



Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived

Meeting **EXPLORING THE MANY FACES OF FEAD**'Report

8th FEAD Network Meeting: '

13-14 November, Novotel Paris Vaugirard Montparnasse

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Contents

Session 1 – Introduction and ‘Network News’	5
Session 2 – Welcome from the Commission.....	5
Session 3 – Welcome from the French Managing Authority.....	6
Session 4 – FEAD implementation in France: the vision of the four implementing partners.....	6
Session 5 – “Open Space” workshop on the FEAD programme post 2020.....	8
Session 6 – Closing plenary session, Day 1	13
Session 7 – Project visits	15
Session 8 – Closing plenary session, Day 2	18
Keep in touch! – Join the FEAD Network	19

8th FEAD Network Meeting, Novotel Paris, Vaugirard Montparnasse, 13-14 November 2017

On 13-14 November 2017, the European Commission hosted the 8th Network Meeting of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD). The meeting brought together the EU-wide network of actors involved in FEAD to take stock of the differences in FEAD implementation across the Member States, the different types of people supported, as well as the multiple social challenges the programme helps to tackle across Europe. In light of these differences, the delegates were invited to reflect on these “many faces of FEAD”, and how these could be reflected in the future programme. The meeting was organised by Ecorys on behalf of the European Commission. 88 delegates from 23 European Union countries attended the event, held at the Novotel Paris, Vaugirard Montparnasse, representing a range of stakeholders including Managing Authorities, EU- and national level partner organisations, other local, regional and national actors, European Commission officials, and the wider EU community.

Session 1 – Introduction and ‘Network News’

Vicki Donlevy, Director, Policy and Research, Ecorys UK opened the 8th FEAD Network Meeting by welcoming delegates to the event, praising the high number of attendees and giving an overview of recent FEAD Network news. More than 370 members are now registered on the online FEAD Yammer platform, which gives members the opportunity to share updates on ongoing projects and to organise live chats on topics of their own choosing to exchange best practices across Europe. Vicki also mentioned that in January 2018 Ecorys will carry out a survey among members of the Network to identify topics which could inspire the agenda for future FEAD Network Meetings.

Session 2 – Welcome from the Commission

Marie-Anne Paraskevas, Senior Policy Officer, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission

welcomed participants to the meeting, thanking the French Managing Authority and partner organisations for hosting the 8th FEAD Network Meeting in Paris. She continued by emphasising that, in light of the Commission’s ongoing discussions on the future Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) post 2020, today’s meeting



represented a valuable opportunity for members of the Network to evaluate how the programme has been implemented so far in the different Member States, and how it could be improved to strengthen its focus on fighting poverty and social exclusion in Europe. She therefore encouraged the delegates to reflect on key recommendations for topics to be taken into consideration in the future FEAD programme post 2020, including on the role of the Managing Authorities and partner organisations, as well as on the impact of potential synergies between FEAD and other EU funds, such as the European Social Fund (ESF) and EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI).

Session 3 – Welcome from the French Managing Authority

On behalf of the French Managing Authority, **Jean-Philippe Vinquant, Director General for Social Cohesion at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health** welcomed the delegates to Paris, recognising the different “faces” of FEAD implementation across the EU, and the importance therefore of the FEAD Network Meetings to exchange best practices and foster mutual learning. At the same time, however, he emphasised that FEAD as a whole has been an important “new face” in providing social support to the most deprived and fighting poverty, and hence the importance of maintaining this “solidarity” element in the FEAD successor programme. Jean-Philippe concluded his welcome speech by highlighting that a new strategy on improving the quality and sustainability of food aid¹ is currently being implemented in France.

Session 4 – FEAD implementation in France: the vision of the four implementing partners

Following the welcome by the European Commission and the French Managing Authority, **Vicki Donlevy** invited the representatives of the four FEAD implementing organisations in France to the stage to present their shared vision on the future of the FEAD programme.



The joint presentation by the four implementing organisations started with a speech by **Anne Bideau, Director of the Volunteering Department at the French Red Cross (Croix Rouge)**. The French Red Cross is a major voluntary actor working for solidarity in France. Its numerous social programmes enable it to identify, welcome, listen to, protect, accompany and guide vulnerable people to help them avoid the risk of exclusion and develop their future life plan. Food aid lies at the heart of the support services offered

by the French Red Cross. It constitutes an indispensable base from which to offer other forms of social inclusion assistance, such as: financial advice, textile support, transportation support, access to health services, access to leisure activities and holidays, and French language classes. The French Red Cross welcomes almost 400,000 people each year across over 600 centres.

Anne started by saying that, as a result of the economic depression in 2008/2009, poverty rates across the EU had increased over the past fifteen years, representing a break with the steady decline in poverty over the course of the last three decades of the twentieth century. She then continued by highlighting that, in 2016, over 120 million people were living in poverty across the EU (i.e. 25%); in France, this figure was 8.8 million, or one in seven people. One third of these people living in extreme conditions are young people; two thirds are people living in families (25% of which are single parent families); and 2.5 million are migrants, who face additional challenges of discrimination. She underlined the importance for France of FEAD, which so far has been able to support over 4.8 million people, and that, for all four organisations, **food aid works as an important entry point to provide wider support for the social reintegration of the most deprived.**

Next, **Sébastien Thollot, Member of the National Board of the Secours populaire français**, went into greater depth on the variety and flexibility of support services offered through FEAD by the partner organisations. The Secours populaire français is an NGO, created in 1945, that aims to support victims of social injustice, poverty, hunger, natural disasters and armed conflicts by providing means of material, medical, moral and legal assistance.

¹ “Etats généraux de l’alimentation”, see: <https://www.egalimentation.gouv.fr/>

Sébastien began by saying that, of the €500 million of FEAD investment in France for the period 2014-2020, 25-30% of food aid has been distributed so far. He highlighted that FEAD allows the partner organisations to select food from a range of over 30 different products, which allows food support to be tailored to the needs of individual end beneficiaries. He then continued by saying that for Secours populaire, as for the other three partner organisations, emergency relief (such as food aid) is unconditional and should be provided to anyone who needs it. Following this first response, **a holistic response to poverty** based upon an individual diagnosis of the end recipient's situation can be offered. This "whole person approach" is a way to provide people with a wide range of support services, from clothing aid, guidance and legal support, to healthcare, housing, access to holidays, culture and sports activities, including school support/tutoring. Sébastien concluded by emphasising that **the underlying principle of all support activities should be dedicated to facilitating "genuine exchanges" between people**, as a way for people to overcome isolation, develop their personal and professional skills and ultimately get out of poverty and reintegrate fully into society as autonomous citizens.

Francis Gaillard, Vice-President of the Federation Française des Banques Alimentaires (FFBA) was the next representative to present. The FFBA gathers all French Food Banks as self-governing associations. The Food Banks distribute food to partner associations and are therefore not in direct contact with beneficiaries, and all operate under the same principles of sharing, volunteering and donating food for free to fight food waste.



During his presentation, Francis highlighted that FEAD food products are crucial basic needs products which are an essential complement to the food collected through donations and to the mission of food banks, representing 24% of their procurement. He also emphasised that the four partner organisations have noticed **FEAD has an important "multiplier effect"** in the sense that it leverages crucial additional support from volunteers and other funds, such as the ESF.

Finally, **Patrice Blanc, President of Les restaurants du Cœur** spoke about the role of FEAD in strengthening territorial cohesion. Les restaurants du Cœur was created in 1985 by the famous French comedian Coluche, to fight against all forms of exclusion in France. It is one of the main associations delivering food aid to people in need (132.5 million meals were provided to 926,000 people during the winter) through more than 2,000 centres across France. In addition to providing crucial support to the most deprived through food aid, they also offer a range of social inclusion activities to respond to European social challenges, such as support in finding housing, employment, access to justice, language classes and budget counselling.

Patrice started his speech by highlighting the importance of intervening at local level, because in order to make a tangible impact at European level in terms of **strengthening social cohesion**, we need to be able to reach out to the most isolated people in society (e.g. the elderly living in small and remote villages in the countryside). He also mentioned that reaching out to people in remote areas is not only important to support them to reintegrate into society, but can also play a key role in promoting the added value of the "European project" and active citizenship more broadly.

Shared view on FEAD post 2020

Following their individual presentations, the four representatives of the FEAD partner organisations in France presented their shared view on FEAD post 2020. In their view, FEAD post 2020 should...

... **be secured** in order to pursue efforts to reduce poverty.

... **remain autonomous**, not merged with but rather complementary to other European funds.

... **be universal**, allowing unconditional help to be offered to any person in a situation of extreme poverty.

... **become more ambitious** in terms of budget and resources to achieve the shared goal of solidarity and social cohesion.

Key learning points:

The presentations of the representatives of the four FEAD implementing organisations in France were followed by a Q&A session with the participants, moderated by Vicki Donlevy. Three key take-home messages emerged during these discussions:

- Firstly, both the panellists and participants agreed that **food aid is an important welcoming space** for providing further social support services. People who come to receive food aid often have more substantial underlying social issues, and providing them with access to support services which can help them address these more structural issues is key in helping them out of poverty and ultimately fully reintegrating them into society.
- Secondly, the **training of volunteers** on issues such as food safety (e.g. through cooking classes) was highlighted as a key issue – and has been highlighted repeatedly in many previous Network Meetings.
- Finally, often people in poverty are either not able or not allowed to work. The social activities organised through FEAD therefore offer viable alternatives to **develop personal and professional skills** to reintegrate into society and find employment.



Finally, Vicki asked the panellists to conclude the session by each highlighting one key challenge for the future of FEAD:

- For **Patrice Blanc**, attracting more volunteers and providing them with food safety training was a key aspect to consider for the design of FEAD post 2020;
- **Francis Gaillard** said that it was important to keep FEAD funding post 2020 in order to ensure poverty and social exclusion can be adequately addressed at European level;
- **Sébastien Thollot** emphasised the importance of maintaining and improving the flexibility for the implementation of the Fund; and
- **Anne Bideau** highlighted the challenge of finding a balance between working with dedicated volunteers and professional staff.

Session 5 – “Open Space” workshop on the FEAD programme post 2020

Following a short networking break, **Magda Tancau of the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)** introduced the delegates to the “Open Space” methodology, around which the afternoon workshop



would be structured. The aim of the workshop was to allow the participants to suggest discussion topics and lead discussions themselves, with the ultimate goal of developing key recommendations for the European Commission to consider in their ongoing discussions on the future of FEAD post 2020.

Magda opened the workshop by inviting the participants to present discussion topics to the group, guided by the following overarching theme for the workshop: “How could the FEAD programme be

improved after 2020 to better promote social inclusion and address the needs of the end recipients?”

Participants were free to suggest any topic for discussion. However, the majority of suggested topics fell under one or more of the following four overarching questions on the future of FEAD post 2020:

1. What are the main elements of the current FEAD programme that **you would like to maintain** for the period post 2020?
2. Are there **any elements which should be improved** in a FEAD successor programme post 2020 in order to better address the needs of end recipients?
3. What changes are needed in order for FEAD to **better support the social inclusion** of end recipients post 2020?
4. What could be done in order to **reduce the administrative burden** of FEAD post 2020?

Altogether, no less than **19 topics for discussion** were suggested by the group. All the suggestions were collected on an “Agenda Wall”, which divided the topics across three different workshop sessions with parallel round table discussions. As is inherent to the Open Space methodology, participants were free to join or leave any discussion at any time, the underlying idea being that “whatever happens is meant to happen”, and contributions should come from those who are most engaged and passionate about the topic under discussion.



Each of the 19 round table discussions was moderated by the delegate(s) who had suggested the relevant discussion topic; and each group also had one designated note taker, who was responsible for filling out a common reporting template in order to capture the key messages emerging from the Open Space discussions and formulate them into key recommendations. Following the three rounds of parallel round table discussions, the delegates were invited to read the different reporting templates on the Agenda Wall and vote for the recommendations which they felt to be key for the European Commission to take into consideration for the future of FEAD post 2020.

The key messages emerging from each round table discussion are discussed in turn below. Following this, the key recommendations emerging from the subsequent ‘voting exercise’ will be presented.

Open Space workshop – Round 1

Table 1: Monitoring FEAD outcomes

At this table, participants discussed how to improve and use the measurement of the effectiveness and impact of FEAD actions on end recipients. The delegates stated that measurements should go further than merely monitoring the number of end recipients reached, but also show the difference FEAD actions are making at an individual level. They also highlighted the importance of gathering information on the impact of combining different funds (e.g. FEAD and ESF funds), and of collecting and building on the feedback collected from coordinators and volunteers working directly with end recipients, which they felt would improve the quality of support services offered by the organisations and volunteers for end recipients.

Table 2: Reducing administrative burden



The discussions at this table focused on the various administrative obstacles faced by the Managing Authorities and partner organisations in implementing FEAD. The delegates highlighted that the types of administrative challenges encountered are highly dependent on national contexts, but the overall agreement was that more guidance on FEAD implementation was needed from the Commission – especially at the start of a future FEAD successor programme post 2020 – to ensure a concerted and collaborative approach towards tackling poverty and social

exclusion through FEAD. Furthermore, the delegates agreed that the overall funding for the programme should increase, in particular when it comes to the 5% flat rate currently available to cover logistical, technical and administrative costs. Finally, it was felt the Commission should reflect in greater depth on the ‘ideal balance’ between allowing for flexibility and imposing common administrative procedures across all EU Member States, e.g. in relation to public procurement.

Table 3: Increasing involvement of end recipients

The key message emerging from this table related to the importance of ensuring the quality of support services and tailoring to the needs of end recipients in order for them to be treated in full dignity. Delegates highlighted that, in order for this to happen, flexibility is key in the delivery of the programme. Not only should the target group be consulted on their needs, but the services they are provided with should also present them with a choice to select from a range of different food products and social support services. The tailoring should also be part of the way in which end recipients are welcomed – e.g. coffee/tea for adults vs. toys/books for children.

Table 4: FEAD and housing

At this table, participants highlighted the importance of involving local authorities and convincing the authorities to increase the number and type of recipients eligible to receive FEAD support. In some countries, for example, housing support only covers “emergency situations” – in which case the ESF intervenes. However, participants felt that a more structural approach to homelessness should be provided through FEAD.

Table 5: Defining target groups

The discussions at this table were centred on the different approaches across Member States in terms of defining target groups. While in some countries the Managing Authorities pre-identify fixed target groups eligible for FEAD support, other countries give partner organisations the freedom to choose who to support. The majority of participants agreed that it was important to maintain a certain level of flexibility in order to provide support to anyone in need in times of emergency. They also underlined the importance of trusting the partner organisations – who are in direct contact with end recipients on a daily basis – to select who they wish to support.

Table 6: Investing in social capital

The main recommendation emerging from the discussions at this table was that all actors involved in the delivery of the FEAD programme should be supported in their continuing professional development to increase the quality of support services offered to end beneficiaries. To this end, delegates expressed their support for and underlined the importance of networking at local, national and EU level, which is important in fostering collaboration and synergies between stakeholders as well as for the exchange of good practices underpinning skills development. Exchanges and training should be focused in particular on food hygiene, guidelines on acting in crisis situations and dealing with stress.

Table 7: Synergies between FEAD and ESF

The delegates at this table discussed the possibility of potentially merging the FEAD and ESF funds post 2020. They unanimously felt that this should not be pursued, highlighting a number of risks linked to merging both funds. Firstly, they felt it would have a negative impact on the visibility FEAD has given to the overarching issues of poverty and social exclusion in Europe. Secondly, they feared it would have an impact on the complexity of applying for FEAD-related actions in the future. Instead, they recommended to the Commission to strengthen the ex-ante conditionalities encouraging a combined use of FEAD and other European funds, such as ESF and FEAD for housing projects.

Open Space workshop – Round 2

Table 1: Next generation of accompanying measures

The aim of this discussion was to brainstorm on ideas to improve the uptake, quality and diversity of accompanying measures under OP I. The delegates highlighted that it is often a challenge to encourage end recipients to take up accompanying measures in addition to food aid provided. They therefore felt that it was important for Managing Authorities to give sufficient autonomy to partner organisations to be creative and innovative in terms of



the format of the accompanying measures provided, so they are closely tailored to the needs of individual end recipients, underlining that *“we do not need to formalise everything – if it works, it works”*.

Table 2: Strengthening the role of food aid as a first step towards social inclusion

This group discussed challenges and recommendations related to ensuring food aid functions as an effective gateway for social inclusion activities. The delegates highlighted the importance of simplifying the mechanisms and procedures for volunteers to take care of beneficiaries and of improving the quality and diversity of food supplied. Most people in Europe socialise around having a good meal together. Hence, if people are provided with a high-quality meal and are welcomed by motivated volunteers, the likely take-up of social support services will increase.

Table 3: Towards setting a political FEAD target for 2030

The key message emerging from the discussions at this table was that policymakers, whenever a new legislative proposal or decision is taken, should closely evaluate the likely impact of this decision on social issues. The group advocated for stronger links between FEAD and the results of decision makers, and for increased support to facilitate synergies between end beneficiaries, volunteers and professionals.

Table 4: Public procurement

In relation to public procurement, the delegates highlighted the challenge the multiplicity of public procurement procedures presents to the Managing Authorities. The current administrative process was felt to be very laborious and time-consuming. They therefore encouraged the Commission to reflect on potential simplifications, which it was felt could reduce implementation costs and directly benefit end recipients who would be able to benefit from support services of greater quality.

Table 5: Children as beneficiaries

At this table, participants discussed key challenges and recommendations for supporting children from vulnerable families as FEAD end recipients. The group emphasised that all administrative barriers should be removed when dealing with children in order to be able to prioritise and focus on their needs for support. Several Member States have already put in place specific measures to support children, which according to the group should be seen as good practice. They recommended that a minimum number of basic principles should be agreed upon with the Member States for supporting children from vulnerable families, and recommended to potentially even dedicate a specific amount of funding to children under the FEAD programme post 2020. Furthermore, in order to support children indirectly, they felt that additional thought should be given to supporting parents.

Table 6: FEAD budget post 2020

The delegates who participated in this discussion unanimously agreed that the overall funding for FEAD should be increased post 2020. It was felt that the 5% flat rate for partner organisations should include an option to include real costs. The current funding structure was also seen as not sufficiently flexible to cover for costs of transportation related to food distribution.

Open Space workshop – Round 3

Table 1: FEAD as a separate funding stream

The delegates who took part in the discussions at this table advocated to keep FEAD separate from other EU funds, notably the ESF, post 2020. They felt that this was important to guarantee the flexibility which currently underpins the implementation of FEAD across the Member States, and which is crucial to tailor support services to the needs of end beneficiaries and tackle the many different issues related to poverty and social exclusion. Instead, it was felt the Commission could investigate options to strengthen the FEAD ex-ante conditionalities to encourage synergies between FEAD and other EU funds, and for ESF funds to target FEAD beneficiaries.

Table 2: Increasing the impact of FEAD Operational Programme II (OP II) post 2020

The delegates who took part in this discussion highlighted that, in order to increase the impact of OP II after 2020, necessary changes include a reduction in administrative burden and an increase in the flexibility of evaluation criteria. The group also felt that OP II was important as a holistic programme, but that more should be done to reach out to beneficiaries to support them effectively.

Table 3: FEAD management post 2020

The key message emerging from the discussions at this table was that changes to the current FEAD management and monitoring structure were undesirable. However, some participants felt that shared management of the programme was the desired way forward post 2020.

Table 4: Providing greater flexibility in FEAD



The delegates at this table underlined the importance of communication between different levels, and the need to be flexible in support provided through FEAD, as the needs of end beneficiaries change continuously. The needs of the target group also vary from country to country, which therefore entails a need to allow for flexibility in the way in which funding for accompanying measures is spent. Finally, the group emphasised that the EU should do more to empower frontline workers on the ground to eradicate poverty and set flexible indicators.

Table 5: Improving the effectiveness of FEAD accompanying measures

At this table, delegates discussed how the effectiveness of accompanying measures could be improved to support social inclusion of the most deprived and isolated groups of people at local level. The discussions emphasised the importance of individualised support for families and of taking into account the different social systems across Member States in the EU.

Table 6: Defining social inclusion

The discussions at this table were focused around the differences in and challenges related to defining social inclusion across the different EU Member States. The main difficulty highlighted by the delegates relates to the differences in situations and customs between countries in terms of the average population's social activity, which in turn heavily determine social inclusion. One can therefore be "socially included" in many different ways (e.g. access to employment, access to a minimum income), which are not always measurable. The group further stressed that it is important to ask end beneficiaries directly whether or not they feel included, confident and/or discriminated in order for them to feel valued, and that they may need help in structuring their thoughts.

Open Space workshop – Key recommendations

The **12 key recommendations** emerging from the discussions and subsequent voting by the participants are presented below and structured under the four overarching umbrella topics outlined above.

1. What are the main elements of the current FEAD programme **that you would like to maintain** for the period post 2020?

In terms of the main elements to maintain post 2020, the participants put forward three key recommendations to the European Commission:

- **Maintain FEAD as a separate funding stream and do not merge it with the ESF or other European funds.** The delegates felt that merging FEAD with other European funds entailed a risk of losing overall visibility of FEAD and increasing the complexity to apply for FEAD-related actions. Instead, they recommended to strengthen ex-ante conditionalities encouraging a combined use of FEAD and other European funds, such as ESF and FEAD for housing projects. This emerged as the single most important recommendation from the discussions.
- **Maintain and strengthen accompanying measures under Operational Programme I (OP I).** Participants felt that accompanying measures under OP I were key for a long-term and more structural approach to tackling poverty and social exclusion. They therefore recommended that FEAD post 2020 should reflect a more innovative and flexible view of the different types of accompanying measures which can be offered under OP I. The delegates also highlighted that increased opportunities for capacity building of all actors involved in the delivery of FEAD accompanying measures was key in order to increase the overall quality of support services.
- **Consider increasing shared management of FEAD across the Member States post 2020.** Finally, some participants felt shared management was the best way forward post 2020.

2. Are there **any elements which should be improved** in a FEAD successor programme post 2020 in order to better address the needs of end recipients?

With regard to the main elements to improve for a FEAD successor programme post 2020, the participants put forward three key recommendations:

- **Increase the involvement of end recipients in the shaping of the programme.** After the recommendation to keep FEAD as a separate funding stream post 2020, the delegates agreed almost unanimously that more should be done to take into account and tailor support services to the needs of individual end recipients. Consulting end recipients, encouraging genuine interactions and supporting them to enhance their autonomy were highlighted as crucial.
- **Enhance the role of food aid in FEAD as a first step towards social inclusion.** The majority of participants agreed that providing the most deprived with food aid is very effective in working

as a gateway towards more holistic social support services for reintegration. They therefore recommended this aspect to be reflected more strongly in a successor programme post 2020, because, as mentioned by one participant, “*you cannot build a man on an empty stomach*”.

- **Invest in innovative measures to increase interaction between and social capital of different stakeholders involved in the delivery of FEAD.** Finally, the delegates underlined the importance of exchange platforms such as the Yammer Network and FEAD Network Meetings to stimulate collaboration and facilitate networking for the exchange of best practices across the Member States and different groups of stakeholders, as they felt that a concerted effort and shared vision was necessary to ensure the impact of FEAD actions.

3. What changes are needed in order for FEAD to better support the social inclusion of end recipients post 2020?

Three key recommendations were put forward in relation to better supporting social inclusion through the FEAD programme post 2020:

- **Maintain and increase the flexibility for Member States and partner organisations to deliver support services to the most deprived.** A large majority of participants felt that it was important to be flexible when it comes to providing a ‘first helping hand’ to those in need in emergency situations, for example in the form of food aid. Participants also felt that the flexibility of the programme should be increased in order for organisations to be able to respond more effectively to the diverse and rapidly changing needs of end recipients.
- **Gather and build on feedback directly collected from end recipients.** In order to increase social inclusion outcomes, participants felt that it was important to reflect on innovative ways to not only collect, but also constructively build on the feedback collected from end recipients.
- **Increase support for the integration of children from vulnerable families.** Finally, a small number of delegates felt that it was important to provide more targeted support and funding for the integration of children from vulnerable families, including from migrant backgrounds.

4. What could be done in order to reduce the administrative burden of FEAD post 2020?

In terms of key financial and administrative recommendations for the FEAD programme post 2020, the delegates invited the European Commission to reflect on the following issues:

- **Increase the overall FEAD budget post 2020.** The delegates agreed almost unanimously that a greater budget was needed to reach FEAD’s common objectives. In particular, they underlined the need to increase the 5% flat rate for logistical, technical and administrative costs.
- **Increase flexibility for administrative procedures.** The delegates invited the Commission to reflect in greater depth on the ideal balance between allowing for flexibility and imposing common administrative procedures across the EU, e.g. in relation to public procurement.
- **Provide more guidance to the Managing Authorities and partner organisations for the implementation of the programme.** Finally, a number of delegates felt that the Commission should do more, especially at the start of a FEAD successor programme post 2020, to guide and support the diversity of stakeholders involved in implementing the programme to ensure a concerted and collaborative approach towards tackling social exclusion and poverty in the EU.

Session 6 – Closing plenary session, Day 1

Magda Tancau opened the closing plenary session by thanking all the delegates for their engagement during the Open Space workshop, after which she then closed the Open Space workshop by presenting the main recommendations emerging from the vote (presented in greater detail above).

Following this, **Vicki Donlevy** closed the first day of the 8th FEAD Network Meeting by thanking all the speakers and participants for their input throughout the day, which was extremely interactive with many fruitful exchanges. She also reminded the participants of the five project visits, organised in collaboration with the four French FEAD implementing organisations, which would take place the next day.

Session 7 – Project visits

On the second day, in line with their preferences indicated during the registration process, the delegates were split into five groups and accompanied on a visit to one of the four FEAD implementing partner organisations in France. The visits were designed to show participants how the practical implementation of food aid and social inclusion activities takes place “on the ground” in France. The delegates visited the five following projects, the outcomes of which are then presented in detail below:

- “Food aid on wheels” – FEAD in rural areas (*Croix rouge*)
- Job opportunities at a FEAD food aid depot (*Les restaurants du Cœur*)
- Gateway to social inclusion through food aid (*Les restaurants du Cœur*)
- Food aid distribution cycle (FFBA – *Fédération française des banques alimentaires*)
- Diverse FEAD assistance under one roof? Diversity in social inclusion activities (*Secours populaire français*)

1. “Food aid on wheels” – FEAD in rural areas (*Croix rouge*)

For this project visit, the delegates were guided to the headquarters of the French Red Cross in Paris. The visit started with a presentation providing the delegates with a general overview of the activities of the French Red Cross, which highlighted that, today, the organisation has: over 1,000 operational local branches; 674 health, social and training centres; over 17,000 employees and almost 60,000 volunteers (30,000 of which are involved in social action programmes). The Red Cross representative underlined that 45% of end beneficiaries supported are unemployed or outside of the labour market, and that in recent years there has been a significant increase in the number of students registering with the centres to receive food aid – especially during exam periods. Finally, it was mentioned that around 25% of food is supplied through FEAD, around 30% comes from food banks, and almost 40% from unsold products from supermarkets.

Following this general overview, the delegates were presented the Red Cross’ “Food aid on wheels” project (*Croix rouge sur roues*), which has been running since 2012. This project is implemented by 420 volunteers manning 44 mobile units, active in 34 districts in France (mainly in the South-East and South-West of the country), and thereby able to cover almost 40% of the country. The project aims to reach people who might otherwise be “invisible”, i.e. the most vulnerable, isolated, or immobile people, living in geographically remote locations with little or no access to social support services in their local community. In addition to food aid, and in close collaboration with local social services and municipalities, the mobile units are designed to provide people with a wide range of additional social support services, such as access to healthcare, nutritional education, assistance with administrative procedures, etc. Finally, the delegates visited and met with the volunteers of a mobile social unit which is active in the Haute-Saone region.

2. Job opportunities at a FEAD food aid depot (*Les restaurants du Cœur*)

The delegates in this group visited the Aubervilliers centre of *Les restaurants du Cœur*, a food distribution centre which was created in May 2000 and has two objectives: on the one hand, to deliver hot meals, clothes and personal care products to people on the streets; and on the other hand, to professionally train representatives of marginalised groups and support their reintegration into the labour market. Over the course of 2016-2017, the organisation prepared and distributed 740,000 hot meals to homeless people. It has seven permanent employees and mobilises around 2,000 volunteers who provide help with the distribution of food on the streets.

The centre’s professional integration programme has 65 beneficiaries and makes an effort to work with representatives of different marginalised groups. Each beneficiary has a career project or objective they try to fulfil and throughout the programme they receive individual guidance, training and assistance. The programme offers two types of training:

- Individual training on personal behaviour and competences, e.g. in French language, health and safety, road safety, communication skills and self-esteem building;
- Professional training in logistics, cooking and healthcare.

The food assistance programme is funded through different private sponsors and FEAD. This year, the centre also started collecting unsold or almost past their sell-by-date products. This approach aims to improve the quality of the two programmes run by the organisation – the food assistance and professional reintegration programmes – by:

- Improving the quality and nutritional value of meals (more fresh fruit and vegetables);
- Increasing the number of jobs in the organisation;
- Offering higher job qualifications (cooking);
- Making significant savings on the goods bought.

3. Gateway to social inclusion through food aid (*Les restaurants du Cœur*)

The delegates visited the Alleray centre of *Les restaurants du Cœur* (south of Paris near Montparnasse), a food distribution centre also providing a range of accompanying social inclusion measures. The Alleray centre is one of 2,000 centres working to tackle poverty and deprivation in France.

60 volunteers work at the Alleray centre delivering food items several times a week. The sources of food are donations, food purchases from suppliers and FEAD items (25% of food supply). Anyone is welcome to take part in the centre's activities. However, in order to receive food, individuals need to be registered with the centre. The delegates were shown how the registration system works, which is computer-based and has replaced the manual system. It conducts a comprehensive needs assessment of the end recipients. Their data is preserved confidentially and only used in order to better address their individual needs when visiting the centre.



In addition to food aid, the centre provides social inclusion activities, such as support in accessing social rights, French classes, cultural activities, private counselling, and cooking and hairdressing classes. The site visit made clear that volunteers play a key role in running *Les restaurants du Cœur*, and the majority of them working for the organisation are retired individuals willing to contribute to the community.

4. Food aid distribution cycle (FFBA – *Fédération française des banques alimentaires*)

The delegates who took part in this project visit visited the Paris Food Bank in Arcueil, one of the many food distribution centres in Paris. They were welcomed by representatives of three organisations: the Paris Food Bank, the French Federation of Food Banks and the European Federation of Food Banks, who all collaborate in the distribution of food to those in need. The representatives highlighted that over 4 million people require food aid, and the number is increasing each year. Over 12.5% of people in France are currently living in conditions of food insecurity.



The delegates saw first hand how the food banks collect, store, organise and distribute food through a computerised system, distributing to a network of independent partner associations who then deliver the food to the end recipients. They learnt how food provided by FEAD, usually once or twice a year in a large delivery, is complemented by other sources, such as collections from supermarkets and other donors. Food products from FEAD are very important as they present a stable and

continuous source of longer-term products, complementing the donations from supermarkets which depend on availability and tend to be perishable products. The representatives mentioned that the administrative burden associated with food from FEAD is no bigger than the burden from other food sources. The delegates were able to see all the key areas of the Paris Food Bank centre, accompanied by a number of volunteers who explained the practical details of the whole distribution cycle.

Volunteers have an important role to play in the operation of food banks in France. The guides explained to delegates that FEAD in France is mainly implemented by volunteers and that there is no shortage of volunteers, as many people, particularly those close to or in retirement, wish to give something back to society.

5. Diverse FEAD assistance under one roof? Diversity in social inclusion activities (*Secours populaire français*)

The delegates were welcomed by the *Secours populaire français* to its main reception centre in Paris, which employs 16 members of staff and relies on the support of approximately 3,300 volunteers. This centre is one of eight centres run by the organisation across Paris, and serves as the “head office”. It was explained that this centre is generally where the first contact is made with potential beneficiaries. All individuals are invited to the centre, either to drink a cup of coffee and socialise, or to receive support from one of the volunteers. Volunteers are extensively trained to be able to support individuals in addressing all their potential needs, and are well equipped to diagnose the situation and identify the type of support needed.

One of the key types of support offered by the organisation is the provision of food, and the organisation strongly feels that the provision of food works as an important entry point for further social inclusion. Apart from the provision of food, the *Secours populaire français* also offers a wide range of support measures, such as:

- The provision of clothing;
- The provision of school supplies for children;
- Support in finding accommodation;
- Support in accessing healthcare services and social protection;
- Support with administrative needs;
- French lessons for adults;
- Homework help for children;
- The organisation of sports activities, such as football;
- Support with domiciliation;
- The organisation of social outings and holidays.

Following a visit to the reception centre, the delegates had the opportunity to explore one of the food distribution points. This centre supports approximately 400-450 families each week and is organised in such a way that it resembles a supermarket. Products are stored in refrigerators and cupboards and individuals are able to go around the distribution centre with a shopping trolley. To teach end recipients how to manage their finances, the *Secours populaire français* has also created a kind of “points system” whereby products are “priced” and end recipients are able to “purchase” them. There is also notable variety in the types of products available to families. 60% of the goods are procured from FEAD. The remaining 40% are gathered through daily collections of surplus products from supermarkets, donation campaigns in supermarkets, as well as products specifically purchased by *Secours populaire français* (e.g. fresh fruit and vegetables).

Session 8 – Closing plenary session, Day 2

Vicki Donlevy opened the closing plenary session, which was hosted by the French FEAD Managing Authority at the Ministry for Social Affairs and Health. Vicki thanked the partner organisations for their time and effort in arranging the site visits for the delegates, underlining the importance of being able to see at “grassroots level” how the implementation of food aid and social support services takes place, in order to make informed decisions on a future FEAD programme post 2020.

Next, Vicki invited the five project guides to report on their site visits. The project guides for the site visits were: François Staring, Ecorys (Project 1); Magda Tancau, European Anti-Poverty Network (Project 2); Laya Taheri, Ecorys (Project 3); Jitka Dolezalova, Ecorys (Project 4); and Charlotte Ruitinga, Ecorys (Project 5). Following the plenary reporting by the five project visit guides, the delegates were invited to discuss cross-cutting observations from the five visits. The three key observations which emerged from these discussions were that:

- **Volunteers** play a key role in the implementation and sustainability of food aid and social support for end beneficiaries;
- With an average of around 25% of all food supplied, **FEAD constitutes an indispensable form of support** for the four partner organisations; and
- **Food aid is regarded as an important and effective entry point** for further social inclusion activities.

Following the plenary discussion, **Marie-Anne Paraskevas** thanked all the participants and organisers for a fruitful meeting, underlining the importance of local networks for the implementation of FEAD and the fight against poverty and social exclusion. Vicki joined Marie-Anne in thanking the participants, and encouraged them to further discuss and identify topics for future meetings. The next meeting will take place in Brussels in early 2018.

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 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 will 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:

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Email us: Fead.Network@ecorys.com



Contact us

Visit our website: **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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