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Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived

Background information on
'THE EUROPEAN PILLAR OF SOCIAL RIGHTS'

10th FEAD Network Meeting

Copenhagen and Malmö, 24-25 April 2018

Social Europe

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This paper has been prepared by Charlotte Ruitinga and Olivia Geymond of Ecorys, on behalf of DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion of the European Commission. It is financed by FEAD technical assistance.

1. Introduction

On 22nd October 2014, the President-elect of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, stated to the European Parliament: “*What I want is for Europe to have a social triple-A rating. That is just as important as an economic and financial triple-A rating.*” He called for a more ‘social’ Europe in which employment and social considerations are given a more prominent role in European policymaking. A year later, in his first State of the Union address in September 2015, he announced his flagship social initiative, the **European Pillar of Social Rights**, and with it his ideas for building a more inclusive and fairer European Union.

Following the completion of an extensive consultation phase, the European Pillar of Social Rights was ultimately proclaimed by the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission at the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth in Gothenburg, Sweden on 17th November 2017.¹ Consequently, EU Institutions, Member States, public authorities, social partners and civil society organisations are now jointly tasked with acting on the principles laid out in the Pillar.²

The upcoming FEAD Network meeting on **24th and 25th April** in **Copenhagen and Malmö** will explore the role of FEAD stakeholders in the delivery of the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights and will present the various ways in which FEAD can be used to foster the social inclusion of some of Europe’s most vulnerable individuals. This background paper briefly contextualises the topics that will be addressed over the two-day event. It presents the 20 principles and rights defined in the Pillar, as well as noting the way in which FEAD is already tackling some of the issues that the Pillar aims to address.

2. Understanding the European Pillar of Social Rights

The European Pillar of Social Rights consists of a set of 20 principles and rights under three strands, namely ‘**equal opportunities and access to the labour market**’, ‘**fair working conditions**’ and ‘**social protection and inclusion**’.³ While there are certain rights and principles more directly applicable to the daily on-the-ground activities of FEAD stakeholders, it is important to consider the principles as a whole, as well as their relation to each other. Gender equality (Principle 2a), for instance, can be applied universally across all other principles and rights.

While particular principles will be singled out in section 4 in order to illustrate the manner in which FEAD can contribute directly to their implementation, this section presents the European Pillar of Social Rights in its entirety. An overview has been created to present the 20 principles and rights under each of the three strands. Subsequently, this section will touch upon how various stakeholders are able to contribute to the implementation of the Pillar principles, as well as the manner in which the implementation process will be monitored at EU level.

¹ European Commission (2017) Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth – factsheets. Available via: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/publications/social-summit-fair-jobs-and-growth-factsheets_en

² European Commission (2017) Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on Establishing a European Pillar of Social Rights [COM (2017) 250 final]. Available via: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A52017DC0250>

³ European Union (2017) European Pillar of Social Rights – Booklet. Available via: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/social-summit-european-pillar-social-rights-booklet_en.pdf

The 20 principles and rights of the European Pillar of Social Rights

Equal opportunities and access to the labour market

Principle 1: Education, training and lifelong learning

Everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and successfully manage transitions in the labour market.

Principle 2: Gender equality

a. Equality of treatment and opportunities between women and men must be ensured and fostered in all areas, including regarding participation in the labour market, terms and conditions of employment, and career progression.

b. Women and men have the right to equal pay for work of equal value.

Principle 3: Equal opportunities

Regardless of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, everyone has the right to equal treatment and opportunities regarding employment, social protection, education, and access to goods and services available to the public. Equal opportunities of under-represented groups shall be fostered.

Principle 4: Active support to employment

a. Everyone has the right to timely and tailor-made assistance to improve employment or self-employment prospects. This includes the right to receive support for job searching, training and re-qualification. Everyone has the right to transfer social protection and training entitlements during professional transitions.

b. Young people have the right to continued education, apprenticeship, traineeship or a job offer of good standing within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving education.

c. Unemployed people have the right to personalised, continuous and consistent support. The long-term unemployed have the right to an in-depth individual assessment within 18 months of unemployment.

Fair working conditions

Principle 5: Secure and adaptable employment

- a. Regardless of the type and duration of the employment relationship, workers have the right to fair and equal treatment regarding working conditions, access to social protection and training. The transition towards open-ended forms of employment shall be fostered.
- b. In accordance with legislation and collective agreements, the necessary flexibility for employers to adapt swiftly to changes in the economic context shall be ensured.
- c. Innovative forms of work that ensure quality working conditions shall be fostered. Entrepreneurship and self-employment shall be encouraged. Occupational mobility shall be facilitated.
- d. Employment relationships that lead to precarious working conditions shall be prevented, including by prohibiting abuse of atypical contracts. Any probation period should be of reasonable duration.

Principle 6: Wages

- a. Workers have the right to fair wages that provide for a decent standard of living.
- b. Adequate minimum wages shall be ensured, in a way that provides for the satisfaction of the needs of the worker and his / her family in the light of national economic and social conditions, whilst safeguarding access to employment and incentives to seek work. In-work poverty shall be prevented.
- c. All wages shall be set in a transparent and predictable way according to national practices and respecting the autonomy of the social partners.

Principle 7: Information about employment conditions and protection in case of dismissals

- a. Workers have the right to be informed in writing at the start of employment about their rights and obligations resulting from the employment relationship, including during a probationary period.
- b. Prior to any dismissal, workers have the right to be informed of the reasons and be granted a reasonable period of notice. They have the right to access effective and impartial dispute resolution and, in case of unjustified dismissal, the right to redress, including adequate compensation.

Principle 8: Social dialogue and involvement of workers

- a. The social partners shall be consulted on the design and implementation of economic, employment and social policies according to national practices. They shall be encouraged to negotiate and conclude collective agreements in matters relevant to them, while respecting their autonomy and the right to collective action. Where appropriate, agreements concluded between the social partners shall be implemented at the level of the EU and its Member States.
- b. Workers or their representatives have the right to be informed and consulted in good time on matters relevant to them, in particular on the transfer, restructuring and merger of undertakings and on collective redundancies.
- c. Support for increased capacity of social partners to promote social dialogue shall be encouraged.

Principle 9: Work-life balance

Parents and people with caring responsibilities have the right to suitable leave, flexible working arrangements and access to care services. Women and men shall have equal access to special leaves of absence in order to fulfil their caring responsibilities and be encouraged to use them in a balanced way.

Principle 10: Healthy, safe and well-adapted work environment and data protection

- a. Workers have the right to a high level of health and safety protection at work.
- b. Workers have the right to a working environment adapted to their professional needs and which enables them to prolong their participation in the labour market.
- c. Workers have the right to have their personal data protected in the employment context..

Social protection and inclusion

Principle 11: Childcare and support to children

- a. Children have the right to affordable early childhood education and care of good quality.
- b. Children have the right to protection from poverty. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds have the right to specific measures to enhance equal opportunities.

Principle 12: Social protection

Regardless of the type and duration of their employment relationship, workers and, under comparable conditions, the self-employed have the right to adequate social protection.

Principle 13: Unemployment benefits

The unemployed have the right to adequate activation support from public employment services to (re)integrate into the labour market and adequate unemployment benefits of reasonable duration, in line with their contributions and national eligibility rules. Such benefits shall not constitute a disincentive for a quick return to employment.

Principle 14: Minimum income

Everyone lacking sufficient resources has the right to adequate minimum income benefits ensuring a life of dignity at all stages of life, and effective access to enabling goods and services. For those who can work, minimum income benefits should be combined with incentives to (re)integrate into the labour market.

Principle 15: Old age income and pensions

- a. Workers and the self-employed in retirement have the right to a pension commensurate to their contributions and ensuring an adequate income. Women and men shall have equal opportunities to acquire pension rights.
- b. Everyone has the right to resources that ensure they can live with dignity in old age.

Principle 16: Healthcare

Everyone has the right to timely access to affordable, preventive and curative healthcare of good quality.

Principle 17: Inclusion of people with disabilities

People with disabilities have the right to income support that ensures they can live with dignity, services that enable them to participate in the labour market and in society, and a work environment adapted to their needs.

Principle 18: Long-term care

Everyone has the right to affordable long-term care services of good quality, in particular home-care and community-based services.

Principle 19: Housing and assistance for the homeless

- a. Access to social housing or housing assistance of good quality shall be provided for those in need.
- b. Vulnerable people have the right to appropriate assistance and protection against forced eviction.
- c. Adequate shelter and services shall be provided to the homeless in order to promote their social inclusion.

Principle 20: Access to essential services

Everyone has the right to access essential services of good quality, including water, sanitation, energy, transport, financial services and digital communications. Support for access to such services shall be available for those in need.

3. Delivering on the European Pillar of Social Rights

Through the European Pillar of Social Rights, the Commission is giving a new impetus to the concrete implementation of its principles and rights by offering a range of tools and competences to local, regional and national authorities, social partners and civil society actors. Notably, the social dimension will be included in the European Semester, as the National Reform Programmes that set out priorities and actions at national level and the subsequent Country Specific Recommendations will need to include social priorities and actions. The Commission will continue to provide the funding for the relevant structural reforms and initiatives investing in people, in line with the priorities outlined in Country Reports and the Country Specific Recommendations⁴, for instance in the form of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), notably the European Social Fund (ESF) but also through FEAD.

In March 2018, the 27 European Semester country reports⁵ were published in which the European Commission presented its analysis of the economic and social situation across Member States and their progress in implementing the Country Specific Recommendations. Of particular note is that for the first time, the country reports emphasised the mainstreaming of the principles and priorities of the Pillar in their reports⁶. They additionally made use of the data gathered by the newly launched **Social Scoreboard**, which was introduced to track employment and social performances across the EU and is being managed by the Joint Research Centre (JRC).

The Social Scoreboard accompanies the European Pillar of Social Rights and monitors the implementation of the Pillar by recording and analysing the performance of EU Member States across 12 priority areas. The Scoreboard is structured around three dimensions:⁷

1. **Equal opportunities and access to the labour market** – including indicators related to fairness in education, skills and lifelong learning, gender equality in the labour market, inequality and upward mobility, living conditions and poverty, and youth;
2. **Dynamic labour markets and fair working conditions** – including indicators related to labour force structure, labour market dynamics, and income;
3. **Public support, social protection and inclusion** – covering indicators related to fair outcomes through public support and/or social protection, mainly covering the provision of services and social safety nets.

Particularly useful for FEAD stakeholders, for instance, could be the monitoring of the trends related to 'living conditions and poverty' in which they present the at-risk-of-poverty or social inclusion rate (AROPE), the at-risk-of-poverty-rate (AROP), the severe material deprivation rate (SMD), the number of persons living in households with very low work intensity and the percentage of individuals living in severe housing deprivation.

The introduction of the Social Scoreboard is one of the three new elements introduced as part of the European Semester in order to help monitor the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights. Additionally, there will be a mainstreaming of the priorities of the Pillar in the European Semester and selected themes will be reported on annually (e.g. through the Annual Growth Survey, the Country

⁴ European Commission (2018) Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council and the European Economic and Social Committee. Monitoring the Implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights. [COM (2018) 130 final] Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2018%3A130%3AFIN>

⁵ Which includes all Member States except Greece, which is currently under a stability support programme.

⁶ European Commission (2018) European Semester Winter Package Out. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1226&newsId=9063&furtherNews=yes>

⁷ European Commission (2018) A Social Scoreboard for the European Pillar of Social Rights. Available at: <https://composite-indicators.jrc.ec.europa.eu/social-scoreboard/>

Reports and through country-specific guidance). There will also be technical assistance, the promotion of benchmarking and exchange of good practices through dialogue with various stakeholders, and the strengthening of mutual learning opportunities across Member States.

4. FEAD's contribution to delivering on the European Pillar of Social Rights

FEAD stakeholders are on-the-ground actors that play a role in delivering on the European Pillar of Social Rights. FEAD funds initiatives that promote equal opportunities, fair access to the labour market and welfare systems, and foster social protection and inclusion. FEAD contributes in particular to fostering and delivering education, training and lifelong learning (Principle 1); equal opportunities (Principle 3); childcare and support to children (Principle 11); access to healthcare (Principle 16); inclusion of people with disabilities (Principle 17); housing and assistance to the homeless (Principle 19); and access to essential services (Principle 20). These priorities will be explored in particular depth at the Network meeting. The next sections will illustrate the contribution FEAD initiatives can make, or are making, to implementing the Pillar's principles.

4.1 Education, training and lifelong learning (Principle 1)

Education is key to improving opportunities for people at risk of poverty and social exclusion. The European Pillar of Social Rights seeks to ensure the right to quality and inclusion education, training and lifelong learning for all. FEAD contributes to delivering on this principle on the ground through measures such as **the provision of training and/or educational support**.

In OP I countries, this often takes place via accompanying measures to FEAD food and material assistance. For instance, a Maltese project takes the opportunity of food distribution to survey families about their level of education and interest in continuing education. Based on this assessment, families are referred to relevant service providers such as the National Literacy Agency. They can then benefit from services ranging from the provision of books for home use and advice on how to read with their children, to receiving information about available national-level support schemes such as financial assistance for school uniforms.

Similarly, in Slovenia, the regional Red Cross Association Ljubljana delivers around 200 workshops per year for end recipients of FEAD food and material assistance. Sessions cover topics such as sewing, recycling, reusing materials, producing natural housecleaning products and cosmetics, relaxation techniques, etc. In addition to improving their social skills, participants develop their practical skills and benefit from lifelong learning. The association encourages participants to run the workshops wherever possible and to become volunteers and mentors so as to further develop their skills. A parallel programme has been developed for children.

In OP II countries, FEAD projects can contribute more comprehensively to tackling social education through education and training. This is the case of the Dutch project *Living and Learning – Elderly in the Neighbourhood*. Elderly people with a migrant background are particularly subject to poverty and social exclusion in the Netherlands due to lack of education and poor language skills. The project encourages these vulnerable elders to become more socially active by offering them the chance to take part in skills-building activities such as informatics training, language courses or mathematics. Those training courses, in turn, empower the recipients to improve their situations on their own.

4.2 Childcare and support to children (Principle 11)

Over a quarter of Europeans aged 0-17 are at risk of poverty or social exclusion,⁸ meaning children are at higher risk of poverty compared to the rest of the population. The risk of growing up in poverty is the highest in Bulgaria, Romania and Greece.⁹ The impact of child poverty can have long-lasting effects on the well-being, development and health of children. Children experiencing poverty face a higher risk of social exclusion, stigmatisation and lifelong poverty. Against that background, Principle 11 of the European Pillar of Social Rights seeks to ensure children's protection from poverty, their right to equal opportunities, and their right to affordable early childhood education and good quality care. FEAD contributes to delivering on this principle in several ways.

A common way of supporting children in, or at risk of poverty, through FEAD is to **distribute food directly within schools and nurseries**. As an example, the Croatian project 'Grow up Equally' uses FEAD funding to provide a daily meal for 195 primary school children in, or at risk of, poverty in the Virovitica-Podravina county. Similarly, the Czech project 'School lunches for disadvantaged children' covers the costs of school lunches for over 3,000 children whose parents cannot afford them across 4 regions in the Czech Republic. Children benefitting from the project demonstrate better physical and mental health, and improved levels of school attendance.

FEAD also contributes to enhancing equal opportunities for children through the **distribution of basic educational materials**. This is the case with the FEAD-funded Austrian 'School starter parcels' project, which provides school supplies to the most deprived families at the beginning of each academic year. Over 33,000 parcels were distributed in 2015 alone, helping alleviate the financial burden that purchasing school materials represents for families with limited financial stability.

Finally, FEAD can contribute to **providing affordable early childhood education and good quality care**. Accompanying measures of FEAD-funded projects can support the learning and personal development of school and pre-school children from socially disadvantaged background whose parents are FEAD recipients. Such measures can include the organisation of learning assistance workshops, as well as creative and outdoor activities that contribute to the children's fulfilment.

4.3 Accessing healthcare (Principle 16)

Over a quarter of the European population aged over 15 have unmet healthcare needs.¹⁰ Barriers to accessing health services include cost, distance, waiting times, lack of cultural sensitivities and discrimination.¹¹ Language represents an additional barrier for non-native speaking patients, as they may have a poor understanding or lack of knowledge of their rights and of the administrative practices and requirements of health systems. The European Pillar of Social Rights seeks to ensure the right to timely access to affordable, preventive and curative healthcare of good quality for all. FEAD contributes to delivering on this principle on the ground in both OP I and OP II countries.

In OP II countries, FEAD funding directly supports the access to healthcare through the **provision of information and referrals to health services**. In Sweden, the *Better Health* project supports vulnerable, unemployed and homeless women suffering from poor health. The project provides information on personal health management, but also on the type of services recipients are entitled to access and how they can do this. The ultimate goal is to empower recipients in relation to their health and ensure they are better equipped to access the right services for their needs. In the same vein, the Swedish project *Frisk* delivers individual and group counselling sessions on healthcare and disease prevention issues to mobile EU citizens including Roma. These activities help inform participants about

⁸ Eurostat (2016). Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Children_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion#Main_statistical_findings

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Eurostat (2014). Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unmet_health_care_needs_statistics#Unmet_needs_for_health_care

¹¹ Ibid.

the ways they can access health services. The project also directly refers beneficiaries to other healthcare services.

In Finland, an OPI country, a FEAD project has introduced an accompanying measure to support the mental health of its recipients in partnership with a mental health association. During FEAD material assistance delivery, interested end recipients are invited to contact the association's information centre. The centre is then able to refer them to relevant mental health rehabilitation services and self-help groups in the country.

4.4 Housing and assistance for the homeless (Principle 19)

It is estimated there could be as many as 410,000 homeless people (roofless and houseless) on any given night in the EU; meaning around 4.1 million people could experience homelessness each year for varying periods.¹² Beyond rough sleeping, homeless people experience reduced life expectancy, health problems, discrimination, isolation and barriers to accessing basic public services and benefits.¹³

Principle 19 of the Pillar seeks to ensure housing and assistance for the homeless through better access to social housing or housing assistance of good quality to those in need; ensure the right to appropriate assistance and protection against forced eviction; and ensure that adequate shelter and services are provided to the homeless. FEAD directly contributes to implementing this principle on the ground. A straightforward manner in which FEAD can support the homeless is through the **provision of food, clothes and/or shelter**. A classic example of such an activity is the Greek Catholic Charity's project in Eastern Slovakia, where the organisation provides around 120 warm and healthy meals per day and five times a week to homeless people during the colder winter months. Another example is the project *Housing First Network Project* in Italy, which uses FEAD funding to distribute clothes and starter kits that include cooking utensils to houses.

Beyond the provision of food, material and/or shelter, FEAD contributes to **providing services promoting the social inclusion of homeless people in OP II countries**. In Denmark, the FEAD projects '*Udenfor*' and '*Compass – Homeless vulnerable EU migrants*' help homeless people to navigate their way through mainstream social services. Beyond the provision of a locker room where homeless people can store their belongings, the *Udenfor* project supports and advises homeless people on finding employment, food and healthcare services. Similarly, in addition to providing emergency shelters, the *Compass* project offers counselling services to the homeless. Around 100 counselling sessions are held each week and cover a wide range of topics such as the registration process in Denmark, legal rights and obligations, housing and social services in Copenhagen, the process for reporting lost documents, the process for opening a bank account and CV drafting support.

In Germany, projects such as *Frostschutzengel Plus*, *StreetBer* and *Europe.Bridge.Muenster* also seek to foster the social inclusion of homeless people. They do so through participative counselling, which raises the awareness of end recipients on their rights and duties. They also carry out outreach work in low-threshold service institutions for homeless people and offer counselling services in different languages. The ultimate objective is to build bridges between the homeless and mainstream society.

4.5 Equal opportunities (Principle 3) and Access to essential services (Principle 20)

The Pillar guarantees the right to equal treatment and opportunities regarding social protection, and access to goods and services available to the public. The majority of OP II projects, and accompanying measures of OP I material assistance projects, directly contribute to delivering this principle on the ground. A relevant example from OP II is the work done by the organisation *Amaro Foro e.V.* in Germany, which uses FEAD funding to provide **counselling services to particularly disadvantaged, newly arrived EU citizens** such as Roma. In addition to existing prejudices against Roma, recent

¹² FEANTSA (2018) About Us. Available at: <http://www.feantsa.org/en/about-us/faq>

¹³ European Commission (2018) Homelessness. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1061&langId=en>

negative portrayals in the media has exacerbated their stigmatisation and exclusion from many areas of life and social infrastructures in Germany. The *Amaro Foro* team reaches out to those disadvantaged, newly arrived EU citizens, provide counselling in their mother tongue, and accompany them to meetings with local services and authorities, hence fostering equal access to essential services.

OP I projects can foster equal opportunities and access to essential services through accompanying measures to food and/or material assistance. In Slovakia, food parcels are distributed by accredited social workers who can counsel and advise, but also signpost end recipients to additional non-FEAD services such as projects financed by the European Social Fund (ESF). Such services include advice on personal bankruptcy, financial counselling, information on accommodation in social facilities, training and help to access the job market, etc.

4.6 The inclusion of people with disabilities (Principle 17)

People with a disability are generally seen as being at a higher risk of social exclusion, and face increased challenges to get into employment due to the lack of training tailored to their needs. FEAD can help overcome these challenges in particular through accompanying measures and partnerships. The project '*A chance for tomorrow*', implemented in Poland and targeting 60 beneficiaries of the FEAD food aid programme with a mild or moderate disability, is a very relevant example. Co-funded by the ESF, it offers professional training and counselling services, as well as a three-month paid placement **to help recipients with disabilities to transition into employment**. Similarly, in addition to food assistance, the Polish Committee of Social Welfare provided educational workshops on a range of topics to over 6,000 participants with a disability in 2016. Such workshops covered topics such as household budgeting, housekeeping, food waste prevention and meal preparation using FEAD-provided ingredients. Because it provided an opportunity for recipients to engage socially, it helped them to take their first steps out of poverty and social exclusion.

5. Concluding remarks

The European Pillar of Social Rights has been designed to foster an upward convergence towards better working and living conditions across Europe. While it is strongly supported by the EU, it is predominantly Member States that are responsible for the implementation of the principles of the Pillar. As can be seen by the analysis above, activities implemented using FEAD-funding can strongly complement the principles outlined in the Pillar. Consequently, the FEAD Network meeting will offer a platform for FEAD stakeholders to discuss the implications of the adoption of the Pillar for their work, as well as explore the ways in which the implementation of the principles can be carried out in practice. During the meeting, various perspectives on the Pillar will be presented, including presentations by EU-level representatives, national representatives (from Denmark and Sweden), urban representatives (from the city of Copenhagen and the municipality of Malmö) and civil society actors (project representatives from Denmark and Sweden). FEAD stakeholders will be able to explore the manner in which various principles can be implemented in their respective Member States and will also be given the opportunity to witness the implementation of projects fostering social inclusion first-hand, through a series of project visits.