



FEAD Network

Fund for
European Aid
to the Most Deprived

Background information on issues related to offering support to a range of target groups

5th FEAD Network Meeting on 'IDENTIFYING AND REACHING OUT TO BENEFICIARIES'

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Social Europe

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1. Introduction

With a growing population that stood at over 510 million individuals at the turn of 2017¹, the population of the European Union (EU) represents a dynamic, evolving and increasingly diverse society. While Member States faced significant challenges in the aftermath of the financial and economic crisis of 2008, the European Commission's Winter 2017 Economic Forecast predicts that all EU Member States' economies will experience growth in 2016, 2017 and 2018. Significantly, the real GDP of the euro area has grown in 15 consecutive quarters and there is notable improvement in terms of decreasing unemployment rates².

Despite these promising figures, there is simultaneously growing income inequality³ and there are still significant numbers of individuals living at risk of poverty or social exclusion. While Member States have robust welfare systems, and there is evidence of increasing expenditure on social protection, in 2015 there were still around 119 million people (equivalent to 23.7 % of the total population) at risk of poverty or social exclusion⁴.

One instrument introduced by the EU to support individuals in their transition out of poverty is the **Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD)**. This fund was established in 2014 to address the prevailing deprivation across the EU through the provision of material assistance (e.g. food, clothing and hygiene items) as well as particular social inclusion measures. The European Commission has additionally supported the development of an active "FEAD Network," a community of practice of actors involved with the fund. The network not only discusses key issues on a designated online platform, but also meets face-to-face at several annual meetings.

Member States are able to use FEAD-funding to support particular target groups, as it is recognised that certain groups are distinctly vulnerable as they face multiple and complex barriers in accessing regular social support systems. In Germany, for instance, the target groups are newly-arrived mobile EU citizens, their children and homeless people. Other Member States take a more universalistic approach extending eligibility for FEAD support to all individuals living under the poverty threshold. The upcoming FEAD Network meeting on the 06th and 07th of April will focus particularly on practices through which Member States successfully **identify and reach out to selected target groups**.

The purpose of this background paper is to outline the context in which these topics will be discussed. It will outline the global and European policy framework addressing the exclusion of particular groups, as well as the academic discourse surrounding the identification of target groups and the challenges of outreach work. It will furthermore present several examples of good practices across the EU in identifying and reaching out to particularly vulnerable groups and highlight several key challenges and issues that could be discussed at the meeting.

2. Global and European policy context

Recognising the importance of supporting vulnerable groups, there are a number of international legislative measures devoted to non-discrimination and the protection of the fundamental human rights. As a foundation the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)** underscores the fact that human rights apply to all persons and that this is not to be compromised by "race, colour, sex, religion,

¹ Eurostat (2017) Population change - Demographic balance and crude rates at national level, http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=demo_gind&lang=en

² European Commission (2017) Winter 2017 Economic Forecast, https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-performance-and-forecasts/economic-forecasts/winter-2017-economic-forecast_en

³ Eurofound (2017) Income inequalities and employment patterns in Europe before and after the Great Recession.

Publications Office of the European Union: Luxembourg, <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2017/income-inequalities-and-employment-patterns-in-europe-before-and-after-the-great-recession>

⁴ Eurostat (2016) The share of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU back to its pre-crisis level. News release 17 October 2016, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7695750/3-17102016-BP-EN.pdf/30c2ca2d-f7eb-4849-b1e1-b329f48338dc>

language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status".⁵ Fundamental rights also form the basis of the UN's **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**,⁶ and the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**.⁷ In addition there are a range of targeted international policies supporting specific groups, tackling racial discrimination⁸, gender discrimination⁹, discrimination of persons with disabilities¹⁰, discrimination against (undocumented) migrants¹¹ as well as supporting individuals belonging to a national, ethnic, religious or linguistic minority¹².

Against the backdrop of these international frameworks, several initiatives have been developed to respond to the social exclusion of key populations in the European context. The **EU Charter of Fundamental Rights** gathers a set of rights and freedoms under six titles: dignity, freedoms, equality, solidarity, citizens' rights and justice.¹³ The **European Convention on Human Rights (1953)** similarly protects human rights and fundamental freedoms in Europe. The focus of EU action in relation to non-discrimination has historically been placed on preventing discrimination on the grounds of nationality and gender. However in recent years Member States have approved new EU competences to tackle discrimination related to racial or ethnic origin¹⁴, religion or belief, disability¹⁵, age or sexual orientation.

Policies specifically aimed at tackling discrimination and exclusion are intertwined with overarching policy developments related to poverty alleviation, including initiatives under the **Europe 2020 Strategy**, the **European Semester Process** as well as the upcoming **European Pillar on Social Rights**. This is evident in the **EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI)** which promotes social protection and high-quality, sustainable employment and working conditions and combats both social exclusion and poverty.¹⁶ Similarly, the **European Social Fund (ESF)** has a dual focus on creating more and better jobs and fostering a socially inclusive society as part of the EU 2020 strategy to promote smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the EU.¹⁷ The **Open Method of Coordination (OMC) for Social Protection and Social Inclusion** also provides a framework around which Member States may exchange ideas and nationally address issues related to poverty and social exclusion, including for specific groups such as Roma¹⁸. Lastly, the **Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD)** offers assistance available to the most deprived individuals in Europe through the provision of food aid and the supply of basic materials (e.g. clothing, hygiene and school starter

⁵ United Nations (2015) Universal Declaration of Human Rights booklet, http://www.un.org/en/udhrbook/pdf/udhr_booklet_en_web.pdf

⁶ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (1966). International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx>

⁷ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (1966) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/publication/unts/volume%20999/volume-999-i-14668-english.pdf>

⁸ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (1965) International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racism, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/cecrd.pdf>

⁹ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (1979) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/cedaw.pdf>

¹⁰ United Nations (2006) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/resources/general-assembly/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-ares61106.html>

¹¹ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (1990) International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/cmw.pdf>

¹² United Nations (2010) Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities. (unpublished), http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Minorities/Booklet_Minorities_English.pdf

¹³ European Commission (2012) Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12012P/TXT>

¹⁴ Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin.

¹⁵ Communication from the Commission – European Disability Strategy 2010-2020: A Renewed Commitment to Barrier-Free Europe COM(2010) 636 final

¹⁶ European Parliament (2016). Poverty in the European Union. The crisis and its aftermaths: in-depth analysis, <https://bookshop.europa.eu/en/poverty-in-the-european-union-pbQA0216224/?CatalogCategoryID=twMKABstaW8AAAEjopEY4e5L>

¹⁷ Communication from the Commission - Europe 2020 A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (COM(2010) 2020 final).

¹⁸ European Commission (2012) What Works for Roma Inclusion in the EU. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/whatworksfor_romainclusion_en.pdf

materials). FEAD furthermore places a specific emphasis on measures to promote social inclusion through its OP II strand and the provision of accompanying measures in its OP I strand.¹⁹

3. Summary of relevant research

While there are a range of policy developments supporting particularly vulnerable groups to escape from or prevent their entry into poverty, it is important to understand how actions are undertaken on the ground. These vulnerable social groups are notoriously hard to reach, and it is imperative that ground-level work is conducted with care.

3.1 Explaining the non-take-up of social benefits and public services

The complexities of outreach activities have been discussed at length in the academic arena. Researchers have, for instance, questioned the ways in which aid fails to reach the most vulnerable social groups, as well as the reasons for the non-take-up of social benefits and public services. Several reasons have been identified for why social security benefits are not taken up by entitled claimants, undermining their function of reducing poverty. Following an international comparison of take-up research it was determined that factors influencing take-up can be classified at three levels: (i) at the level of the benefit scheme itself; (ii) at the level of the administration and; (iii) at the client level²⁰.

At the **level of the benefit scheme** itself, non-take-up can occur as a result of the existence of complex rules and guidelines that contain vague criteria for entitlement and/or strict eligibility conditions, as well as potentially containing a means test. Additionally, there is a greater likelihood of non-take-up when social assistance is aimed at groups in society that are associated with negative prejudices, when they are supplementing other sources of income, or when the initiative for uptake needs to be taken by the claimants themselves.

There are additionally a variety of factors at the **administrative level** that pose a barrier to take-up. Issues include the attitudes and behaviour of civil servants. Their way of handling claims and claimants can sometimes be a humiliating or degrading experience for recipients. Another factor is poor communication with clients, for instance by being given insufficient information and advice or by being hindered by a language barrier. Poor cooperation with other administrations can also lead to increased complexity in the application process.

Lastly, there are several '**client-related**' issues that are of importance. Firstly, potential beneficiaries may be unaware of the existence of the scheme or have insufficient knowledge and false interpretations of entitlement criteria. On a personal level, there may be a fear of stigmatisation and humiliation and attitudes towards dependency on society. Moreover, they can be put off by the anticipated bureaucracy of the application process²¹.

3.2 Suggested practices for identifying and reaching out to target groups effectively

These particular barriers to individuals' access to regular social services and benefits leave them particularly vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion. As a result, NGOs become increasingly important for reaching out to the individuals that are excluded from regular social services. These individuals are particularly hard to reach, however, and it is imperative that organisations identify and reach out to these target groups effectively.

¹⁹ Regulation (EU) No 223/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 on the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived, OJ L 72, 12.3.2014, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32014R0223>

²⁰ Van Oorschot, W. (1991). Non-take-up of social security benefits in Europe. *Journal of European Social Policy* 1(1), pp. 15-30, <https://perswww.kuleuven.be/~u0079125/wvo/ArtikelenOnline/non%20take-up.pdf>

²¹ Issues of non-take-up were further explored in the Eurofound study (2015) on Access to social benefits: reducing non-take-up. Publications Office of the European Union: Luxembourg, https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef1536en1_0.pdf

It is therefore essential that both public authorities and NGOs are able to identify which groups are not being sufficiently supported and are thus at risk of poverty and social exclusion. In order to do so, active discussions between involved stakeholders would facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences. In a number of Member States, FEAD Managing Authorities (e.g. in BE, DE, EL and IT) carry out regular consultations with their partner organisations to exchange information and discuss relevant issues, such as the ways in which target groups can be identified and reached out to. Notably, in Estonia there is currently an ongoing consultation regarding the refining of the target group for FEAD-funded support.

Commented [CR1]: To be elaborated if Boris can potentially provide us with more information regarding these developments.

One of the key elements of the FEAD regulation is that Member States have the freedom to determine which target group will be supported. Some Member States define their target group broadly by stating that all individuals living under the poverty threshold are eligible for support. Other Member States have opted to refine their target group to support specific vulnerable groups, for instance by funding projects specifically supporting homeless people or ethnic minorities such as the Roma population.

A criticism of the more universal schemes is that the particularly vulnerable or “hardest-to-reach” target groups are not sufficiently supported as they “fall through the cracks” of the social system and are thus not identified as individuals in need of support. To reach out to these particularly hard to reach individuals, partner organisations could opt for more targeted outreach activities which are designed with the intention of helping certain groups with specific needs. Partner organisations would be able to cater to their specific needs, by employing individuals with particular language skills or with specific cultural awareness. This in turn would make both the outreach activities and the subsequent support offered more effective (and ultimately more sustainable). Examples of such vulnerable groups include newly-arrived EU mobile citizens (both seasonal workers and longer-term migrants) or homeless people.

While there are merits to a targeted approach, research reveals that programmes that are aimed at a specific sub-group of the population can potentially also generate more stigmatisation than universal schemes²². It was concluded that being attached to a specific social group decreases the likelihood of taking up social benefits²³. Another study showed that adopting a more targeted or means-tested benefit system increases the risk of creating a “distance” or “rupture” between the social assistance providers and potential beneficiaries²⁴. There is evidence; however, contradicting these claims, revealing that it is not the experience of stigmatisation that leads to non-take-up of social assistance, but that it is simply a result of a lack of awareness and information regarding the support offered²⁵.

Ultimately, whether Member States adopt a more universalistic or targeted approach to identifying and reaching out to their target groups, it is essential that the outreach and support activities of partner organisations are carried out with care.

3.3 Effectively reaching out to vulnerable individuals

A study of outreach work in Sweden²⁶ concluded that there were three key tasks of outreach work: (1) contact making, (2) initiating social change processes, and (3) providing social support to keep the

²² Hernanz, V., Malherbert, F. & Pellizzari, M. (2014). Take-up of welfare benefits in OECD countries: a review of the evidence. *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers* (17). OECD Publishing: Paris, http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/take-up-of-welfare-benefits-in-oecd-countries_525815265414

²³ Kayser, H. and Frick, R. (2000), “Take it or leave it: (Non-) Take-up behaviour of Social Assistance in Germany”, DIW Discussion Paper Nr. 210, http://www.diw.de/sixcms/detail.php?id=diw_02.c.224130.de

²⁴ EX NOTA Consortium (2005) Exit from and non-take-up of public services. A comparative analysis: France, Greece, Spain, Germany, Netherlands, Hungary. Coord. Ph. Warin, EXNOTA, DG Research, p.54, http://cordis.europa.eu/docs/publications/1001/100124181-6_en.pdf

²⁵ Daponte B.O., Sanders S., Taylor L. (1999), Why do Low-Income Households not Use Food Stamps? Evidence from an Experiment, *The Journal of Human Resources*, vol.34(3), 612-628, https://www.istor.org/stable/146382?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

²⁶ Andersson, B. (2013). Finding ways to the hard to reach – considerations on the content and concept of outreach work. *European Journal of Social Work*, 16(2), pp. 171-186, <http://www.gu.se/english/research/publication?publicationId=180457>

process going. By exploring these tasks, the study noted that in order to effectively make contact with beneficiaries there are two important factors to consider:

1. **Outreach workers tend to work with individuals considered to be “hard to reach”.** They elaborate that there are two kinds of “hard-to-reach” individuals. The first group consists of individuals that are unaware of and have little relation to social support systems. This includes individuals that have not been living on the margins of society for prolonged periods of time or “new groups” such as users of previously unknown drugs or street workers from previously non-represented countries. The second (more prevalent) group consists of individuals with extensive, complicated experiences in dealing with social services who have become disillusioned and hesitant to deal with public services any further. Outreach workers need to be aware of the history of their clients with regards to their dealings with social services in order to understand the best way in which they can bring individuals into the social system²⁷.
2. **Outreach workers operate in diverse environments.** In most cases, outreach workers are required to operate in surroundings and situations that are out of their control. They thus need to understand that in most instances they are ‘visitors’ to the environment in which they are trying to make contact with beneficiaries and they must act accordingly.

In order to initiate social change, outreach workers generally need to build a good relationship with their clients. To do so, they need to be sensitive in engaging with the target group to avoid being too intrusive. Outreach workers can adopt a ‘wait and see’ strategy whereby potential beneficiaries are encouraged to take the first step. Outreach workers therefore need to take on an accessible and approachable stance, whereby they play down their authority. An informal and respectful atmosphere is deemed important, as it makes beneficiaries more likely to open up to the outreach workers. Respect for human dignity and full ownership of one’s inclusion pathway are crucial elements. The dilemma of adopting such an approach is that it distorts power relations between the outreach worker and beneficiaries. A balance between empathy and authority needs to be found by outreach workers, so that they gain the trust and respect of beneficiaries while maintaining their position as an outreach worker.

Following initial contact, outreach workers need to assess the situation and determine the manner in which the individual can be supported in their effort to escape from poverty. The approach taken is different when dealing with particular groups, for instance when dealing with young people²⁸, homeless people²⁹, substance abusers³⁰ or other groups³¹. As in many cases NGOs are limited in terms of size and resources, they are not able to offer a wide range of support activities and are thus required to refer beneficiaries to partner organisations. Rather than an immediate ‘screen and refer’ approach³², however, an emphasis needs to be placed on building stronger relationships whereby outreach workers take the time to assess the social situation of individuals more thoroughly. Furthermore, linking beneficiaries to social services is complex as beneficiaries are often untrusting towards public organisations. Additionally, civil servants may not be sensitive to the particularities of dealing with these vulnerable individuals. As a result, it is important that outreach workers mediate and support their beneficiaries throughout the whole process of linking to social services, wherever possible.

²⁷ Kryda, A.D. and Compton, M.T. (2009) Mistrust of outreach and lack of confidence among individuals who are chronically street homeless. *Community Mental Health Journal*, 45, pp. 144-150, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18807181>

²⁸ Crimmens, D., Factor, F., Jeffs, T., Pitts, J., Pugh, C., Spence, J. & Turner, P. (2004). Reaching socially excluded young people – a national study of street-based youth work, The National Youth Agency: Leicester, <http://dro.dur.ac.uk/6409/1/6409.pdf>

²⁹ Van Laere, I. and Wither, J. (2008). Integrated care for homeless people – sharing knowledge and experience in practice, education and research: results of the networking efforts to find homeless health workers. *European Journal of Public Health*, 18(1), pp. 5-6, <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckm107>

³⁰ Platt, L., et. al. (2006). Methods to recruit hard-to-reach groups: comparing two chain referral sampling methods of recruiting drug users across nine studies in Russia and Estonia. *Journal of Urban Health*, 83(1), pp. 39-53, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1705540/>

³¹ Priebe, S. et. al. (2012). Good practice in mental health care for socially marginalised groups in Europe: a qualitative study of expert views in 14 countries. *BMC Public Health*, 12, pp. 248, <https://gmro.qmul.ac.uk/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/4344/PRIEBEGoodPractice2012FINAL.pdf?sequence=2>

³² Morse, G., Calsyn, R.J., Miller, J., Rosenberg, P., West, L., Gilliland, J. (1996). Outreach to homeless mentally ill people: conceptual and clinical considerations. *Community Mental Health Journal*, 32 (3), pp. 261-274, <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/BF02249427>

4. Examples of existing practices in identifying and reaching out to beneficiaries

The complex nature of outreach activities, particularly when working with a wide range of vulnerable individuals, reaffirms the importance of opening up the discussion and sharing practical experiences and good practices among peers at all levels. The upcoming FEAD Network meeting provides a forum for these discussions and will present several concrete examples where Member States have been able to identify and reach out to their target groups in a successful way. Several examples of such FEAD-funded initiatives will be presented below.

Several Member States have signalled difficulties of mobile EU citizens in navigating the social systems of their destination countries and have therefore initiated projects in which they seek to help these individuals gain access into host social and administrative systems. [An example of such an initiative is the Compass Project of the Danish Kirkens Korshær, whereby volunteers offer counselling services, and, if needed, emergency shelter to homeless EU/EEA citizens. They have a multilingual outreach team that actively reaches out to homeless individuals on the street as well as offering a drop-in centre.](#)

[An example of such an initiative is a German project. Similarly, EUROPE.BRIDGE.MUNSTER is a German project](#) run by the [Bischof-Hermann-Stiftung](#) in cooperation with the city of Münster. Social workers actively seek to foster the social inclusion of newly arrived EU citizens by building bridges to the regular social assistance system. Social workers employ a range of methods in order to identify and reach out to potential beneficiaries, who are generally from Eastern Europe (predominantly Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia), and seek to build a bridge to social service providers such as migration counsellors, health insurance funds or other relevant public authorities.

[Another German project Amaro foro provides a contact point for newly arrived EU citizens in Berlin offering multilingual counselling and advice in order to improve their access to regular social services, help them to establish local networks and to empower them.](#)

An issue faced in several Member States is that the most vulnerable individuals are located in remote areas of the country and are therefore physically hard to reach. This was, for instance, the case in Kainuu, the poorest region of Finland. The [Kainuun Citizens' Centre](#) provides approximately 10 000 people with FEAD-funded food annually, and has taken up the challenge of delivering food to recipients unable to collect their parcels from the centre, as it presents a logistical challenge to beneficiaries if they are required to travel up to 100 kilometres. The key to making this a successful initiative is the determination and support of a group of dedicated volunteers.

5. Conclusions

Despite promising figures in terms of economic growth across EU Member States, there is evidence of growing inequalities across the population and certain social groups are increasingly at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Recognising this trend, the European Commission introduced a range of instruments to counter these trends, for instance through the introduction of FEAD in 2014.

Partner organisations using FEAD funding, however, are faced with the difficult task of supporting Europe's most deprived individuals in their transition out of poverty. They actively seek to identify and reach out to the most vulnerable, hard-to-reach individuals across EU Member States to ensure that they receive support. Outreach workers and volunteers, however, face multiple challenges when doing so, including potential resistance and mistrust from the target population, the diversity of issues that need to be addressed, and issues associated with operating in a diverse working environment while simultaneously working with limited resources.

At the upcoming **FEAD Network Meeting on 'identifying and reaching out to beneficiaries'** in Berlin, several case studies will be presented portraying varying strategies for reaching out to particularly vulnerable groups, including target groups such as: EU mobile citizens, homeless people, geographically hard-to-reach individuals, seasonal migrants, children and large families with children. Participants are asked to share their experiences in working with the wide array of beneficiaries, in order to highlight key challenges as well as key strategies to potentially overcome them.

Contact us

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We look forward to hearing from you!

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