They can also receive legal counselling from volunteer lawyers. Notably, Caritas also takes specific steps towards end recipients that seem comfortable being reliant on social welfare aid, to help them become independent and self-sufficient. To achieve this goal they organise workshops and lectures on a range of topics. An example of a recent workshop is: *"Do we really need everything that the advertisements encourage us to buy?"*

The second case study was presented by **Auksė Dukšienė, FEAD programme manager, Ministry of Social Security and Labour** (the FEAD Managing Authority in Lithuania). She described the four main challenges in offering accompanying measures alongside FEAD food distribution. The first challenge highlighted was the specificity of the target groups. She stated that individuals dependent on psychotropic substances (e.g. alcohol, drugs, etc.), the long-term unemployed, the socially excluded, elderly, minority groups, at-risk families, individuals with (temporary) financial difficulties all need different kinds of support and it is difficult to offer relevant services to all of them. The second challenge is thus to offer a wide

range of support measures in order to address the specific issues of individuals falling under the diverse target groups. Thirdly, covering the expenses of the measures is an issue. Currently, NGOs and municipalities offer the services free of charge; however, the plan is to use the 5% flat rate to cover expenses between 2018 and 2020. Lastly, the issue of ensuring synergies between FEAD and ESF initiatives was discussed and the aspiration to involve FEAD end recipients in ESF programmes in future.

Session 7 – Case study presentation and debate: The role of volunteers

For many implementing organisations, volunteers are crucial in redirecting FEAD end recipients to accompanying services. The role of volunteers within the Red Cross was discussed by three Red Cross representatives from different countries.

After briefly describing the overall structure of the Red Cross as an organisation, **Matti Hetemäki, Red Cross Finland**, described the importance of volunteers and emphasised the importance of recruiting and engaging volunteers. He stated that volunteers are generally motivated to get involved by the fact that they want to be an active citizen who is able to help others. Another major motivational factor is the fact that volunteering offers new social contacts. In order to retain volunteers it is important to offer these two opportunities. Therefore volunteers should not only be given menial tasks with little responsibility, as they may feel disengaged and underappreciated. There should also be sufficient room for socialising among the volunteers to ensure that volunteers keep returning to support on other projects.

As the Red Cross in Spain has an extensive network of over registered 200,000 volunteers, it is important to readily be able to engage volunteers with the relevant expertise for both long and short-term projects. **Jose Javier Sánchez Espinosa, Red Cross Spain**, described a “self-management coordination tool,” a mobile and web app, that they use to coordinate their volunteers both prospective volunteering opportunities. When there is a call for volunteers, individuals receive a notification and are able to signal their availability. The appointment is subsequently directly inserted into their calendar. Volunteers are also able to find information and training invitations through the app. The app has been in use for approximately one year and already 60% of their currently active volunteers are using it, significantly improving communication between the organisation and its volunteers.

Lastly, in order to effectively offer accompanying measures, it is important that the volunteers are sufficiently trained. **Silvia Piscitelli, Red Cross Italy**, described the various training opportunities offered to volunteers in Italy. At their induction, all of the 160,000 volunteers received 18 hours of training to become a Red Cross volunteer. There are seven different modules, depending on the type of work that the volunteer intends to carry out. “Social operators” subsequently receive 26 hours of theoretical training and 20 hours of practical training with the ultimate goal of providing the volunteer with the adequate tools to establish a relationship with a vulnerable person and support them towards autonomy. The training can be amended depending on the target group that the volunteer will be working with (e.g. addicts or homeless people). Ultimately, it is felt that volunteers not only offer better services when they are fully trained but there is also more volunteer retention as individuals are more actively involved and engaged in the volunteering activities.

Session 8 – Participatory session

Participatory “world café” sessions were organised to allow participants to actively discuss the main challenges, solutions and success factors in implementing accompanying measures.

The main **challenges** highlighted were:

- Lack of trained volunteers
- Size and heterogeneity of the target group
- Lack of cooperation with NGOs offering similar services
- Timing of the accompanying measures
- Lack of clarity regarding the definition of “accompanying measures”
- Addressing the multiplicity of issues experienced by end recipients
- Avoiding the stigmatisation of end recipients

The key **solutions** defined during the world café were:

- Not only looking to the FEAD 5% flat rate for the financing of accompanying measures
- Simplify the monitoring and evaluation process and in doing so decreasing the potential additional workload for practitioners
- Better cooperation with NGOs already offering additional services (potentially create a network of social service providers)
- Raise awareness regarding the available services (through an information point or helpdesk)
- Be flexible in terms of delivery (potentially offering more home visits and deliveries)
- Employ a “personal approach” to providing accompanying measures as every end recipient has different needs
- Actively involving end recipients in determining their needs with regard to accompanying measures
- Better links to relevant ESF projects.

The **concrete steps** that participants stated they would like to take are:

- Carry out a mapping exercise of social service providers
- Discuss the findings and key issues on the FEAD Yammer page
- Disseminate the knowledge gained from the Network Meeting with relevant partners and discuss the findings with the national Managing Authority
- Collect and disseminate ESF measures to see which initiatives can complement FEAD activities
- Potentially organise visits to other Member States to discuss best practices
- Actively train and support volunteers to encourage their involvement in offering accompanying measures.

Session 9 – Closing plenary session

Following a brief recollection of the main findings from the two world café sessions, the speakers were invited to the stage to present their final observations. The speakers

reemphasised the importance of engaged volunteers when offering accompanying services, as it is it frequently the volunteers who are directly interacting with the FEAD end recipients. The volunteers do, however, need to be prepared for their tasks as they are required to interact with a particularly challenging target group. It was additionally noted that the voices of the end recipients needed to be heard more frequently, in order to create initiatives that specifically address their needs.

Keep in touch! – Join the FEAD Network

The FEAD Network is an animated community of practice with lively exchange of experience and shared learning.

It allows the sharing of tools, ideas and resources that can help with delivering the Fund successfully.

The Network discusses all aspects of planning, managing and delivering activities across Europe. Conversations within the FEAD Network can cover any theme related to the role of the FEAD in the fight against poverty such as the food aid, child poverty, issues relating to migration, access to social services or assistance for older people.

By joining the Network, you'll be able to interact with people who do similar work as you in different European countries – wherever you are.

To join the online network and stay up to date with news, sign up at:
<http://uk.ecorys.com/feadnetwork>

Join the FEAD Network on Yammer:
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We look forward to hearing from you!

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