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Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived

Background information on 'Tackling poverty among children with
FEAD'

14th FEAD Network Meeting

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Social Europe

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Introduction

Poverty and social exclusion during childhood has a significant impact on children's mental, physical, emotional and spiritual development.¹ This often carries long-term consequences both for the individuals concerned and for society as a whole. For instance, children growing up in poverty are more vulnerable to poor health, unemployment, participation in criminal activities, social exclusion and, ultimately, continued poverty into adult life.² As a result, child poverty constitutes a complex challenge that requires a dedicated and interdisciplinary policy approach.

By offering material and non-material assistance to the most vulnerable individuals across Europe, the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) is used as a tool by Member States to prevent and tackle child poverty in a variety of ways. For example, a number of national FEAD programmes (FEAD OP I) focus on **food security** for children, by providing free breakfasts or school lunches. Children also benefit from **basic material assistance**, through the provision of babywear, school bags, writing materials and other supplies.³ In parallel to the provision of food aid and/or material assistance, FEAD provides **accompanying measures** aiming at addressing social exclusion. Finally, FEAD support to children is given as part of **social inclusion initiatives (FEAD OP II)**.

Against this backdrop, the upcoming **14th FEAD Network Meeting on 20 February 2019** will reflect on how FEAD, in complementarity with national and EU funding, can support addressing childhood poverty across the European Union (EU). The meeting aims to provide a platform for various stakeholders, and network members, to exchange best practices in tackling poverty among children through FEAD support. The meeting will also serve to contextualise FEAD activity by providing insight into wider policy measures, strategies and programmes. In supporting these objectives, this background paper seeks to provide insight into the current state of child poverty across Europe. It subsequently highlights existing policy responses and frameworks at European and global level in tackling the issue. Lastly, it proceeds to uncover FEAD's role in combatting child poverty, through the examination of a variety of approaches across Member States, including specific case study examples.

Despite its ambitious coverage, this paper primarily serves as a reference paper. As such, please refer to the thematic dossier on 'Addressing child poverty and well-being through FEAD', for more in-depth information on the topic.⁴

¹ UNICEF definition of child poverty.

² Bynner, J. (2000), Risks and outcomes of social exclusion: insights from longitudinal data.

³ DG EMPL (2018), FEAD successfully complements national initiatives to combat poverty, press release, (14 November 2018).

⁴ European Commission, 'Thematic Dossier 4: Addressing child poverty and well-being through FEAD', (November 2018).

Current situation/challenges on child poverty

Child poverty is a prevalent and important issue in the EU. According to the latest Eurostat data, almost **25 million children** (or over one in four children) were at risk of poverty, or social exclusion, in the EU in 2016.⁵

Abbreviated as AROPE, 'at risk of poverty or social exclusion' corresponds to the sum of persons who are either at risk of poverty, severely materially deprived, or living in a household with a very low work intensity.⁶ Individuals are only counted once, even if they are present in several sub-indicators. As such, AROPE counts children living in low-income households with low participation in the labour market, or material deprivation, or in the worst cases, in households experiencing all of these aspects of poverty and social exclusion.⁷

The AROPE rate is the headline indicator to monitor the EU 2020 Strategy poverty target. At present, the rate reveals that **children are the age group** who are at the **highest risk of poverty** in the EU.⁸ For example, in 2016, 26.4 % of children in the EU were at risk of poverty or social exclusion compared to 24.2 % of adults (18–64) and 18.2 % of the elderly (65 years or over).⁹

Similarly, the most recent Joint Employment Report from 2018 found that 26.4 % of the total population aged 0 to 17 years in the EU were at risk of poverty, or social exclusion, compared to 24.2 % of the working age population (16-64) and 18.2 % of the elderly (65 years or over).¹⁰ While there is a high risk of poverty and social exclusion among children of all age groups, **older children from 12 to 17 years old were found to be at highest risk** (29.1 %), followed by children aged between 6 and 11 years (26.4 %), and children below 6 years of age (23.8 %).¹¹

Nonetheless, **different levels of risk** are observed **across the EU Member States**.¹² For example, the share of young people aged 17 years or younger at risk of poverty, or social exclusion in 2016, was highest in Romania (49.2 %) and lowest in Denmark (13.8 %).¹³

The 2008 **economic crisis** caused increased rates of poverty across the European population, while historically high unemployment and long-term unemployment rates were also recorded.¹⁴ Nonetheless, the crisis has had a particularly adverse impact on children. For example, austerity measures have affected households with children more strongly than other

⁵ Eurostat, 'Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion', (November 2016), available at: ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Children_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion.

⁶ Eurostat, 'Glossary: At risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE)', available at: [ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_\(AROPE\)](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_(AROPE)).

⁷ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 'Combating child poverty: an issue of fundamental rights', Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2018, p. 7.

⁸ European Parliament, 'Child poverty in the European Union: The crisis and its aftermath', press briefing, July 2016, available at: [www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/586598/EPRS_BRI\(2016\)586598_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/586598/EPRS_BRI(2016)586598_EN.pdf).

⁹ Eurostat, 'People at risk of poverty or social exclusion by age and sex', (January 2019), available at: <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>.

¹⁰ European Parliament, 'Child poverty in the European Union: The crisis and its aftermath', press briefing, (July 2016), available at: [www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/626059/IPOL_STU\(2018\)626059_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/626059/IPOL_STU(2018)626059_EN.pdf), p. 23.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Eurostat, 'EU children at risk of poverty or social exclusion', (November 2017), available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/EDN-20171120-1>.

¹⁴ Eurostat, 'Unemployment Statistics: Unemployment rates, seasonally adjusted, November 2018 (%)', (November 2018), available at: ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics.

types of households, as some Member States have replaced universal family support with means-tested measures, or payment ceilings.¹⁵

As a consequence, child and family-related benefits have been highly affected, for instance in Ireland, Estonia, Spain and Portugal.¹⁶ The proportion of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the EU has thus increased in the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis and has fallen only slightly since then.¹⁷ Please see Table 1 below on the AROPE rates (as a percentage of the total population in the EU) for children (less than 18 years), adults (18-64 years) and the elderly (65 years or over).

Table 1: AROPE rates for children, adults and the elderly in the EU¹⁸

AGE Group	2008 (EU 27)	2012 (EU 28)	2016 (EU 28)	2017 (EU 28)
Children	26.5%	28.1%	26.4%	24.9%
Adults	23%	25.4%	24.2%	23%
Elderly	23.3%	19.2%	18.2%	18.2%

A series of **factors** can influence the risk of poverty, or social exclusion, in the EU (AROPE). These include:

The type of household: for instance, whether it is a single parent household. Single parent households with dependent children (especially those headed by a woman) were found to be at the highest risk of poverty, or social exclusion, with almost one in two (48 %) at risk of poverty, or social exclusion, in 2016.¹⁹

- **Monetary poverty:** i.e. very low work intensity households.
- **Level of education of the parents:** i.e. children whose parents' highest level of education is low so are at more at risk of poverty, compared to children whose parents' highest level of education is high. For example, in 2016 it was found that 63.7 % of children with low-educated parents live in poor households, compared to only 10.3 % of children with tertiary-educated parents.²⁰
- **Migrant background and ethnicity of the parents:** children with a migrant background (for instance Roma)²¹ are at a greater risk of poverty than children whose parents were native born.
- **Living conditions:** for instance, if households are severely materially deprived.²²

¹⁵ Eurofound, 'Families in the economic crisis: Changes in policy measures in the EU', (27 January 2016), available at: www.eurofound.europa.eu/fr/publications/report/2016/social-policies/families-in-the-economic-crisis-changes-in-policy-measures-in-the-eu.

¹⁶ European Parliament, 'Child poverty in the European Union: The crisis and its aftermath', press briefing, (July 2016), p. 5, available at:

[www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/586598/EPRS_BRI\(2016\)586598_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/586598/EPRS_BRI(2016)586598_EN.pdf).

¹⁷ European Commission, 'Thematic Dossier 4: Addressing child poverty and well-being through FEAD', (November 2018), p. 3.

¹⁸ Eurostat, 'People at risk of poverty or social exclusion by age and sex', (January 2019), available at: <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>.

¹⁹ Eurostat, 'Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion', (November 2016), p. 8, available at: ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Children_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion.

²⁰ European Parliament, 'Child poverty in the European Union: The crisis and its aftermath', press briefing, July 2016, available at:

[www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/626059/IPOL_STU\(2018\)626059_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/626059/IPOL_STU(2018)626059_EN.pdf), p. 23.

²¹ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 'Combating child poverty: an issue of fundamental rights', Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2018.

²² European Commission, 'Thematic Dossier 4: Addressing child poverty and well-being through FEAD', (November 2018), p. 8.

Global and EU policy context

A number of **current global policy initiatives and strategies** are in place to address child poverty. For one, **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** has set up common standards for the universal protection of children, including states' responsibility to ensure a maximum survival and development of the child.²³

Moreover, the **Sustainable Development Goals** recognise the importance of poverty reduction by including an ambition to reduce the amount of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions by at least half by 2030.²⁴

The **United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)**, is working to more fully understand how, and where, children are experiencing poverty to allow a more nuanced set of policy responses in national mechanisms, such as poverty-reduction strategies.²⁵ UNICEF also has various on-going projects and tools related to child poverty measurement and influencing policies and programming that address child poverty.²⁶

At European level, a number of policy initiatives have been taken to address child poverty.²⁷ Various recent council presidencies (Hungary in 2011,²⁸ Cyprus in 2012,²⁹ Ireland in 2013,³⁰ Greece in 2014,³¹ and the Netherlands in 2016³²) commissioned studies and convened conferences on child poverty.³³

In 2010, the European Commission put in place the **Europe 2020 Strategy**,³⁴ which aims to bring 20 million people in the EU out of poverty, and social exclusion, by 2020.³⁵ Moreover, the European Commission adopted the '**Investing in children – breaking the cycle of disadvantage**' recommendation,³⁶ in February 2013, which emphasises the importance of preventative measures to reduce the risk of childhood poverty. It also provides guidance for

²³ European Commission, 'Thematic Dossier 4: Addressing child poverty and well-being through FEAD', (November 2018), p. 2; www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ 'Child poverty and social protection', UNICEF's website, available at: www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/index_childpoverty.html.

²⁶ For further information on such projects see: www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/index_childpoverty.html.

²⁷ European Commission, 'Thematic Dossier 4: Addressing child poverty and well-being through FEAD', (November 2018), p. 6.

²⁸ TARKI Institute, 'Child well-being in the European Union: Better monitoring instruments for better policies', (May 2011), available at: old.tarki.hu/en/research/childpoverty/tarki_chwb_mainreport_online.pdf.

²⁹ Eurochild, 'EU Presidency Scorecard: Performance assessment of the Cyprus EU Presidency from a Child Rights perspective', (January 2013), available at:

www.eurochild.org/fileadmin/public/05_Library/Thematic_priorities/07_EU_watch/04_EU_Presidencies/Scorecard_CY_2012_2.pdf.

³⁰ Children's Rights Alliance, 'International Experts Gather in Dublin to End Child Poverty Within the EU', (10 April 2013), available at: www.childrensrights.ie/resources/international-experts-gather-dublin-end.

³¹ EU Alliance for Investing in Children, 'Greek consultation meeting on Investing in Children: Conclusions and recommendations out', (29 September 2014), available at: www.alliance4investinginchildren.eu/conclusions-and-recommendations-from-consultation-meeting-on-investing-in-children/.

³² 'The Netherlands EU Presidency', The Netherlands Government website, available at: www.government.nl/topics/european-union/the-netherlands-eu-presidency.

³³ European Parliament, 'Child poverty in the European Union: The crisis and its aftermath', press briefing, (July 2016), available at: [www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/586598/EPRS_BRI\(2016\)586598_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/586598/EPRS_BRI(2016)586598_EN.pdf), p. 6.

³⁴ European Commission, 'Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth', 2010, available at: ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-economic-governance-monitoring-prevention-correction/european-semester/framework/europe-2020-strategy_en.

³⁵ Ibid; European Commission, 'Thematic Dossier 4: Addressing child poverty and well-being through FEAD', (November 2018), p. 6.

³⁶ European Commission, '2013/112/EU: Commission Recommendation of 20 February 2013 Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage', OJ L 59/5, (2 March 2013), available at: eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:059:0005:0016:EN:PDF.

Member States on how to tackle the issue through measures, such as early childhood education, family counselling, support and benefits, and quality childcare.³⁷

Additionally, the European Parliament adopted a **resolution on reducing inequalities with a special focus on child poverty** on 24 November 2015.³⁸ The resolution proposed a '**Child Guarantee**' funding programme to provide every child, at risk of poverty in the EU, with access to 'free healthcare, free education, free early childhood education and care, decent housing and adequate nutrition'.³⁹ A consortium of organisations, including the Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER), Applica, Save the Children and Eurochild, has been contracted by the European Commission to conduct a feasibility study to understand how the Child Guarantee can benefit children.⁴⁰

EU funding opportunities

A number of **EU shared management funding mechanisms** beyond FEAD (to be explored later on in the paper) are also in place to help reduce child poverty and disadvantage. For example, investment in children – breaking the cycle of disadvantage recommendation – was successfully used to leverage more funding possibilities for children and their families from the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Compared to the previous programming periods, 25.6 % of the total ESF allocation of EUR 86.4 billion is now earmarked for social inclusion measures and all Member States have to allocate at least 20 % of ESF resources to social inclusion, including measures for access to childcare and tackling early school leaving.⁴¹

The **ESF** has also funded various projects under the four thematic objectives (employment, education, social inclusion and public services) to further opportunities for children.⁴² This includes funding for childcare provision (e.g. 'Children groups' are being set up in the Czech Republic at the workplace, helping working parents who have difficulties finding a place for their children at overcrowded state nursery schools and who cannot afford a private one).⁴³ Funding is also provided to support children in social care. For example, the ESF has funded the 'Centre for foster care and adoption' project in Bulgaria which moves children out of social care homes and into a loving family environment.⁴⁴ The ESF also provides funding for the training of prospective foster carers (e.g. the 'Improving Foster Care of Children and Youth in the Republic of Croatia' project, which aims to enhance the protection and well-being of children through better foster care and various activities, including educating experts).⁴⁵

³⁷ European Commission, 'Thematic Dossier 4: Addressing child poverty and well-being through FEAD', (November 2018), p. 6.

³⁸ European Parliament, 'Resolution of 24 November 2015 on reducing inequalities with a special focus on child poverty', 2014/2237 (INI), (24 November 2015), available at: www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&language=EN&reference=P8-TA-2015-0401.

³⁹ European Commission, 'Thematic Dossier 4: Addressing child poverty and well-being through FEAD', (November 2018), p. 6.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ European Commission, 'Staff Working Document: Taking stock of the 2013 Recommendation on "Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage"', SWD (2017) 258 final, (26 April 2017), p. 10.

⁴² European Parliament, 'European Social Fund: fighting poverty and unemployment', press release, (5 December 2018), available at: www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/society/20181129STO20519/european-social-fund-fighting-poverty-and-unemployment.

⁴³ European Commission, 'European Social Fund: Innovative childcare', 9 January 2013, available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=67&langId=en&newsId=8064>.

⁴⁴ European Commission, 'European Social Fund: Fostering a Fairer Future', 19 September 2011, available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=46&langId=en&projectId=247>.

⁴⁵ European Commission, 'European Social Fund: Fostering better futures', 21 June 2013, available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=67&langId=en&newsId=8154>.

Projects targeting educational services for Roma children have also been funded by the ESF. The 'Chave Zurale educational support clubs' project was a co-operation between a Roma-oriented foundation, three regional organisations and the Romanian Ministry of Education. It covered 20 communities, trained 100 teachers, ran 8 summer schools and set up 20 educational clubs focusing on 500 children in 11 counties.⁴⁶

Moreover, of the EUR 196 billion EU budget allocated to the **ERDF** for the 2014-2020 funding period, EUR 11.9 billion has been earmarked for measures promoting social inclusion and combating poverty. In addition, approximately EUR 5.9 billion has been earmarked for investment in educational facilities, out of which EUR 1.22 billion is planned for early-years education and care (ECEC) infrastructure.⁴⁷

The EUR 250 million scheme, which is delivered under the **Common Agricultural Policy** (CAP), also provides funds to Member States to subsidise activities relating to the distribution of **milk, fruit and vegetables** to school children in EU Member States.⁴⁸ This 2017 scheme brings together the previously separate EU School Milk scheme, established in 1977, and the School Fruit scheme, established in 2009, both funded under the CAP. Over the course of the 2015/16 school year, the School Fruit scheme reached 11.7 million children in around 80 000 schools across the EU.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ European Commission, 'European Social Fund: Boosting Roma education', 20 September 2013, available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=67&langId=en&newsId=8199>.

⁴⁷ European Commission, 'European Social Fund: Fostering a Fairer Future', 19 September 2011, available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=46&langId=en&projectId=247>.

⁴⁸ European Commission, 'Combined EU School Fruit, Vegetables and Milk Scheme begins operating in European Schools', Press Release, 7 December 2017, available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1246&newsId=9022&furtherNews=yes>.

⁴⁹ European Commission, 'School fruit, vegetables and milk scheme', available at: https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/school-scheme_en.

How FEAD can contribute to addressing child poverty?

FEAD can contribute to address child poverty through all strands of the programme, complementarity to national funds and other EU funds, primarily through direct material and/or food support to children, and through accompanying measures targeted at families with children, both delivered through Operational Programme I (OP I). According to FEAD Annual Summary information, approximately 30 % of end-recipients receiving FEAD support were children under the age of 15. More specifically, in terms of the distribution of basic material assistance to the Fund's target groups, nearly 300 000 children received nursery equipment, school bags, sports equipment and clothes, amongst other resources. Specific examples of this type of activity in individual countries is outlined below.

Addressing child poverty through direct support

Some Member States have also chosen to focus their operational FEAD programmes, in full or in part, specifically on the alleviation of child poverty through the provision of direct material or food provision. This is most typically provided to children through, or in relation to, schools.

For example in the **Czech Republic**, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs put in place a programme where the cost of school lunches is covered for children whose parents cannot afford it.⁵⁰ Other programmes have been implemented which specifically focus on infants, such as the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), Secours Populaire Français (SPF) 'libre-service de la solidarité' (LSS) (self-service of solidarity) programme, in **France**, with the distribution of food aid and material goods, such as clothes, cleaning products, cultural items (e.g. books and CDs) and home equipment taking place five days per week.⁵¹

Similarly, **Austria** is using FEAD grants to deliver educational resources to children in need.⁵² Austria's operational FEAD programme has for the past few years been focused on providing educational resources to children from disadvantaged families. Families in receipt of social transfers, can apply for a free FEAD funded package containing basic educational materials (such as school bags, stationery) up to a value of EUR 70. The resources provided are mainstream brands in order to avoid potential stigmatisation of recipient children. Information about other sources of social support, and Red Cross services, is provided alongside the pack. In the school year 2018/2019, around 45,000 parcels were distributed among the 53,700 eligible pupils, a take-up of 84%.

In **Romania**, FEAD resources include boosting children's motivation and reducing dropout rates through provision of school supplies. In 2014, Romania had one of the highest risks of poverty and social exclusion in the EU (39.5 %), equating to one in two children being identified as in poverty. The economic crisis has made it impossible for many families to keep up with the costs of their children's education, especially at higher levels. These factors have contributed to an increase in school dropout rates. The Fund is helping to strengthen social cohesion by alleviating the worst forms of poverty, mainly by distributing food packages to the

⁵⁰ European Commission (2017), Diverse Approaches to supporting Europe's most deprived FEAD case studies 2017. European Commission.

⁵¹ European Commission (2018), Thematic Dossier 4: Addressing child poverty and well-being through FEAD. European Commission

⁵² For more information visit:

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7947&%0AurtherPubs=yes>

most deprived. Secondly, school supplies and school bags are distributed to children in low income and disadvantaged households, with the aim of boosting children's motivation and reducing dropout rates.

As a final example of direct assistance, in **Cyprus**, the FEAD operational programme aims to provide material assistance to children in public schools from disadvantaged households. In 2014-2015, 12 % of the school population received free food daily, but social grocery stores also reported a demand for school supplies at the start of the school year. All of the above now come under the national scheme. The operational programme targets children directly by giving school supplies (school clothing and bags) to the most deprived students attending public schools in Cyprus. The main objective is to protect them from social exclusion and the winter cold, but the programme also aims to reduce the rate of early school leaving.

Similarly, accompanying measures in OP I can be seen to address child poverty. This includes advice and information on available social services, or other types of public and private assistance, basic counselling activities and workshops, such as on managing a household budget, nutrition, sport and cooking classes. For example, **Malta** implements a programme which, among other forms of social support, provides literacy support for children.⁵³ As well as providing children in vulnerable and low-income families with school supplies, such as uniforms or stationary, the families are provided with books for home use, with the aim of encouraging reading sessions within the family.⁵⁴ Furthermore, **Lithuania** has set up a project which allows children to attend day camps and participate in recreational and educational activities (e.g. day trips and short holidays, group visits to museums, theatres, cinemas etc.). Although children are the end recipients, their parents, grandparents, psychologists, teachers and care workers can also attend the activities organised.⁵⁵

In a similar way, in **Poland**, a project organises Easter workshops with the aim of engaging children in activities that allow them to feel that they are participating 'fully' in society.⁵⁶ During the workshops, the children take part in traditional Easter activities, such as preparing traditional Easter dishes, playing Easter-themed games, painting eggs and receiving gifts.⁵⁷

Breaking the cycle of disadvantaged in early years

It is widely recognised that addressing child poverty can be a key mechanism for breaking the cycle of being disadvantaged and excluded in society. By targeting children directly, through the OP1 activity above, FEAD helps break the vicious cycle of social exclusion and contributes to the EU 2020 pledge with a target of reducing the number of people in poverty, or at risk of poverty, by at least 20 million by 2020. Equally, FEAD adds value by also indirectly combating child poverty through measures to support labour market integration, better access to social services and health more broadly. These accompanying measures under OPI and social inclusion actions (under OP II) also have a key role to play in alleviating child poverty. For instance, some countries have put in place programmes supporting parents' access to the labour market. In **Belgium**, alongside regular FEAD food aid, end recipients are able to gain the relevant work experience to potentially re-enter the labour market. Under the management

⁵³ The Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS).

⁵⁴ European Commission (2018), Diverse Approaches to supporting Europe's most deprived FEAD case studies 2018.

⁵⁵ European Commission (2018), Diverse Approaches to supporting Europe's most deprived FEAD case studies 2018.

⁵⁶ The Socio-therapeutic Community Centre

⁵⁷ European Commission (2017), Diverse Approaches to supporting Europe's most deprived FEAD case studies 2017. European Commission.

of the OCMW centre's employees, the largest public social welfare centre of Belgium, FEAD end recipients receive work experience, and a minimum wage, by working at the assistance distribution centre where they regularly rotate jobs allowing them to acquire a range of skills.⁵⁸

In a similar way, in **Slovenia**, FEAD supports recipients' access to education, where the 'Srečevalnica' ("meeting room") project was developed in order to offer a chance at lifelong learning to individuals, in addition, to food and material assistance. In this case, the implementing Regional Red Cross Association of Ljubljana felt that the organisation of FEAD support activities could contribute to the greater social inclusion of people who were long-term unemployed and excluded. As a result, regular weekly activities provide an opportunity for lifelong learning and the expansion and strengthening of the social networks of the participants.⁵⁹

Furthermore, some Member States have implemented programmes that highlight how FEAD contributes to better access to housing and/or social services. In **Malta**, the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS) actively built partnerships with relevant stakeholders to offer educational support to children living in families with a low level of education. Recognising that education is key to tackling social exclusion, as well as offering young people an opportunity-filled future, the collaboration between key services and stakeholders has allowed them to combine different instruments to better reach out to low income families with children that are in need of more targeted educational support.⁶⁰

As part of OP II, a project in **Sweden** further seeks to empower marginalised women to make informed decisions about their health and, subsequently, access the right services for themselves and their families' needs when appropriate, as well as transfer this knowledge back to their children and communities.

In **Germany**, the Fachstelle für Wohnungssicherung (FAWOS) ("Department of Housing Security") project, a German housing security initiative, set up preventative measures against homelessness. In so doing, it filled a gap in the pre-existing support system, through the provision of timely advice and support to tenants in 'at-risk' tenancies, preventing homelessness before it occurs. The centres also advocates for the preservation of affordable and adequate housing at municipal level. Through its cooperation with the municipal authorities in Ludwigsburg, the programme is set to be incorporated into the public assistance system.

⁵⁸ Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) (2016), Meeting Report: First FEAD Network Meeting Sustainable integration: Challenges, solutions and good practices from the accompanying measures under OP I

⁵⁹ European Commission (2017), Diverse Approaches to supporting Europe's most deprived FEAD case studies 2017. European Commission.

⁶⁰ Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) (2018), Thematic Dossier: Exploring sustainability through FEAD interventions. European Commission.

Conclusions

Europe's social and economic future is greatly reliant on its capacity to break the transmission of being disadvantaged across generations. At present, children growing up in poverty and social exclusion are particularly vulnerable to continued poverty and social exclusion as adults, while being less likely to be employed, creating stable families and enjoying good health later in life. Children are also more vulnerable to poverty, and social exclusion, than the rest of the population. As such, breaking the cycle of being disadvantaged by combating child poverty is one of FEAD's main priorities, while also posing one of its main challenges.

Within this context, a number of questions arise:

- How can FEAD optimise its role in contributing to alleviate child poverty in the EU?
- What partnerships and synergies can FEAD create, with other initiatives and funding programmes, to strengthen sustainability and impact?
- How can ESF+ best capitalise on the lessons learned through FEAD, in the protection of children and minors, against poverty and social exclusion?

The 14th FEAD Network Meeting provides a valuable opportunity to raise awareness and further discuss these issues. By relying on the knowledge and experience of the FEAD community on the subject, it is expected that a stronger contribution to fighting child poverty in the EU will be made.



Contact us

Visit our website: <http://ec.europa.eu/feadnetwork>

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

Or email us with your questions: FEAD.Network@ecorys.com

We look forward to hearing from you!

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