



European  
Commission



# Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived

Meeting Report

**12<sup>th</sup> FEAD Network Meeting: 'The provision of accompanying  
measures alongside food distribution'**

4–5 October 2018, Dolmen Hotel, Qawra, Malta

Social Europe

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# 12th FEAD Network Meeting on the provision of accompanying measures alongside food distribution

Dolmen Hotel, Qawra, Malta, 4–5 October 2018



On 4–5 October 2018, the European Commission co-hosted the 12th FEAD Network Meeting in Qawra, Malta with the Maltese Managing Authority. The meeting brought together the EU-wide network of FEAD stakeholders to discuss the provision of accompanying measures alongside food and basic material distribution. The meeting was organised by Ecorys on behalf of the European Commission and welcomed 95 delegates from 24 Member States, 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.

The meeting moderator, **Jan Aulehle, Director of Communications at Ecorys** opened the meeting by welcoming participants and presenting the programme for the day. Jan highlighted the benefit of FEAD accompanying measures in providing a multi-dimensional approach to alleviating poverty. The first day provided the opportunity to learn about the Maltese approach to accompanying measures through project visits to three FEAD support centres, while the second day provided an overview of the variety of approaches and types of accompanying measures implemented across the EU.

## Day 1: Welcome from the European Commission

Following these introductory words, **Jan Behrens, Policy Officer at the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission** welcomed the participants and thanked the Maltese Managing Authority, the Ministry for Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity and the Foundation for Social Welfare Services for their support throughout the organisation of the meeting. Jan underlined that Malta shows a good example of mature FEAD implementation, which has already incorporated lessons learnt. Going forward, it is important to keep networking, learning from each other and thus to keep strengthening the provision of the accompanying measures.

Jan reminded participants that the European Commission proposal for merging FEAD and ESF under the new ESF+ is currently under negotiation with the Member States and the European Parliament. As of now, the suggestion of the merger offering synergies coupled with maintaining a simplified approach to FEAD, in particular in terms of monitoring requirements, has been well received. Finally, Jan reminded participants that the European Commission would be hosting a FEAD EU-level stakeholder meeting later in the year.





## Day 1: FEAD implementation in Malta



**Therese Fiorini, Head of the ESF and FEAD at the Ministry for European Affairs and Equality, Malta** welcomed participants on behalf of the Managing Authority and highlighted that the Network represents an ideal platform to discuss issues, identify solutions and share ideas to tackle common challenges, such as the implications of the new GDPR for FEAD work on the ground.

Following these introductory words, **George Sultana, Director of Policy Development and Programme Implementation at the Maltese Ministry for Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity** (the FEAD Intermediary Body) presented the way in which the Maltese authorities implement FEAD. George explained that the Maltese government has chosen to target

the most deprived households, in particular households with children and elderly residents, due to the fact that those two groups are at a higher risk of poverty. Eligible households receive food packages containing a variety of products, including fresh items. Since 2016, 10 distributions have taken place: four distributions took place the first year and three rounds each year since then. Distributions have been planned out until 2022. In addition to distributing food parcels, the FEAD implementing partner organisation in Malta, the Foundation for Social Welfare Services, carries out a number of accompanying measures targeted at FEAD recipients: nutrition and health information sessions, cooking on a budget, household budgeting courses, family workshops and parenting courses. Over 3,000 households benefit from the programme.



Next, **Stephen Vella, Director of Corporate Services at the Foundation for Social Welfare Services** explained how the Foundation ensures that FEAD's social inclusion objectives are met. The Foundation places particular emphasis on working in a collaborative fashion. One-off initiatives are not enough, which is why the Foundation considers that providing food is only the first step when reaching out to the target group. It is crucial to understand the complex situation of end recipients and to help them in the long term. To better understand the kind of help that was most needed by FEAD end recipients, the Foundation therefore carried out an extensive FEAD 'profiling' exercise.



During food distributions, frontline workers asked end recipients if they agreed to be visited, following which 3,200 FEAD families received a home visit in which their living conditions and all their diverse needs were discussed and assessed. The main learning from this exercise was that the cause of the vulnerability of many recipients could be found in the mismanagement of their limited income, increasing rental expenses, and a lack of qualifications. Those findings inspired the Foundation to design adequate accompanying measures to tackle these issues.

The Foundation also places particular emphasis on fostering a spirit of collaboration with all relevant entities. In particular, the Foundation relies on partners for the implementation of accompanying measures, and refers recipients to the relevant mainstream social services, making it crucial for all actors to complement and collaborate with each other to meet the clients' needs. Stephen concluded his presentation by highlighting that FEAD seems to have paved the way for more sustainable nationally funded initiatives. While the LEAP Centres, currently used by the Foundation for FEAD food distribution, were originally created and funded through ESF, they are now sustained by national funding. In the same vein, the government has now started to support those vulnerable families that do not meet the FEAD eligibility requirements. The session ended with an opportunity for exchange between the panellists and the audience.

## Day 1: Key impressions from the project visits

The delegates were divided into two groups, each of which had the opportunity to visit two LEAP Centres across Malta. The first group visited the centre in Valletta, the second group visited the centre in Cottonera, and both groups had an opportunity to visit the centre in Qawra.

### Cottonera LEAP Centre



The delegates first had the opportunity to visit the premises of the centre, thereby witnessing the wide range of services offered by the LEAP team. In particular, participants could see the **counselling rooms**, dedicated to both group and one-to-one sessions, as the LEAP staff explained that not all clients are comfortable with being received in a group setting. Participants further visited the **facilities for disabled clients**, including a room dedicated to learning about independent living, where clients feed and take care of birds. Finally, participants visited the **childcare facilities** where children can gather for reading and recreational activities.

Following the visit, the delegates heard in more detail from three different representatives about their work with FEAD beneficiaries. In multiple instances, FEAD is seen as a valuable **starting point for conducting further social inclusion work**. The Foundation of Social Welfare Services, for instance, uses the FEAD food collection in the LEAP Centres as an opportunity to approach the target group and obtain their consent for a home visit. The subsequent home visits are a chance for the LEAP staff to ask a set of questions to recipients and better understand their reality. Together with the clients, they can then determine the area in which they require the most support, be it related to mental health, family difficulties, housing issues or disability and/or sickness.

The National Literacy Agency also uses the FEAD food distributions as an **opportunity to identify FEAD recipients who have young children**. This is not demographic information that the Agency could otherwise obtain. The Agency staff distribute books to recipients with young children and make

them aware of the importance of reading. The team has been able to reach 580 families this way, and has given them the opportunity to participate in one of their three programmes. The “Magic of Stories” programme aims to encourage a love of reading among children and their parents; “Read with me” is an early literacy programme designed for children up to the age of three and their caregivers to develop the child’s imagination through fun and stimulating activities; while “Parents the first teachers” is a course aimed at parents of children up to the age of three, providing practical tips on how to help children develop their linguistic skills.

Similarly, the government programme to reduce energy poverty, SMART UP, **used the FEAD network as a starting point to identify relevant beneficiaries**. As part of a pilot project, 50 FEAD families were followed more closely and visited in their homes to give them information on how to budget and save energy, as well as personal counselling tailored to their specific energy usage.

## Valletta LEAP Centre

Valletta LEAP Centre is located in the less affluent part of Malta’s capital and provides services for the Northern Harbour District. Delegates had the opportunity to visit its facilities, spread across the floors of an historic building. They were shown the food distribution centre, the offices where social mentoring and training take place, the office of the Department for Social Services (where the beneficiaries can sign up to benefits), and the JobPlus office. Valletta LEAP Centre closely collaborates with other agencies such as the Energy and Water



Agency, schools and the police. This enables the LEAP team to offer comprehensive assistance under one roof. The participants were then given presentations about several key areas of assistance such as **nutrition and health, household budgeting and parenting advice**. These are the areas that were identified as being most critical for recipients during the profiling exercise. Parenting classes, in particular, put special emphasis on positive parenting and inclusion of the parents and their children in the community and society as a whole.

## Qawra LEAP Centre

The delegates were welcomed by the manager of Qawra LEAP Centre and visited the various facilities available. The centre is modelled as a **one stop shop** where people can access a number of different services under the same roof. Food distribution is often the key point of contact with people in need. As they collect food packages, recipients are offered a range of other services and a profiling exercise is undertaken to identify their exact needs. An important success factor is that **key social services can be accessed directly on spot** at the LEAP Centre, and that the network of LEAP Centres extends across the island, making it easy for people to visit one close to their home. Moreover, the LEAP Centres communicate and collaborate closely with one another, as well as with partnering agencies and across the regional network of LEAP Centres.





Visitors had the opportunity to see the food distribution centre, including the food packages and their products, which are all from the higher end of the market and therefore of good quality. Material assistance is also available and includes the provision of clothes. The delegates then walked through the childcare facility run by the Foundation for Educational Services, the JobPlus office run by the National Employment and Training Agency, which provides advice to jobseekers, the office of the Department for Social Services, and a computer room where basic IT courses are offered.

The visit concluded with two presentations from the LEAP team: one about social loans and one about the 'White Goods Scheme'. **Social loans** are typically offered to first-time property buyers who earn a low income, including FEAD end recipients. The scheme runs in collaboration with the main banks in Malta and offers loans of up to €120,000 at an advantageous rate, whilst covering a number of fees. The '**White Goods Scheme**' provides replacement of old or inefficient household appliances such as fridges or cookers, in collaboration with the Energy and Water Agency. Appliances that need replacing are identified during the home visits carried out by the LEAP staff as part of the profiling exercise. In 2017, 277 appliances were replaced as a result of 470 home visits.

## Day 2: Welcome from the Foundation for Social Welfare Services

**Alfred Gixti, Chief Executive Officer for the Foundation for Social Welfare Services** opened the second day of the event with a screening of a short video about the Foundation and its work. Alfred finds FEAD to be a genuine success in Malta. He highlighted that some of the most impactful work undertaken by the Foundation with FEAD beneficiaries has involved its home-based therapy services. These services consist of supporting Maltese families to tackle the challenges they face, such as mental health issues, drug addiction or domestic violence, through interventions conducted directly at the recipients' homes.



## Day 2: Panel discussion on the practical implementation of accompanying measures



**Vicki Donlevy, Director, Policy and Research at Ecorys** introduced the objective of the session, which consisted of presenting three different perspectives on the practical implementation of accompanying measures. Delegates had the opportunity to hear the perspectives of a Managing Authority (namely the Lithuanian FEAD Managing Authority), the perspective of a major European-wide partner organisation (the Red Cross) and the perspective of a national partner organisation (the Foundation for Social Welfare Services).

### **Arturas Bytautas of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour**

explained that, in Lithuania, the value per capita of the food packages distributed to FEAD recipients amounts to around €2.50 per month. This is too little to make a significant difference to the lives of recipients. For that reason, the Managing Authority considers FEAD mainly as a tool to 'catch' the relevant clients. In Lithuania, people are not outwardly open and willing to participate in social support measures, therefore FEAD food aid provides a way to attract such vulnerable clients and provide them with services. The Lithuanian Managing Authority sees their role as an enabler: they provide conditional financing to their partners, but leave them free to design and implement the accompanying measures of their choice. The Ministry considers that partner organisations are better placed to understand how they can best support recipients, so the only requirement they set is for the clients benefitting from accompanying measures to be FEAD beneficiaries. The Managing Authority then analyses the accompanying measures that are implemented to identify best practices and promote the most efficient model.



**Isabelle Vekemans, Head of Food and Material Support at the Luxembourg Red Cross**, then presented the way the Red Cross implements accompanying measures in Luxembourg, which is representative of the way they work across Europe. In Luxembourg, FEAD is distributed through social grocery stores. These stores are designed to promote informal exchanges that remain confidential. The Red Cross establishes links with partner organisations who can advise beneficiaries on specific topics. The first step in the process, and the most challenging, is to establish contact with the target group. Typically, the social store manager builds relations with end recipients little by little. This initial reach-out process is very time consuming but essential for engaging the target group, as once links have been



established, the recipients are much more likely to participate in the workshops organised for them. Workshops cover areas such as cooking, knitting and sewing, first aid measures against small injuries and job search support, as well as creative workshops for children, parents' coffee mornings, and workshops for parents to help their children better perform at school. In addition to addressing the specific needs of the recipients, these sessions are an opportunity for social workers to talk with the target group about their everyday lives, thus fostering a spirit of belonging to the community.

Finally, **Stephen Vella** explained that the main challenge the Foundation faces when implementing accompanying measures is also to engage FEAD end recipients. The team has experienced instances in which 30 clients have signed up to an initiative and only five turned up on the day, which can be disheartening for social workers. A second challenge relates to reaching out to those who are most vulnerable. For instance, the Foundation noticed that 10% of the target group was not coming to collect their FEAD food packages. The team proactively tracked down those recipients and realised that, while some of them were simply misinformed about the location of the food distribution, some of them purposely provided the wrong contact details as they were trying to avoid taxes and feared potential repercussions. Thanks to this outreach, the Foundation has helped a number of particularly vulnerable





clients to regularise their situation with the social services. This sheds light on the importance of not treating people as numbers and instead adopting an individual approach through tailored accompanying measures. In his closing remarks, Stephen touched upon the vast range of accompanying measures implemented by the Foundation, and highlighted one in particular. Through its collaboration with MaltaEnterprise, the Foundation is able to refer clients including FEAD recipients who aspire to create their own companies. The eligible recipients then receive a grant – which they do not need to pay back – to kick-start their business.

## Day 2: Roundtable discussions

Following the panel, the roundtable session was an opportunity to explore specific examples of accompanying measures in greater detail and learn from successful examples. The interactive session started with a brief introduction from the moderator, **Charlotte Ruitinga, Senior Consultant at Ecorys**, about its methodology. The delegates were split into six tables, where they could hear about different case studies. In total, the delegates were able to attend three presentations out of six. Each one started with a presentation of the case study, followed by a short Q&A between participants and the presenter, and concluding with a set of questions on which all delegates were invited to reflect. The six case studies that were presented are summarised below.



**Table 1 – Latvia: Life skills training** (Facilitator: **Olivia Geymond**)

“Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime”. These were the words that **Silva Bišofa of the Latvian First Aid Unit** used to introduce the project “Fish and not only”, which aims to change the mind-sets of FEAD recipients by teaching them to fish. Alongside FEAD food aid, the Latvia First Aid Unit offers fishing workshops, which are an opportunity for recipients to gain, or in some cases regain, confidence in their ability to be self-sufficient. After each session,

participants and staff cook a soup altogether with the fish caught on the day, further fostering a sense of belonging to the community. The project also initiates children in the basics of fishing with simpler tools, with the aim of instilling a spirit of self-sufficiency and control over their life.

**Table 2 – Slovenia: Nurturing the personal development of children** (Facilitator: **Vicki Donlevy**)

The “We are together” project is a psychosocial support programme for children and young people from socially vulnerable families. **Gasper Leskovec and Ayla Smajic of the Slovenian Red Cross** explained that this takes place in the form of workshops and learning support after school, carried out by volunteers who are also usually also young people. To implement the programme, the Red Cross cooperates with two elementary schools from the municipality of Postojna, and two secondary schools: the School Centre of Postojna (Šolski center Postojna) and the Secondary Forestry and Woodworking School (SGLŠ Postojna). A number of the volunteers come from the secondary schools, and are able to share their own experiences. The volunteers are supported by the local Red Cross and coached in

how best to support the vulnerable young people. The project also works closely with the Centre for Social Work (CSD) to ensure the necessary support.



**Table 3 – Cyprus: Advice for new parents (Facilitator: Jan Aulehle)**

**Petros Attas of the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture** presented the "Baby's Dowry" project, which supports vulnerable parents who have a new-born baby. The project is implemented by the Social Welfare Services. Parents who earn less than €600 a month receive a "welcome pack" that includes useful basic baby items such as a pram, mattress, cot, baby chair and a range of hygiene products for new-borns. The accompanying measure involves a presentation on improving parenting skills, delivered by social workers. Parents who wish to receive the baby pack are required to attend the presentation. Parental advice covers topics such as the changes that having a child creates in the family; key aspects





of the role of parents, with a focus on positive parenting; behavioural aspects, including basic infant care; and other factors contributing to the child's welfare, such as advice on professional and vocational training and employment for parents. At the same time, recipients are informed about other government schemes that can help them get more involved in their communities. After this initial outreach, social workers conduct follow-up visits.

**Table 4 – Finland: Social activities around communal meals (Facilitator: Dimitrios Routsakis)**

**Tapio Pajunen, Head of the Fundraising and Project Unit at Kirkkopalvelut NGO, Finland** explained how his project helps the people of the small community of Konginkangas by organising communal meals and providing accompanying measures, namely social and community support services specifically targeted at youth and the elderly. In Finland, one in three people suffer from loneliness, which is why the project aims to support vulnerable people to increase their social skills and overcome any potential mental health issues they might be facing. Through communal meals, young and old recipients socialise and get to know each other. They subsequently help each other in their everyday lives. An example of such community support is young people helping older people with small repairs at their homes for free.

**Table 5 – Poland: Culinary workshops and nutritional awareness (Facilitator: Magda Tancau)**

**Malgorzata Lelonkiewicz of the Federation of Polish Food Banks** talked about the culinary workshops that are organised for recipients of FEAD food aid as an accompanying measure. The workshops implemented by the Federation of Polish Food Banks have been very successful and their popularity among end recipients is constantly increasing. In 2017 and 2018, the food banks conducted a total of over 5,000 workshops for 88,500 people, 42% of which were culinary workshops. The food banks try to target specific groups, such as women, mothers in large families, the elderly and youth; however, the workshops are offered to any recipients of food aid who are willing to participate in them. The workshops are organised through partner organisations that help to find a suitable place and invite participants. The food bank provides a programme, materials and a trainer. The workshops, which last around four hours, engage participants in cooking, preparing meals and eating together. At the beginning, the principles of hygiene, food safety and prevention of food waste, as well as the rules of the workshop, are discussed. In addition to practical skills, healthy nutrition and financial management, the culinary workshops teach participants about teamwork and motivate them to be more self-sufficient.

**Table 6 – Malta: One-to-one housing advice (Facilitator: Jitka Dolezalova)**

**Eliane Aquilina of the Foundation for Social Welfare Services, Malta** explained that it is increasingly difficult for vulnerable people to cope with the rising rental costs in Malta. This was also something that emerged from the profiling exercise that the Foundation carried out with FEAD beneficiaries. Against this background, the LEAP team, in collaboration with the Housing Authority (HA) has conducted over 2,000 home visits to profile households who are on the HA waiting list (the entire HA household waiting list amounts to around 3,200 people). Most of those on the HA housing list are FEAD beneficiaries. It is important to mention that in Malta there are very few people living on the streets without any shelter, and when such people are encountered, they are immediately assisted. During the home visits, an in-depth analysis of the housing situation of families is conducted those who need immediate assistance (for instance due to a leaking roof) are immediately assisted. During the visits, the LEAP staff also offer one-to-one housing advice and give further assistance according to the specific needs of the beneficiaries. In order to provide efficient support, recipients who are on the HA waiting list are divided per region and referred to the closest LEAP Centre to their home. LEAP mentors contact those households and carry out the one-to-one home visits and informative sessions.



The **first set of follow-up questions** revolved around the choice of a target group for accompanying measures, as participants were asked to discuss the following questions:

- **Who was the target group for this particular initiative and why?**
- **Do you have any examples in your own country of initiatives supporting this target group?**
- **If not, why have you chosen not to support this particular group?**

The **second set of questions** revolved around the choice of type of accompanying measures, as delegates were invited to discuss the following questions:

- **Why was this particular type of accompanying measure chosen to support the target group?**
- **What are the advantages and disadvantages of this type of measure?**
- **Do you organise such measures differently in your own countries?**

**Finally**, participants reflected on the sustainability of accompanying measures through the following questions:

- **How sustainable is this initiative?**
- **Could anything be done to ensure the continuation of this initiative?**
- **Are there any risks to its continuation?**
- **Can you give examples of sustainable initiatives from your own country?**

Selected outcomes of the discussions for each round are summarised below:

### **Round 1 – Target group**

Discussions underlined the advantages and drawbacks of setting a specific target group for accompanying measures. Setting a specific target group ensures that efforts are focused on the categories that are deemed to need support the most. This also prevents people from taking advantage of the system. However, in practice this excludes some recipients who might not meet the set requirements, but are nevertheless very vulnerable. In some countries, such as the Baltic States, recipients are not outwardly open and willing to participate in accompanying measures, which is why it

is particularly important to define an inclusive target group. This way, those vulnerable recipients who participate in accompanying measures trigger a spill-over effect whereby they encourage other vulnerable people in their areas to take part too. Furthermore, delegates stressed the importance of working with young recipients, as interventions are most effective at an early age. In addition, children are seen as an ideal route to reach out to their parents and families, and eventually to the wider community. Finally, cross-generational target groups were praised as an efficient way to build a sense of belonging to the community and foster learning.

### Round 2 – Type of measures

Discussions highlighted the importance of accompanying measures fostering a sense of belonging and self-sufficient mind-set, increasing social interactions and breaking the poverty cycle as early as possible.

However, discussions also highlighted the challenges involved in implementing most accompanying measures, including the fact that many people are ashamed of accepting help and opening up about their issues. Finally, people receiving food aid are at risk of becoming dependent on it, therefore it is essential to implement accompanying measures that also support the empowerment of the recipients.

### Round 3 – Sustainability

Discussions focused on two main aspects: effective sustainability and potential risks and challenges.

**Effective sustainability** can be achieved through:

- Partnerships: whether private, public or with other NGOs;
- Community support, such as through volunteers and facilities;
- Sense of ownership: in Malta, for example, the Housing Authority primarily owns the project assisting the homeless, and LEAP/FEAD assist;
- Long-term strategic planning, to ensure that those who are currently assisted through social support do not encounter additional issues to sustain themselves once they reach pensionable age;
- Awareness raising and education of vulnerable families to help them become independent of giveaways and schemes;
- Opportunities for recipients to themselves become volunteers for the project.

**Potential risks and challenges** faced when implementing accompanying measures include:

- Lack of empowerment: individuals can become dependent on food aid instead of using it as a first step towards empowerment;
- Lack of social support: many individuals face mental health issues and need social support in order to attend food aid and the accompanying measures in the first place. Many projects therefore struggle to engage with the most vulnerable people;
- Lack of motivation of some vulnerable people to improve their personal situation.

## Day 2: Closing session

In the closing session, **Jan Aulehle** touched on some of the main messages that emerged throughout the event. Project visit guides **Jitka Dolezalova and Olivia Geymond (both Ecorys)** reflected on the highlights of the project visits from the previous day and shared photos from the visits. Following this, the delegates were invited to share their own impressions. Jan concluded the meeting with information about the last FEAD Network Meeting of the year, which will take place in Brussels on 6 and 7 December 2018 on the topic of tackling homelessness through FEAD support.

# Keep in touch! – Join the FEAD Network

[Visit the European Commission web pages](#) to learn more about the FEAD Network and find related articles and documents.

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.

The FEAD Network has an 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.



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**We look forward to hearing from you!**

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