



FEAD Network

Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived

Meeting report

**FOURTH FEAD NETWORK
MEETING: Good Practices in the
Selection of Food Products**

22 February 2017

Hotel Bloom, Brussels



Social Europe

Acknowledgements

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The fourth FEAD Network Meeting

On 22 February 2017, the European Commission hosted the fourth 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 good practices in the selection of food products. The meeting was organised by Ecorys on behalf of the European Commission. 90 delegates from across the European Union attended the event held at the Hotel Bloom in Brussels, representing a range of stakeholders, including: Managing Authorities (MAs); partner organisations; other local, regional and national actors; European Commission representatives; EU-level partner organisations and the wider EU community.

Session 1 – Introduction

The meeting was opened by Boris Kandziora, Policy Officer at the **European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL)**, who briefly introduced the meeting.

The word was then given to **Vicki Donlevy, Technical Director at Ecorys**, who moderated the plenary sessions throughout the meeting. Vicki presented the different elements of the agenda and introduced two new interactive elements which were launched for the meeting: Yammer live updates and the Yammer feedback wall. Vicki then introduced the first speaker of the day.

Session 2 – EU policies on nutrition

Session 2 aimed at providing participants with an overview of EU policies on nutrition, as well as sharing the findings of a recent study carried out by the European Joint Research Centre (JRC).

Maria-Mihaela Armanu, Policy Officer at the European Commission, Directorate General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE), presented the current efforts made at EU level to overcome health inequalities and obesity. She presented the [European Union Strategy on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity-related Health Issues](#) launched in 2007 as well as the activities carried out by the [High Level Group on nutrition policy](#), which was established under the framework of the Strategy and in the context of the [EU platform on Diet, Physical Activity and Health](#). In particular, she stressed the importance of the multi-stakeholder action-oriented approach taken in the context of the strategy, which seeks to create partnerships between the European Commission, Member States and civil society. In conclusion to her presentation, Maria presented the additional actions taken at EU level in the field of nutrition, such as the [Health Programme](#), [Horizon 2020](#), the [School Fruit, Vegetables Scheme](#) and [School Milk Scheme](#) (soon to be merged in one scheme), in addition to the activities carried out by the Joint Research Centre, which supports the EU platform and the High Level Group with relevant research and updates on scientific developments.





Maria's intervention was followed by a presentation of the technical report on [Public Procurement of Food for Health](#) by **Stefan Storcksdieck, Scientific Project Officer in the Directorate for Health, Consumers and Reference Materials of the DG-Joint Research Centre (JCR), European Commission**. The report is one of the main deliverables of the study launched under the Maltese EU Presidency, with the aim to make the case for considering health aspects in food-related public procurement. The report offers best practices and operational guidance for translating existing healthy school food standards into appropriate procurement specifications. For this, it provides tools to assist with public procurement of food in schools, such as specification sheets for foods and nutrients.

Session 3 – FEAD mid-term evaluation and public consultation

Costanza Pagnini of Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini provided a short presentation of the ongoing Mid-Term Evaluation of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived. While the findings of the evaluation are not available at the moment, she briefly presented the aim, data sources, criteria and possible use of the evaluation. Costanza reminded the participants that the European Commission launched an [Open Public Consultation](#) on 6 February 2017 in the context of the evaluation. She invited them to take part in the consultation, which will run until 5 May 2017. She also presented the other activities which will involve stakeholders throughout the evaluation.

Session 4 – Network update

An overview of the latest developments in the [FEAD Network](#) was given by **Jan Aulehle, Director of Communications of Ecorys' Programme Management and Communications Unit**. Jan reminded the delegates of the main objectives of the network as well as the various strategies employed in order to make the network effective and sustainable. He subsequently presented the results of the survey of FEAD Network stakeholders and provided an overview of future FEAD activities.

Findings of the survey

The FEAD Network survey was conducted in January 2017 in order to collect stakeholders' feedback on the network so far and expectations for the future. The survey was sent to over 800 contacts from the FEAD Network database and 149 responses were received from respondents across the European Union, mostly from national-level organisations involved in FEAD activities. With regard to the feedback on past activities, Jan provided examples of suggestions provided by respondents relating to Yammer content, such as the enhancement of stakeholder involvement in the usage of the platform and the establishment of a structure based on theme or target group. The emphasis of the survey was put on determining what FEAD Network members wish to learn in 2017. Future expectations include exploring thematic areas such as social innovation, child poverty and migration, programming aspects such as synergies between FEAD and ESF, and operational aspects such as the whole-person approach. Respondents are eagerly awaiting the preparation of the case study catalogue on project experiences, but would also like to have access to thematic reports integrating research and policy developments, and a catalogue of individual stories of volunteers and partner organisations. Finally, respondents would like network meetings to take place in Member States and to include visits to FEAD projects.

Future activities: Network meetings

In line with what was planned in 2016, a total of five network meetings will be held in 2017 to give participants the opportunity to discuss operational and thematic issues, identify challenges, share good practices and network with other FEAD stakeholders. The four remaining meetings will take place as follows:

- **5th Meeting:** 6-7 April in Berlin on 'identifying and reaching out to beneficiaries'. This meeting will include visits to projects in the area of Berlin;
- **6th Meeting:** early/mid June 2017, in Brussels;
- **7th Meeting:** end of September/early October 2017 (location tbc);
- **8th Meeting:** early November 2017 (location tbc).

The locations of the meetings which will take place in the second half of the year are yet to be established. On a general note, it was pointed out that for those network members unable to attend a particular event, live updates and chats on Yammer will be organised.



Future Activities: 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. As for 2016, a catalogue of 28 case studies will be published online and disseminated. The case studies will present experiences from the implementation of the FEAD, will be wide-ranging and may include different fields. Delegates were encouraged to submit proposals.

The online FEAD Network community

Following Jan's update, **Karen Hayer, Digital Communications Manager at Ecorys**, provided an overview of the current status and future development of the FEAD Network online community, presenting ways to make the most of the available instruments. The aim of the community is to engage network members in discussing FEAD online and to reach out to those who are not yet involved in the network, by using online communication tools. Karen presented the FEAD network pages available online and updated participants on the [Yammer network](#). As of today the Yammer network has 267 members, one main group and 6 sub-groups for discussion. She also presented new features which will be introduced in this respect; including more frequent newsletters, Yammer tutorial videos, live updates and discussions, webinars and continuation of social media posts. Participants were invited to drop by the Yammer Hot Desk to ask questions and to use the Yammer Wall to share ideas and provide feedback and tips.

Session 5 – Discussion on selection of food products – general considerations

Session 5 aimed at setting the scene and providing general considerations with regard to the topic of the meeting.

Angela Frigo, responsible for EU and International Relations at Banco Alimentare Onlus, gave an overview of the experiences of the European Federation of Food Banks (FEBA) with regard to the selection of FEAD food products. The presentation provided an insight into the different practices, challenges and needs of food banks across Europe with regard to FEAD products. A variety of criteria are applied to the selection of food products in different countries, mainly due to the flexibility of the FEAD Regulation in this respect. The list of food products to be distributed through FEAD is normally established through an extensive consultation of partner organisations on behalf of the Managing Authorities, with examples of very positive collaboration in some countries (e.g. Italy and Poland) and more difficulties in other Member States (e.g. Portugal). Similarly, the number of products included in these lists varies significantly (from 12 in Italy to 33 in France) and different approaches apply to the type of food and type of package. Some countries, for example, only include products which need to be cooked, while others distribute ready meals as well. Similarly, only some Member States deliver fresh produce and/or take into consideration specific dietary requirements (e.g. gluten-free, halal) or the needs of specific target groups (e.g. children, elderly people).



Angela then focused on the added value of FEAD products for food banks. In 2015, these accounted for 31% of the food volume handled. These products contribute, at least partially, to responding to some of the most basic food needs of the most deprived, providing them with immediate relief and helping make a step towards reintegration in society. They

represent a minimum and essential quantity of food support, contribute to the nutritional balance of the most vulnerable, satisfy the needs of different meals and are normally user-friendly traditional products, which complement the food aid redistributed by food banks through other channels. The further success of FEAD, however, will depend on its ability to address some of the current challenges faced by the actors involved in it. Angela provided a series of recommendations in this regard.

Mathilde Arnal, FEAD Programme Officer on behalf of the Managing Authority, the Directorate General for Social Cohesion of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, France, presented the French study on FEAD food products, which was launched by the Ministry of Social Affairs to inform the Ministry's choices with regard to the precise criteria to be used in the selection of food products. To do so, the study is set to compare European practices in the field and to identify possible space for improvement to the mechanisms currently used in France, also by analysing the different needs of partner organisations in the country. Mathilde provided an overview of the current French mechanism and of the approach used throughout the study, for which findings are not yet available as the assignment is ongoing.

Following Mathilde's presentation, the panel of experts answered questions from the audience. **Angèle Archimbaud, Head of the Department for Social Inclusion and Tackling Poverty at the Directorate General for Social Cohesion of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, France** also took part in this session.



Session 6 and 7 – Two parallel workshops

Two workshop rounds were held in parallel to explore the key challenges, lessons and interesting approaches in the selection and utilisation of food products in FEAD food parcels. Each workshop contained two case study presentations with subsequent sub-group discussions at tables of around eight people.

Workshop 1: Nutrition – ensuring a healthy diet through a balanced range of food products

The workshop was introduced by the lead facilitator, **Stefan Storcksdieck, DG Joint Research Centre (JRC)**, with a brief description of the way in which the workshop would take shape. The workshop offered participants the opportunity to reflect on the common challenges faced when selecting food products for FEAD-funded food parcels with a balanced nutritional value as well as reflecting on the potential solutions to overcome these issues.

The first case study was presented by **Alexandre Lesiw** and subsequently his colleague **Nele Bossuyt** of the **Federal Public Service (FPS) for Social Integration, Anti-poverty and Social Economy in Belgium**. They described the strategy of the Belgian Managing Authority regarding their food product selection. They indicated that they had experienced some issues in public procurement as particular products offered in FEAD food parcels were not popular with the end recipients. Certain products were unattractively packaged (with risks for stigmatisation) while other products were disliked for their taste. The Managing Authority sought to create a more balanced food parcel, both in terms of nutrition and the likelihood that the end recipients would enjoy the foods provided. They consulted food experts at their annual stakeholder consultation as well as doing market research prior to public procurement. They additionally wanted to link FEAD with sustainable development policies but were faced with the challenge that organic foods are more costly than non-organic foods. It was also noted that certain prepared dishes, while healthy, were not deemed particularly tasty or visually appealing. As a result, they will organise taste tests in 2017 to ensure that the prepared dishes are not only of high nutritional value but also flavoursome.

The second case study was presented by **Pieter Boerefijn** of the **Estonian Federation of Food Banks**, who offered an Estonian perspective on the selection of food for FEAD food parcels. He recalled that the first food banks were set up in Estonia seven years ago to support individuals in the aftermath of the financial crisis. There are now 14 food banks across Estonia which work with several partner organisations. There are 250 volunteers working at the food banks and approximately 9,500 end recipients are supported each week. Initially, the Managing Authority consulted with nutrition experts to draft a list of food products that could provide a healthy and balanced food parcel. It was stated, however, that there are several challenges that they are faced with when putting together and distributing the FEAD food parcels. Firstly, the warehouses do not have freezers or refrigerated storage units, which means that they are unable to store perishable fresh goods such as meat or vegetables. It was subsequently noted that the parcels should



not be too heavy, limiting the types of products that can be included. Lastly, a limited budget means that careful consideration needs to be given to how to allocate funds.



Following the two case study presentations, delegates were invited to discuss the key lessons learned from the presentations in groups. More specifically, they were asked to address the following two questions:

1. What are the key challenges in selecting food products and how can we overcome them?
2. How can the FEAD Network members support each other to overcome these challenges?

The key **challenges** identified by the working groups in the two workshop sessions are as follows:

- Partner organisations are not always equipped to store fresh, perishable or frozen foods as they do not have freezer or refrigeration units
- Healthier foods tend to have shorter expiry dates
- More complementarity is needed with the non-FEAD funded food distributed by partner organisations
- Different needs exist across different target groups (e.g. rural/urban dwellers, homeless, families, cultural particularities)
- Meat and protein items are expensive and difficult to store
- Finding the balance between nutrition, cost and flavour is difficult
- Finding the balance between quantity and quality is difficult
- Ensuring a variety in products is important as there can be saturation if end recipients are given the same foods repeatedly
- Technical skills and nutritional awareness are limited among volunteers and staff in charge of delivering the food
- Procurement can be inflexible due to long-term, multi-annual contracts

Solutions offered to potentially overcome these challenges include:

- Consult experts to determine which food items are both nutritious and flavoursome
- Provide accompanying measures to teach end recipients how to prepare nutritious meals (e.g. distribute recipe booklets, offer workshops)
- Educate staff and volunteers regarding issues of nutrition and healthy diets
- Focus on the needs of specific target groups
- Conduct research and evaluation activities, including feedback from end recipients
- Increase discussion between partner organisations and managing authorities on issues of nutrition
- Shorten the length of contracts with suppliers
- Specify in the terms of reference for public procurement that the foods need to be of a specific nutritional value

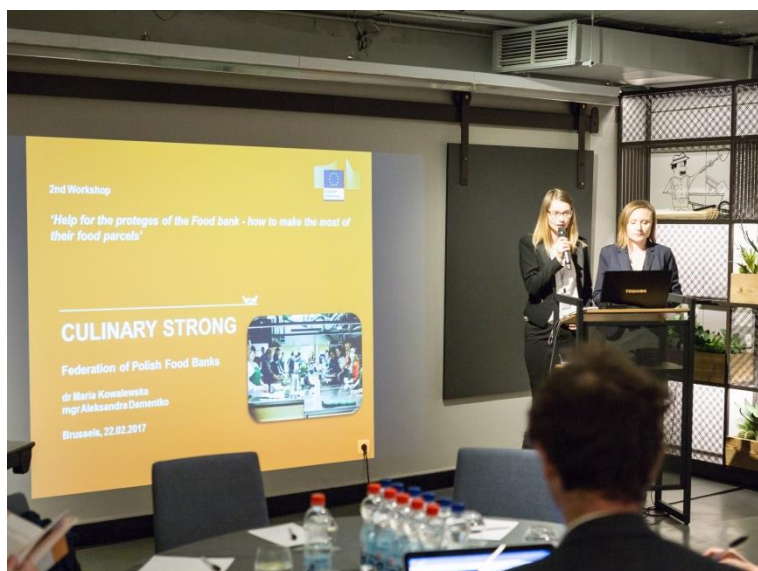
The working groups additionally discussed the ways in which the **FEAD Network** could potentially offer solutions to overcome the identified challenges. These potential solutions are as follows:

- Continue to share best practices (e.g. through the case study catalogue and on the FEAD Yammer page)
- Share studies and experiences through the FEAD Yammer page
- Share procurement criteria through the FEAD Yammer page

- Actively involve Member States in delivering specific tasks
- Cluster Member States with similar features to learn from one another
- Bring together small neighbouring states or regions to create economies of scale for the public procurement process
- Hold site visits to exchange experience and best practice
- Hold face-to-face events
- Offer more live discussions on Yammer on specific topics

Workshop 2: Helping end recipients make the most out of their food parcels

The second workshop focused on strategies to help end recipients make optimal use of the food parcels that they receive. The workshop was facilitated by **Jan Aulehle, Director of Communications of Ecorys' Programme Management and Communications Unit**. He explained that the aim of the workshop was to explore the potential barriers end recipients encounter when using FEAD-funded food parcels as well as the different ways in which they can be supported to overcome these barriers. He subsequently introduced the first of two case studies.



The first presentation of the workshop focused on the project '[Culinary Strong](#)' and was presented by **Aleksandra Damentko** and **Maria Kowalewska** of the **Federation of Polish Food Banks**. Following a brief overview of FEAD in Poland, the educational programme 'Culinary Strong' was presented in which the Federation of Polish Food Banks and 32 affiliated food banks run culinary workshops for FEAD end recipients. They are organised throughout the country and tend to take place in kitchens at local welfare centres, social centres and NGO premises. The objective is to raise nutritional awareness and provide end recipients with independent skills to prepare meals. It is the largest educational programme of its kind in Poland, and in 2015 approximately 5000 workshops were offered, reaching around 75,000 people.

The Polish case study was complemented by a presentation on the Latvian experience of supporting end recipients in making the most out of their food parcels. **Ilze Latviete** of the **Ministry of Welfare** and **Agita Kraukle** of the **Samaritan Association of Latvia** presented their experiences in food selection as well as their experiences in offering cooking classes and distributing recipes. A survey with end recipients about the quality, quantity and usability

of the products received in the FEAD food parcels indicated that 83% of end recipients were satisfied with the products received while 75% were satisfied with the amount of food received. Following the survey the Managing Authority set out to improve the food parcels and to offer opportunities for end recipients out of the parcels that they receive. Opportunities include product exchanges at distribution points and accompanying measures such as cooking classes and the distribution of recipe booklets.

Following the two case study presentations, delegates were invited to discuss the key lessons learned from the presentations in groups. More specifically, they were asked to address the following two questions:

1. What are the key challenges in ensuring end recipients make the most out of their food parcels and how can we overcome them?
2. How can the FEAD Network members support each other to overcome these challenges?

The key **challenges** identified by the working groups in the two workshop sessions are as follows:

- A lack of knowledge on the real needs of the target group
- The diversity of the target group
- Efficiently coping with the requirements for public procurement and the selection of partners
- Offering food assistance and accompanying measures simultaneously
- Building partnerships
- The reluctance of some end recipients to participate in accompanying measures

The main **solutions** discussed to overcome these challenges were:

- Conduct research and evaluation activities to explore the needs of end recipients
- Build more partnerships with a range of stakeholders
- Include recipe books and training materials directly in the food parcels to encourage more end recipients to become involved in workshops and other events
- Create better links between FEAD projects and ESF projects
- Have workshops as events rather than classes so that the entire family is able to participate
- Arrange for transportation to take the end recipients to the accompanying measures

The actions that the members of the **FEAD Network** can undertake to help overcome the key challenges are:

- Sharing of best experience and best practice on procurement issues, the selection of partners and the provision of accompanying measures
- Peer reviewing activities
- Cross-national cooperation and learning opportunities
- The creation of one evaluation methodology for FEAD



Session 8 – Plenary session

Following a brief summary of the main findings from the workshops, a final concluding session was led by the moderator, who opened the floor to **Stefan Storcksdieck, DG Joint Research Centre (JRC)** for his presentation on the “Scientific and nutritional aspects of food programmes.” The presentation highlighted the common definitions of food insecurity, food poverty and material deprivation and presented key figures and findings from EU surveys regarding these particular topics. He presented the patterns of low nutritional intakes, stating, for instance, that this was most prevalent in mothers, individuals with a low income and adolescents. Lastly, he drew attention to the studies of the JRC regarding the issue at hand.

Following the final presentation, Vicki Donlevy invited all the speakers to share their last reflections and their thoughts on themes and topics for future network meetings as well as opening the floor to participants for feedback and comments. Lastly, she reiterated some key information regarding the next FEAD Network Meeting in Berlin and underlined the importance of the participants’ active engagement in making the FEAD Network a success. The meeting was closed with the showcasing of a new [video](#) produced by the Federation of Polish Food Banks.



Keep in touch! – Join the FEAD Network

The FEAD Network is an active community of practice with lively exchange of experiences and shared learning. It allows the sharing of tools, ideas and resources that can help deliver 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, for example 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 to you in different European countries – wherever you are. You will also have the opportunity to continue the discussions arising in the network meetings in the subsequent 'live chats' on Yammer, where a number of speakers from the events will be available to answer questions.

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:

<https://www.yammer.com/feadnetwork/>

Email us: Fead.Network@ecorys.com



Contact us

Visit our website: **<http://ec.europa.eu/feadnetwork>**

Or email us with your questions: **FEAD.Network@ecorys.com**

We look forward to hearing from you!

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