



Banques Alimentaires

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## **DEALING WITH EUROPEAN POVERTY: THE FUND FOR EUROPEAN AID TO THE MOST DEPRIVED (FEAD), AN AMBITIOUS BASIS FOR SOCIAL INTEGRATION**

Nearly 120 million Europeans are suffering from poverty and social exclusion (i.e. a quarter of the population of the Union). 40 million of these people are already experiencing extreme material hardship.

These figures cover a wide variety of distressing personal situations. Different forms of poverty are emerging and personal needs are diversifying. There is a deterioration in the circumstances of millions of families, children, young people and elderly people.

Today more than ever, it is essential that the European Union should take action to combat poverty and exclusion in all their forms. The Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) is playing a decisive role in this area.

### **The FEAD: key to the European social project**

On its creation, the European Union clearly announced its ambitions in terms of solidarity, which notably found an application from the mid-1980s with the launch of the PEAD European Food Aid Programme, which operated until 2013.

Subsequently, the FEAD was launched in 2014. Its aim was the social integration of the most deprived populations, based on financial aid devoted to material and dietary assistance, and support measures.

While the FEAD is not in itself sufficient to deal with the gravity of Europe's social problems – it receives barely 1% of the funds allocated to the European Union's cohesion policy – it is still an essential response to situations of major poverty in the European Union as a whole, and as such is vital.

Indeed, we can already gauge the extent of its impact. Each year, the FEAD provides support for millions of persons living in poverty and significantly improves their living conditions, creating opportunities for lasting social and economic reintegration.

For instance, in 2015, the FEAD enabled assistance for 4.8 million people in France and 2 million in Spain.

Aside from these precise numerical results, the FEAD has had many indirect effects:

- While they cannot yet be precisely established due to the scarcity of statistics on the most disadvantaged populations all over Europe, the savings for society are still measurable, especially in terms of the prevention of humanitarian, social and health crises.
- Very often spearheaded by unpaid or voluntary action, implementation of the FEAD is producing a significant leverage effect for all European public policies.
- More generally, the FEAD provides support for the tireless commitment of millions of unpaid workers and volunteers participating in the efforts of non-profit organisations in every European country, without whom the most vulnerable – and even most marginalised – regions would be vulnerable to every kind of adverse factor.

The explicit social vocation of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived contributes to the strengthening of social cohesion within the European Union.

### **The structural role of food aid**

Among the different kinds of aid supplied through the FEAD, food aid is particularly important since it answers a twofold requirement:

- It is an unconditional emergency aid. Without it, tens of millions of Europeans would go hungry. It recognises individual dignity and, in that regard, is a vital precondition for social integration.
- Food aid also assists many different kinds of population. It is an efficient way of using sharing and exchange between those supplying aid and those who need it to identify and mitigate the obstacles that people face.

In this respect, food aid can be seen as true means of providing access to lasting social reintegration for different populations. It also forms a key basis for the supply of other assistance measures: budget advice, support for job seekers, access to culture and leisure activities, access to rights, access to holidays, access to sport, and so on.

### **For an ambitious, universal, autonomous FEAD!**

The future of the FEAD is guaranteed until 2020. Negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MAFF) will be starting soon and should enable a view of the future, durability and perimeter of the Fund.

In this context, our associative networks are campaigning for a FEAD that upholds the spirit of the founding articles of the European Union, and the urgent need for solidarity that is the prime purpose of its institutions.

To achieve this, the FEAD must be:

**Ambitious:** the FEAD must be equipped with the means to achieve its goals determined by the Europe 2020 strategy: to reduce by at least 20 million the numbers of people threatened by poverty and social exclusion. So the resources assigned to the FEAD must be increased to tackle the worsening of poverty that has caused a surge in the needs of the people assisted by our associations.

**Universal:** the FEAD must provide assistance for all those who find themselves in a situation of distress and poverty, assessed according to criteria of individual economic, social and personal urgency. Unconditional assistance must remain the rule and principle of the FEAD's action. Segmenting the implementation of the fund according to 'target populations' means creating new kinds of exclusion and pitting different types of poverty against each other, according to a rationale that is highly damaging to the efficiency and durability of the action taken by associations.

**Autonomous:** the FEAD must acquire a fully independent identity and work alongside and complementarily to other social funds to act as one of the European Union's responses to poverty, which impacts on all its regions. The FEAD must not be merged into a broader area of public policy where it would disappear.

Consequently, the FEAD cannot be limited to:

- *A general policy uniquely related to the idea of the 'employability' of persons, which is the approach favoured by the European Social Fund (ESF).* The FEAD's mission goes beyond simply finding employment: the concept of social integration cannot be reduced to a simple economic issue. The measures it implements are often necessary before the stage of economic and occupational reintegration can be reached.

Also, many populations who benefit from FEAD support are not directly concerned by the problem of employability (children, elderly persons, the disabled and the chronically ill). The social inclusion of these groups cannot be defined by their occupational integration.

This is why there must be a genuine policy of complementarity between the FEAD and the ESF to cover the experiences of the people concerned as a whole.

- *A European system to combat food waste.* The FEAD is developing a diversified strategy of food aid based on the needs of people and their freedom of choice and balanced diet. It provides associations with multiannual visibility, ensures the stability of their resources and offers the means of supplying people with assistance wherever they are or live, so contributing to the equal treatment and dignity of all.

In this respect, the recovery of unsold goods with a view to combatting waste cannot be seen as solving a shortage of resources assigned to food aid, since it is erratic and not particularly sustainable. Moreover, the foodstuffs procured by the FEAD – frozen foods, milk, flour, tinned meat, etc. – cannot be supplied by recovering unsold food.

So not only can the campaign against food waste (already a long-term commitment of associations) not replace a dedicated fund, but it would actually run counter to the aim of reducing waste. Indeed, because of its support for associations, the FEAD facilitates the recovery of unsold foodstuffs and so has a genuinely exponential effect. This must be taken into account when assessing the Fund and its true economic impact, since it provides direct support for the entire foodstuffs production chain.

So the aim is to consolidate a genuine complementarity of sources of supply, between foodstuffs from the FEAD and gifts in kind as a whole.

***The Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived is absolutely essential to the fight against poverty and exclusion in Europe. We are calling for general action to ensure that it is extended and expanded from 2020 on.***

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