



Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived

Meeting Report

9th FEAD Network Meeting: 'THE ROLE OF VOLUNTEERS IN FEAD DELIVERY'

1 March 2018, Hotel Bloom, Brussels

Social Europe

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9th FEAD Network Meeting on the role of volunteers in FEAD delivery

Hotel Bloom, Brussels, 1st of March, 2018

On 1 March 2018, the European Commission hosted the 9th 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 discuss the involvement of volunteers in FEAD delivery. The meeting was organised by Ecorys UK on behalf of the European Commission. 84 delegates from 21 Member States¹ attended the event at Hotel Bloom in Brussels, representing a range of stakeholders, including Managing Authorities, partner organisations, other local, regional and national actors, European Commission representatives, EU-level partner organisations and the wider EU community.

Session 1 – Introduction and Update on FEAD Activities for 2018

Vicki Donlevy, Director, Policy and Research at Ecorys UK opened the meeting by welcoming participants and presenting the programme for the day. Vicki underlined the importance of volunteering in FEAD delivery and encouraged all participants to contribute their experience and expertise throughout the day.

Alessandra Cancedda, Senior Consultant in Social Affairs at Ecorys subsequently presented the FEAD Network survey results.

Conducted in January, the survey covered four areas: members' current involvement in FEAD, members' experience of FEAD delivery in 2017, their experience with the Network in 2017, and their future expectations for the Network and platform. The survey was well received, with 130 complete and 167 partial responses from 27 Member States, and from a broad range of organisations (national level partner organisations, Managing Authorities, EU-level stakeholders, and national-level stakeholders). Compared to 2016, members reported having learnt significantly more from the Network, in particular when it comes to the different methods and approaches used when implementing FEAD assistance in other EU countries. The FEAD Network Meetings that respondents found most useful were meetings held in conjunction with project visits (namely the 2017 FEAD Network Meetings organised in Berlin and Paris). Topics members would like to see addressed in 2018 included partnership building, monitoring and evaluation, involvement of end recipients, and volunteering. Finally, the three preferred FEAD Network online products were the catalogue of case studies presenting project experiences, thematic dossiers and infographics.

Vicki Donlevy concluded the introduction with an overview of the Network updates. She encouraged Network members to join the [new FEAD Network Facebook group](#), which will replace the Yammer page going forward. She also reminded participants to sign up to the FEAD newsletter, the core



¹ Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, UK

communication medium of the Network. Finally, Vicki provided an overview of the FEAD Network Meetings of 2018, whose topics were selected based on the survey and in consultation with DG EMPL.

- The 10th FEAD Network Meeting will take place on 24-25th April in Sweden (Malmö) and Denmark (Copenhagen) and revolve around FEAD's contribution to delivering the European Pillar of Social Rights;
- The 11th Meeting will take place in Brussels in June to discuss the building of partnerships;
- The 12th Meeting will be hosted in Malta over two days in September. It will deal with the provision of accompanying measures alongside food distribution and include project visits on the second day
- The 13th Meeting will take place in Brussels in November to wrap up the year and tackle monitoring and evaluation.

Following this introduction, Vicki invited Marie-Anne Paraskevas, Senior Policy Officer (DG EMPL) to officially kick-start the meeting.

Session 2 – Welcome from the Commission

Marie-Anne Paraskevas, Senior Policy Officer, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission greeted the participants, reiterating the strong commitment of DG EMPL to FEAD, and provided an update on the future of the Fund post-2020. As already announced, FEAD will be included under the wider European Social Fund+, together with **the ESF and EaSI**. An open consultation has been launched on the future of FEAD and EU funds more generally, in which all Network members are invited to take part. DG EMPL has also initiated the impact assessment of **ESF+**. While acknowledging the concerns raised by such changes, Marie-Anne confirmed the specificity and the flexibility of FEAD will be preserved over the next programming period, and the Network will be maintained considering its high added value in bringing together relevant stakeholders and fostering mutual learning.



Session 3 – Panel discussion on the importance of volunteers

Gabriella Civico, Director of the European Volunteer Centre (EVC) kicked-off the panel by providing a broad perspective on the importance of volunteering across Europe. Drawing on the declarations of Marian Harkin – an Irish MEP who considers volunteers a “valuable source of renewable energy”² for Europe – Gabriella compared volunteers to windmills. Just like windmills, volunteers represent a sustainable source of energy, but they come in all shapes and sizes and have a vast array of roles. Some of them are very visible, working in the streets, while some of them are hidden, working in offices, at home and in the homes of people they support. When engaging with volunteers, it is crucial to understand what form of volunteering and role best fits volunteers’ aspirations. Gabriella deplored the lack of data on volunteering in Europe, which makes it very difficult to understand the profiles and

² See: <http://www.marianharkin.com/news/latest-news/single-article/article/2011-european-year-of-volunteering-our-most-valuable-source-of-renewable-energy/#.WqFnOdKyqHs>

motivations of volunteers. She advocated for initiatives to fill the gap to enable better evidence-based policies on volunteering.



Further developing the windmill analogy, Gabriella highlighted that while many people appreciate volunteers' value, some can be suspicious of them. There are concerns that volunteers may be stealing jobs or may not be properly trained, and there are questions around their motivation to work for free. It is important here again to take such concerns into account when working with volunteers. Another similarity with windmills is that volunteers need maintenance. Gabriella stressed that organisations working with volunteers need an internal volunteer engagement policy covering the processes of volunteer management and practicalities surrounding their involvement (such as insurance, expenses claim, etc.). She underlined the need for professionalization of the way organisations work with volunteers, and the need for actors to better understand the volunteer cycle. Finally, just like windmills, volunteers also need to be given energy and that can happen through recognising their skills and learning. Processes to recognise and validate formal and non-formal learning are crucial

to that end. More efforts should also be invested in giving visibility to the impact of volunteers.

Gabriella concluded her presentation by encouraging FEAD Network members to reach out to their national volunteers' centre, which can help source volunteers, support with training and provide information about legal frameworks or funding opportunities. Gabriella closed her presentation with a quote: "Sometimes the problem feels so big that changing one life does not seem enough. Volunteers know that it is."

Vasiliki Papachristou, Coordinator of the FEAD volunteer team at the Hellenic Red Cross presented how the social welfare service of her Ioannina Regional Red Cross branch works with volunteers. In addition to 60 stable volunteers, the service recruits and trains about 25 new volunteers each year. Those volunteers undergo a training programme composed of a two-month theoretical course, a 90-hour volunteer internship and a written test. About 15 of those volunteers directly contribute to the delivery of FEAD under the guidance of her branch, by contacting and informing individuals and families; receiving and counselling potential end recipients; storing and packaging food and material; contacting end recipients to inform them about distribution times and places; and distributing material to end recipients. To date, 25 volunteer team meetings have been conducted, 23 distributions have taken place and 269 end recipients have been reached.



Vasiliki explained that recruiting volunteers is not a major challenge, due to the presence of important student communities in the operation area. Retaining volunteers, however, proves challenging, as students usually leave the area once they have completed their studies. Also, as a result of the refugee crisis, volunteers are less available as many are busy with other activities. Furthermore, some recipients refuse FEAD items on offer as they are unhappy with their quality and quantity, which creates disappointment and frustration for volunteers and leads some of them to disengage.

Following the presentations of Gabriella and Vasiliki, the floor was opened to participants. **Key challenges** raised included:

- The importance of **recognising the skills and competences** of volunteers. Tools such as the volunteering passport used in some European countries were put forward as promising starting points. However, Gabriella stressed that national education ministries have a crucial role to play in acknowledging and making use of those tools.
- The **lack of a “volunteering culture” in some countries** was reported to be a challenge for recruitment. Panellists underlined the importance of education of youth as a key factor for fostering committed long-term volunteers. They also underlined the role that employees, companies and media can play either in engaging directly in volunteering or in positively raising awareness about it.
- Another challenge experienced by Network members revolves around the **gender of volunteers**. While an important proportion of FEAD work is hard physical work (loading/unloading products), it is proving difficult to recruit male volunteers. It was suggested to proactively target men in recruitment procedures, and to ask for their help with very specific tasks, as breaking down the work is likely to increase their willingness to get involved.
- A final issue revolved around the **allocation of volunteers**, as some participants had experienced situations in which there were too many volunteers and not enough professionals to organise the work. Gabriella highlighted that national volunteer centres can play an important role, as they can help to reallocate volunteers to areas where they are most needed.

Session 4 – Update on the interim results of the FEAD evaluation

Marili Parissaki, an Independent Evaluation Expert presented the interim results of the FEAD evaluation. Based on the evidence already collected, FEAD has been found efficient in intercepting situations of extreme poverty and reaching out to the most deprived, including families with children, homeless people, EU migrants, elderly people with low incomes, and undocumented migrants. Another important trend is that FEAD seems to represent a more stable platform for the distribution of food and in fact represent up to 70% of the food aid in some Member States. Concretely, 1 million tonnes of food have been distributed to about 15 million people through FEAD, primarily in France, Romania, Spain and Poland. Basic material assistance has reached around 660,000 people. Finally, social inclusion measures under OPII have reached around 23,000 recipients.

In addition, it appears FEAD is instrumental in alleviating poverty in that it improves cooperation, partnership and networking; greatly contributes to empowering the beneficiaries and delivery organisations; and raises awareness around the needs of the most deprived, as well as around the social dimension of poverty. The cost benefit of FEAD was found to be overwhelmingly positive, with an added value estimated at €3.8 billion. FEAD added value translates into additional food and material assistance, better quality of items on offer, a better geographical spread, more accompanying measures and new target groups such as elderly people, EU migrants and homeless people.

The areas for improvement identified as part of the evaluation revolve around the need to increase the flexibility of FEAD delivery, in particular when addressing the new and changing needs of the most vulnerable recipients. Also, the capacity of delivery organisations could be improved, especially with regard to the accompanying measures they provide and reducing food waste. It was furthermore suggested that FEAD could be used for food donations, the self-imposed administrative burden could be reduced (resulting from heavy procurement procedures in some Member States), and the monitoring system could be more result-orientated. Suggestions put forward to address those shortcomings included training delivery organisations; involving local actors in the identification of end recipients; establishing closer links with supermarkets and food banks to reduce waste; and tailoring accompanying measures according to the needs of different groups.

Sessions 5 and 6 – Case study marketplace (in parallel)

For the following two sessions, participants were split into five groups and attended four consecutive workshops. As part of each workshop, a FEAD case study on volunteering was presented, followed by

questions and a group discussion to explore challenges, success factors and issues related to successfully and sustainably involving volunteers.

Table 1: The “FRISK” project: building sustainable partnerships between volunteers and organisations, Médecins du Monde (Sweden)

At the first table, **Lena Thurang, Programme Manager at Médecins du Monde (Doctors of the World)** presented the way in which her organisation engages with volunteers in a sustainable way. Doctors of the World has been working in Sweden since 1991, operating medical clinics for vulnerable communities who lack access to healthcare. The FRISK project targets EU mobile citizens and in particular Roma people from Romania and Bulgaria. It provides education on preventative healthcare and self-care to the target group through face-to-face chats or group courses. The majority of the activities are carried out by the 40 volunteers, most of whom are medical professionals such as doctors and nurses.

Key points of the discussions:

- It is important to understand the different reasons behind people's decision to volunteer. This helps the organisations to manage volunteers' expectations and ultimately get the work done.
- Clear and transparent communication between the organisation and volunteers is crucial, particularly in relation to changes to how things are done or to the structure of the organisation. It is important for volunteers to feel they are valued and part of the team.
- When recruiting volunteers, organisations need to explain to them the importance of their roles in the project cycle – however small they may be.
- It is important for organisations to have designated people at the organisation as the main point of contact for volunteers in terms of support and advice.
- It is important to provide incentives for volunteers, even very small incentives, to ensure they feel appreciated and stay committed to the organisation.

Table 2: Effectively meeting volunteers' training needs (Red Cross, Italy)

The Italian Red Cross relies on 150,000 volunteers all over the country, 20,000 of whom are dedicated to social activities. It would be impossible for the organisation to cover its territory so extensively through paid staff. **Roberta Fusacchia, Director of the Volunteering Department and Michella Fornelli, Project leader for social activities and training programmes** stressed the importance of training volunteers in order for them to be equipped to perform their social service safely and efficiently.

The Italian Red Cross has established three streams of training, depending on the role carried out by their volunteers, who are either Social Operators, Coordinators or Training Managers. Social Operators are responsible for identifying situations of vulnerability in the communities, and implementing social interventions in collaboration with local services. Those volunteers are therefore trained in needs analysis, in soft skills more generally (active listening, communication, empathy, etc.) and in project management, and also receive content-related information (such as on the 2020 Red Cross Strategy, on the situation of the Welfare State in Europe, etc.). As Coordinators have monitoring, planning and managing responsibilities, their training revolves around leadership, problem solving, decision-making, fundraising and governance. Finally, Training Managers are responsible for every aspect of the educational path of the organisation staff and beneficiaries. Their training therefore address



organisational skills, basic teaching skills, soft skills (such as communication, relations and emotional intelligence) and provides them with an in-depth knowledge of course content and related guidelines.

Key points of the discussions included:

- It is crucial to invest in volunteers' training needs, as this reinforces their commitment and motivation and empowers them. It is worth the investment, even if volunteers end up leaving, as they might come back later on (in fact, it is recommended to keep in touch with such individuals). It is also crucial to tailor training to the volunteers' needs and roles within the organisation to ensure they perform their tasks efficiently.
- It is successful to involve volunteers themselves in training new starters and to encourage peer-to-peer training more generally.
- It is important to develop a training plan based on values and on the specific culture and history of the organisation.
- Refresher courses can be organised to tackle specific challenges (e.g.: the influx of migrants and refugees due to the refugee crisis).

Table 3: Innovative methods for recruiting volunteers (Polish Committee of Social Welfare, Poland)

Dominik Trelinski, Project Manager at the Polish Committee of Social Welfare explained that it is particularly difficult to recruit volunteers in Poland and in the region where his organisation operates. Most people prefer to volunteer in commercial organisations, in the hope it might lead to employment opportunities. Against that background, the Polish Committee of Social Welfare is recruiting volunteers innovatively. As the Committee also implements seven ESF programmes, end recipients of those programmes are encouraged to become volunteers for the FEAD programme. As part of the ESF programmes, recipients receive psychological support. During this psychological support, ESF recipients are made aware of the opportunities to volunteer in FEAD delivery and to give back to the community. This has proved successful, as over 60% of FEAD volunteers were originally ESF recipients. In addition, FEAD volunteers attend 15 hours of training sessions partially aimed at further inspiring them to volunteer and give back to their community.

Key points of the discussions included:

- Successful methods put forward for recruiting included word of mouth; organising 'open door' events; cooperating with high schools; cooperating with companies (as part of their corporate social responsibility or as part of paid volunteering days); media campaigns with the participation of well-known governmental faces; and ensuring the recognition of the skills of volunteers to help improve their employability.



- Successful methods put forward to retain volunteers included speaking individually to volunteers on a regular basis; involving volunteers in the definition of their roles and responsibilities; having new faces join the team regularly; introducing a uniform for volunteers; and recognising the value of volunteers.

- It was suggested that organisations make it an objective to have a proportion of their end recipients ending up volunteering and work around facilitating this.

Table 4: Successfully recruiting new volunteers for FEAD activities (French Federation of Food Banks)

Marie Castagné, responsible for Public Affairs at the French Federation of Food Banks presented the different recruitment methods deployed by the Federation. She explained that volunteers are crucial to the French food banks, as they represent 90% of their human resources, amounting to about 6,000 staff (around 76 volunteers per Food Bank). The Federation deploys a wide range of recruitment techniques, tailored according to the different types of volunteers they wish to attract. The organisation for instance launched a new recruitment campaign in September 2017, aimed at a general audience. As part of this wide-reaching campaign, the Federation released a dedicated website³ and held a national press conference about the campaign kick-off. To maximise its reach, the Federation made intensive use of online social networks and Google advertising, but also produced dedicated leaflets and secured advertorial prints in relevant magazines. Furthermore, the Federation partners with a French volunteering platform (DIFFUZ) for episodic volunteers.



A more specific recruitment campaign led by the Federation targets skilled people who are working but are still willing to give some time and expertise on the side. In that context, the Federation launched actions in partnership with private companies to inform employees about the opportunities to volunteer as part of the 'skills sponsorship programmes' and to volunteer part time for seniors.

Marie reported that the main challenge in recruiting and working with volunteers relates to finding volunteers who can come regularly enough to ensure the continuity of the missions of the Federation, especially since food products are perishable. Retirees are less likely to come during holidays, for instance, and young people prefer coming for a couple of hours when they can and want. That needs to be kept in mind when planning the allocation of volunteers.

Key points of the discussions included:

- The importance of developing a recruitment strategy and having a staff member dedicated to the recruitment and coordination of volunteers in each food bank;
- The importance of adapting the communications to the target group(s), in particular "to speak their language", and to explain the purpose of the volunteer's involvement. Involving volunteers themselves in communications campaigns at local level was signalled as being particularly helpful;
- The importance of carrying out introduction programmes for volunteers in good time after they express willingness, in order to help prevent them from losing interest;
- The importance of certifying the skills of volunteers.

Table 5: Including end recipients as volunteers (Caritas, Croatia)

Danijela Szipanic Graf, Project Manager at a local branch of Caritas Croatia covered the ways in which her organisation has encouraged end recipients to work as volunteers for FEAD delivery. The now completed FEAD project "*Preventing poverty in Zadar County by distributing food and basic help*"

³ See: <https://www.giletsorange.fr/>

provided material support (food, school supplies, supplies for babies and toddlers) and technical, social and educational assistance to single people and families living in poverty or at risk of poverty.

Of the 2,000 beneficiaries or end recipients of the project, 15 expressed the wish to contribute to the project as volunteers helping to organise food parcels, distribute them to families in need and help elderly families with mobility problems to purchase their medication from pharmacies. These volunteers contributed 4,000 hours of work to the project. The project received a lot of attention from local and national media who gave them visibility. As a result, the Mayor of Zadar granted the volunteers a prize, which made them feel more visible and valued by the local community. Danijela did however stress the need to ensure beneficiaries volunteer willingly and do not feel obliged to volunteer as a way of paying back what they have received.

Key points of the discussions included:

- Most participants agreed that enabling end recipients to become volunteers in FEAD delivery might have a positive impact on their social inclusion and activation. They also agreed it is a good way to develop people's skills, self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Some concerns were raised, however, around the risk of further stigmatisation of end recipients who volunteer; around the lack of data on the real impact of volunteering for end recipients; and around privacy issues resulting from the privileged access that some beneficiaries of the programme have to information about other beneficiaries. It was suggested that this last point could be addressed by ensuring end recipients volunteer in a different branch or sector of activities than the one from which they receive support.

Session 7 – Interactive workshop: initiating and running a volunteer programme

Through this interactive activity, participants were given the opportunity to work together in groups to create a volunteer programme. The aim was to allow participants to share their own experiences in successful recruitment and engagement strategies, as well as to derive inspiration from the experience of others.

Participants were split into seven groups of about ten people, and each team could either choose from two hypothetical FEAD projects or come up with a FEAD project of their own inspiration, based on which they were invited to draw up a volunteer programme. When developing their programme, participants were encouraged to consider a series of non-exhaustive guiding questions under five main dimensions:

- **Mobilisation and recruitment:** What group(s) will be targeted? What messages will be used? What outreach methods will be deployed (posters, online campaign, radio advertising, outreach in universities, links with volunteer centres or the European Voluntary Service)? How many volunteers will be recruited? Will there be a selection process?
- **Training:** What skills will volunteers need to participate in the programme? Will volunteers receive training prior to commencing work and/or throughout their involvement in the project?
- **Management and retention:** How will the volunteers be managed? How will the work of volunteers be monitored and evaluated? Will there be team-building activities? Will there be processes in place to prevent volunteer burnout? What will be done to ensure that the volunteers remain engaged with the project for longer periods of time?
- **Resources:** What resources will be needed for every element of the programme?



- **Risks:** What is the biggest challenge you will face in this programme? What solutions do you see to it? At the end of the workshop, each group nominated a rapporteur to pitch their volunteer programme to the other participants in three minutes. The delegates then voted for the two best volunteer programmes.



Groups came up with a range of ideas for their volunteer programmes including:

- **“Chefs without borders”:** the idea behind this volunteer programme was to recruit retired chefs and dieticians to conduct cooking classes with FEAD end recipients. To attract this target group, the recruitment message would revolve around how potential volunteers can use their passion for useful social purposes.
- **“Hero of the Town”:** this project drew on the difficulties organisations encounter when distributing FEAD food products in remote areas. The idea was to recruit volunteers to deliver parcels directly to the homes of recipients unable to travel long distances to collection points. Targeted groups would include individuals with driving licenses, students, but also companies such as transport or mail/press distribution companies.
- **“2gether”:** drawing on the hypothetical project of mobile counselling for homeless individuals, this project consisted in recruiting expert volunteer teams of five with complementary profiles to reach out and advise end recipients.

After pitching their ideas to the group, a vote was held to choose the “best” two volunteer programmes.

Session 8 – Closing plenary session

Magda Tancau, Development officer at the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) opened the closing plenary session by thanking all the speakers, panellists, presenters and participants for their engagement in the discussions and workshops throughout the day. She invited both the winning team representatives on stage and awarded them a symbolic prize and a certificate for **‘Best volunteer programme’**. The winning teams’ rapporteurs pitched their projects to the entire Network. For more information on the winning projects, and other projects developed by participants, please see below and refer to Session 7.

Group 1 “Kitchen rendez-vous”, one of the winning groups



who would be in charge of selecting them, and agreements would be made with students, schools and professors. Volunteers would receive training on hygiene, safety and pedagogy, but also on intercultural communication, conflict management and psychology. They would have regular briefings and debriefs, during which they could highlight what works well and areas where they might need support.

Many FEAD end recipients do not know how to cook, which can prevent them from making the most of items on offer. The idea behind Kitchen rendez-vous is to recruit volunteer students from vocational schools to organise and lead cooking classes for FEAD recipients. Beyond the pedagogical and social dimension of the cooking classes, sessions would foster cultural exchange, as the recipes taught would be inspired from the culinary traditions of recipients' home countries. Students would be recruited directly through cookery schools,

Group 2 “Digital Volunteer Platform”, one of the winning groups



be matched with organisations in EU Member States of their choice.

Matching volunteers with organisations' needs can be a challenge. The idea behind Digital Volunteer Platform is for all individuals willing to volunteer to be able to register through an online application form and/or website, and be matched with organisations in need. The project would be managed by a board composed of major volunteering organisations. Initially, Digital Volunteer Platform would be conducted at national level, with the view to developing it into an EU-wide platform. Young people interested in travelling could then

Alessandra Cancedda closed the 9th FEAD Network Meeting by praising the intense exchange of ideas and insights that took place throughout the day on the diverse contexts in which delegates work. She reminded participants to join the new FEAD Network Facebook group and encouraged them to stay in touch online until the next meeting in Denmark and Sweden.

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 online.

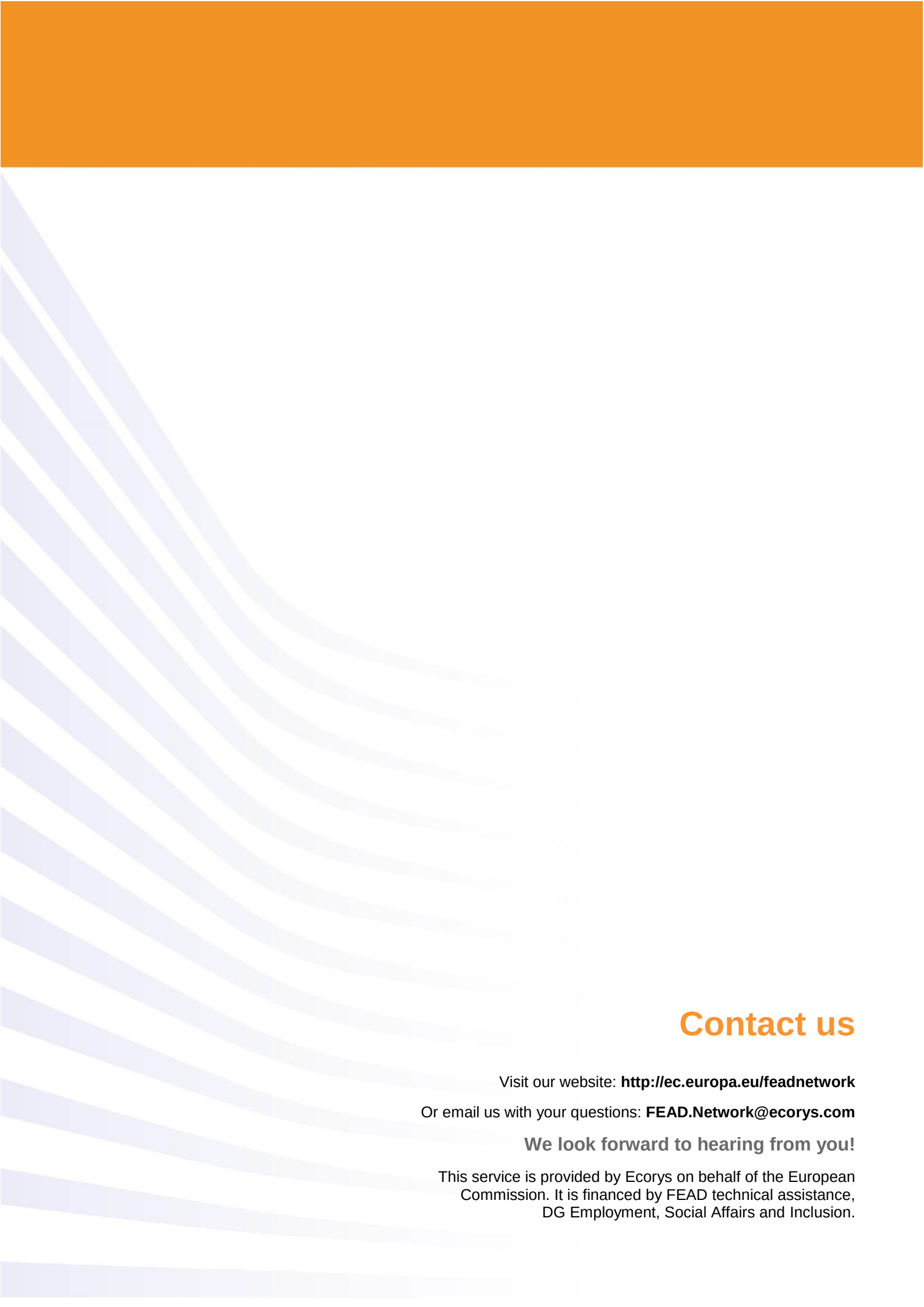
Ways to keep in touch

The FEAD Network has moved to a new online community on Facebook. The new Group is ideal for sharing content and referring colleagues to the group. Keep an eye out for new content including Facebook Live, vlogs and prizes.

[Facebook.com/groups/FEADNetwork](https://www.facebook.com/groups/FEADNetwork)

Stay up to date with news, sign up by visiting and signing up to: uk.ecorys.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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