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Slovakia – Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

Linking FEAD end recipients to social workers

WHY?

There are generally a range of social issues that contribute to the social exclusion of deprived individuals. In Slovakia, as in other countries, **food can act as a gateway** to address additional social issues. As a result, food parcels are distributed in the hope that they will not only provide basic products to those in need, but that end recipients will also have a chance to learn about and access other relevant support services. Counselling and general advice are offered alongside the provision of food aid, as a way to help individuals to address these challenges.

WHAT?

Food parcels are distributed by **accredited social workers** who are able to provide counselling and advice on a variety of topics to those who are interested. In total, there are 202 social workers involved in the current distribution process (113 from Caritas Slovakia, 81 from the Red Cross and 8 from the Charity of Saint Elizabeth; these are the three main partner organisations for the implementation of FEAD in Slovakia). Basic information is available in the form of leaflets that are distributed to end recipients along with the food. Social workers conduct individual or group interviews with end recipients, during which information leaflets are available for end recipients to take away with them. The leaflets contain information about other available services, as well as for example advice on how to store food, healthy eating and managing a family budget.

In many cases the social workers **signpost** end recipients to additional non-FEAD services, if they are in need of more in-depth assistance. For example, these might include ESF projects that provide training and help to access the labour market. In some cases, social workers from ESF financed projects help FEAD funded partner organisations in Slovakia by reaching out to end recipients identified through FEAD, informing them of upcoming distributions and assisting during these. Additional services also include advice on personal bankruptcy and financial counselling, information on accommodation in social facilities as well as general services offered by NGOs in the area.

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The distribution of food packages is the first step in our work with the end recipients. It helps us to open the door and approach the people in difficult circumstances. And we can start trying to find complex solutions to their complicated life situations.”

Monika Pribelová, Caritas Slovakia

WHO?

Three main partner organisations (the Slovak Red Cross, Caritas Slovakia and the Charity of Saint Elizabeth) are involved in the implementation of FEAD activities in Slovakia. In turn, these main organisations work with more than 30 smaller partners to deliver relevant support and services. A network of accredited social workers distribute the food parcels and provide counselling and advice as part of a **holistic, personalised and professional service**.

The target groups are primarily families with dependent children, retired people and people with a disability in need who receive benefits. Food parcels are distributed either twice or four times a year through a **wide distribution network** of over 2,500 distribution points that reach nearly every town and village in Slovakia. At these distribution points end recipients may also receive advice and wider social support. In 2016, 197,005 food parcels were distributed to end recipients, and for the first half of 2017 this number was 180,742 (distribution done in two rounds).

HOW?

It is hoped that by providing support in a more holistic way, **end recipients' resilience will increase** when it comes to dealing with potential crisis situations. The main advantage of adopting a broader approach is the reduction of the number of those at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Thanks to the support they receive (in overcoming unemployment, lack of information on available financial support or other social issues), it is hoped that end recipients will be more able to fight poverty and **proactively manage their own life situations**.

The list of end recipients is generated from an up-to-date national administrative database. The compilation of an official national list means that partner organisations are able to reach out to end recipients that they may not have known about before. Their task is to contact the end recipients and notify them when and where their food parcels will be distributed. If the food parcels are unclaimed for whatever reason (around 5% of the cases), the partner organisation can re-distribute them.

For more information on the project,
contact Ivana Štefančíková at the Slovak Ministry
of Labour and Social Affairs via:
E-Mail: Ivana.Stefancikova@employment.gov.sk