



European
Commission



Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived

Meeting report

‘Celebrating five years of FEAD’

17th FEAD Network Meeting

20 September 2019, Brussels, Belgium

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17th FEAD Network Meeting – ‘Celebrating five years of FEAD’

Bloom Hotel, Brussels

20 September 2019

On 20 September 2019, the European Commission hosted the 17th FEAD Network Meeting ‘Celebrating five years of FEAD.’ The meeting, held in Brussels, brought together 85 delegates from 23 countries and from across the EU-wide network of stakeholders, including FEAD Managing Authorities; partner organisations; other local, regional and national actors; European Commission representatives; EU-level partner organisations; and the wider EU community.

Jan Aulehle, Director of Communications at Ecorys, moderated the event. He opened the meeting welcoming participants to the special event marking FEAD’s fifth anniversary and outlined the agenda of the day. Throughout the day, participants will have the opportunity to take stock and reflect on the achievements of the Fund as well as drawing on lessons learnt that can inform the future. He reminded participants that FEAD 18th Network’s meeting on ‘Monitoring and Evaluation’ would be held in Brussels on 7- 8 November 2019.



Welcome from the European Commission



Jan Behrens, European Commission, DG Employment and Social Affairs, opened the meeting by thanking the Belgian Managing Authority for co-hosting the Network Meeting. In light of the new programming period ahead, it is a very exciting time to look back on FEAD’s achievements, and there are reasons to celebrate. As outlined by the mid-term evaluation, FEAD has reached nearly 13 million deprived people across the EU per year. It reached specific target groups as part of both OPI and OPII, whilst

fostering the professionalisation of partner organisations in the process. Thanks to FEAD Network meetings, it has been possible to explore specific aspects of the Fund’s implementation including accompanying measures, which represent an important instrument for social inclusion.

Jan Behrens gave an overview of the latest developments regarding the European Commission's proposal for a regulation on the European Social Fund+ (ESF+).¹ The Commission's proposal is being discussed with co-legislators, namely the European Parliament and the Council. The European Parliament has adopted a report in first reading, while the Council has agreed on a partial negotiation mandate. In broad terms, the European Parliament proposes to increase the budget earmarked for social inclusion, as well as the minimum amount of resources earmarked for measures targeting the most deprived. The European Parliament also proposes accompanying measures to be mandatory. Conversely, the Council of the European Union aspires to more flexibility in linking social inclusion with country recommendations, and to more flexibility on reporting. The position of the Council on the thematic concentration requirements and the co-financing rates are yet to be clarified.

These negotiations take place in a renewed political landscape: a new European Parliament has been elected and new MEPs are now composing the Committee of Employment and Social Affairs. Similarly, the new Commission will take office in November. The new Commission's vision includes an ambitious ESF+, coupled with a number of flagship initiatives such as the Child Guarantee and the development of an action plan for the European Pillar of Social Rights.



¹ See:

<https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2018/0206%28COD%29&l=en>

Welcome from the Belgian Managing Authority

Alexandre Lesiw, President, FPS for Social Integration, Belgian FEAD Managing Authority, welcomed colleagues from the FEAD Network to Belgium. He wished fruitful visits to three of FEAD's partner organisations that would follow. The Federal Public Service for Social Integration, Anti-Poverty Policy and Federal Urban Policy (FPS) make up the FEAD Managing Authority of Belgium which is working together with its principal partner, the Public Social Welfare Centres (PSWCs), and a network of 750 partner organisations. FEAD in Belgium targets one category of end-recipients including all people living under the poverty threshold. Between 2014 and 2018, the number of end-recipients receiving FEAD support in Belgium increased by 100,000, and now reaches over 350,000 people.



Following, **Nele Bossuyt, FEAD Coordinator, Federal Public Service for Social Integration Service**, presented FEAD's impact in Belgium. The start of FEAD in 2014 marked an important change of perspective from an agricultural to a social policy framework in food aid to the most deprived. This shift allowed developing the social component, where food distribution became the first step to social integration and not just an end in itself. Since 2014, FEAD's implementation in Belgium has improved in several ways. Enhanced communication between the Managing Authority and partner organisations has strengthened their cooperation and resulted in different initiatives. For example, quarterly consultations were introduced amongst partner organisations and supermarket chains to determine the relevance and quality of products for end-recipients.² Other initiatives aim to improve the delivery and quality of FEAD assistance, including taste tests and environmental responsibility measures, such as the inclusion of at least one biological product in the FEAD package. Moreover, Belgium is experiencing a transformation in digitalisation of the sector, having introduced electronic forms in the procurement process as well as an innovative App (FOOD IT), allowing partner organisations to keep track of stocks more effectively. Participants will learn more in the project visits organised to three partner organisations.

² More information will be available in the 2019 FEAD Case Studies Catalogue, to be published at the end of 2019.

Project Visits

Delegates were divided into three groups, each of which had the opportunity to visit one FEAD project site in Brussels.

Group A - Saint Vincent de Paul Giraud – FEAD partner organisation that developed a successful IT tool to manage its FEAD stock

Group A had the opportunity to visit the centre of **Saint Vincent de Paul Giraud**, a charity funded in 1842 with a presence in 140 countries worldwide and a network of 2 million volunteers. In Belgium, the charity has a network of 4,000 volunteers, distributing food products and offering social services, financial support and other services to people in need. Participants were welcomed to the centre by the **Olivier Lendo, President, Saint Vincent de Paul Giraud**, together with representatives from the Board, the Belgian Food Bank and dedicated volunteers from all ages. The centre underwent a recent renovation and introduced a new enhanced electronic system allowing improvements in the distribution of food to end-recipients. The new IT system 'FOOD IT' was developed by a young volunteer and its application in the food distribution process has produced notable improvements, such as decreasing waiting times, providing more accurate records of stock and better allocation of packages to end-recipients.

A member of staff demonstrated how the process of food distribution takes place, from the moment the end-recipients arrive to the allocation of food items. A social worker welcomes end-recipients to the centre and electronically records their information. The system builds a social file of the end-recipient that calculates the food entitlement to each family. The file containing food allocation can be accessed by the volunteers at the distribution point through a tablet, which is connected to the newly introduced FOOD IT App. This has decreased the distribution time per end-recipient to just over five minutes. Given the productivity increase, the centre does not have to rely on large numbers of volunteers and end-recipients are welcomed under improved conditions. Moreover, the IT system allows retrieving statistics that help calculate the annual order of FEAD more accurately. The cost of the system has been two laptops, three tablets and 10 hours of education to volunteers of the new system.

The centre is one of the nine distribution entities in Brussels delivering FEAD packages. Together with FEAD purchased food products, the packages are complemented with additional products thanks to the collaboration with the Belgian Food Bank and partnerships with supermarkets who donate unsold products. This allows a wider range of products to be distributed to FEAD end-recipients, including fresh foods. Given uncertainty about the amounts and quality of donated food, the complementary foodstuffs are not included in the IT system and, therefore, are not measured.

Group B - Centre Social Protestant – FEAD partner organisation that distributes food products and offers social services, help with debts and other services

A second group of delegates had the opportunity to visit the facilities of the **Centre Social Protestant** located in Ixelles, Brussels. Established in 1957, the centre has been providing assistance to all people in need regardless of their political, cultural, racial, religious or sexual orientation. The centre is run by 20 employees and 20 volunteers. In addition to providing food assistance and general social services, the centre offers a wide range of activities including debt management counselling, support to refugees, socio-cultural activities, cleaning services

support for people with reduced mobility, etc. FEAD-funded food items represent 75% of the overall stocks of the centre. Other supplies typically come from the unsold stock of big Belgian supermarket chains. In 2017 alone, the centre has distributed over 2,600 food packages and has served over 3700 meals.

The centre also maintains a social restaurant on its premises, where anyone is welcome to enjoy a cheap and nutritional meal. People in a precarious situation who are registered with the centre can claim free meals thanks to a system of vouchers. Meals are freshly cooked on a daily basis (Monday - Friday) on the premises. The cooks make use of some of the FEAD-funded food items.

Following a presentation of the partner organisation's activities, delegates were split into two smaller groups and had the opportunity to visit the premises and ask questions. They had the chance to visit the social workers' offices, the centre's space for consultation, the social restaurant, the warehouse and the social shop that sells second-hand clothes, second-hand furniture, and basic products (such as cleaning products) at special rates. At these places, people in need can claim items for free using vouchers.

Group C - La Porte Verte – Snijboontje – FEAD partner organisation that distributes food products and accompanying measures

Delegates in Group C were given the opportunity to learn first-hand about the organisation at **La Porte Verte - Snijboontje**. The Social Centre opened in 2004 for the distribution of food parcels. These packages of basic food products are distributed to families and isolated people in crisis. The organisation works with end-recipients across Belgium, and from many different social and economic backgrounds. The organisation targets and distributes its food packages across Brussels according to the needs of three regions in Belgium – Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels-Capital. End-recipients are directed to La Porte Verte-Snijboontje via the Public Social Service, the CPAS in Molenbeek or through any other health/social partner association.

Following a short presentation of the organisation, delegates were split into groups and given a tour of the facility. The groups could see the food packaging process and stock management. While the organisation maintains its status as a FEAD food distributor, volunteers and employees counsel end-recipients and point them in a direction that would benefit their long-term needs. The organisation has had a 100% success rate in accompanying the individuals into economic and food education. Delegates and staff agreed that FEAD is seen as a valuable starting point for conducting further social inclusion and education work, and learned more about how the organisation works with different target groups, such as older people, and the homeless. Following the tour, delegates had a chance to speak to the staff and discuss what they had learned throughout the project visit. The staff and delegates discussed a variety of topics, including food waste management and interaction with organisations having similar goals.

Workshop on FEAD's key achievements and lessons learnt

Following their project visits, delegates were invited to take part in a workshop to reflect on the achievements of FEAD over the past few years, and in particular of the achievements and lessons learnt from their own operational programme or project(s). **Olivia Geymond, Research Manager, Ecorys**, introduced the methodology of the session. To provide perspective, the workshop was introduced with introductory remarks from three different FEAD stakeholders: the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), the FEAD Italian Managing Authority and partner organisation the Federation of French Food Banks.



Florence Tornincasa, European Anti-Poverty Network, highlighted three key achievements of FEAD over the ongoing programming period. At the national level, FEAD has brought together a number of organisations that previously did not have the resources to link up in a sustained manner. Partner organisations have been given the resources to regularly exchange with Managing Authorities. More widely, FEAD has helped change attitudes towards food aid and has helped to normalise it. Whilst receiving food aid used to be seen as shameful, there is less stigma surrounding such assistance and companies are more spontaneously inclined to donate their unsold stocks. Finally, EAPN members report that FEAD has clearly improved the life of its end-recipients, as demonstrated by countless examples on the ground, including the provision of school lunches for children. FEAD has not eradicated poverty however, and in the future, it will be important to address remaining 'grey areas,' and ensure sustained support for children outside of school for instance. **Patrizia De Felici, FEAD Managing Authority, Italy**, explained how the introduction of FEAD has led to a profound cultural change in Italy, raising awareness around the use of public resources and the need to utilise surplus food. Furthermore, FEAD has improved the working relationship between key stakeholders: it has improved the dialogue between Managing Authorities and FEAD partner organisations at national and local level, strengthening the Italian multilevel governance system. In the process, it has fostered mutual learning opportunities, building the capacity of partner organisations. Overall, FEAD in Italy has supported the transition from a charity-based system towards a more mature social welfare system. FEAD's most significant impact lies in its ability to reach the most extreme cases of social exclusion and poverty, and its ability to act as a bridge between the most deprived people and public services. Looking to the future, Patrizia de Felici called for more efforts to integrate FEAD in the national social policy framework, and to become a focal point of the social network services.

Marie Castagné, Federation of French Food Banks, pointed out three key impacts FEAD has had on the activities of the French Food Banks over the past few years. The French food banks (Banques Alimentaires) receive fresh foods, primarily in the form of donations from supermarkets' daily stock that have short expiry dates and come in unpredictable quantities, depending on daily stocks. Conversely, FEAD has been providing a predictable quantity of






food items that have longer-term expiry dates. This has enabled French food banks to expand the range of products they are able to offer to the people they support, providing them with greater freedom of choice and dignity in the process. In the same vein, through FEAD support, French food banks have improved the nutritional quality and balance of the food assistance they provide, in turn improving the health prospects of their end-recipients. Finally, FEAD has represented a lot more than just food aid, and has constituted a valuable base for further assistance towards greater social inclusion of the most deprived. In the future, French food banks are hoping for a bigger unconditional budget and simpler FEAD processes, bearing in mind that their activities are primarily implemented by volunteers.

Following these introductory remarks, **Olivia Geymond** invited delegates to complete an individual exercise to self-assess the achievements of their FEAD-funded interventions and the key lessons they have learned over the past few years of implementation. Delegates had around 10 minutes to reflect and reply to the following questions:

- What achievement(s) of your FEAD-funded operational programme/project are you most proud of?
- What are the main implementation challenges you have faced?
- How have you overcome these challenges?
- What are the key lessons you have learned from implementing your FEAD operational programme/project? How have you adapted your operational programme/ project over time?
- What improvements are you considering or would you consider implementing in the future?
- What are the short, medium and long term steps that you would need to take to implement these improvements?



After completion of their individual assessments, delegates shared their highlights within small groups at their table. Overall, participants highlighted the below elements.

<p>Key achievements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New, greater and stronger institutional cooperation between key stakeholders involved in the implementation of the Fund. • Greater outreach capabilities and greater reach both in terms of geographic coverage and number of end-recipients assisted through FEAD-funded assistance. • Greater capabilities of partner organisations thanks to mutual learning, and to activities that have taken place in the framework of the FEAD Network (knowledge sharing and exchange of good practices). • More structured approach to poverty alleviation at national level. • The introduction of accompanying measures in addition to food assistance. • Greater nutritional balance and variety of the food items distributed to end-recipients. 	
<p>Key challenges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependency on the FEAD-support by some end-recipients is a concern. • Heavy logistics involved in the collection, storage and conservation of food, in particular fresh food. • The selection of recipients, and determining who requires help and to what extent. • Having to deal with heavy public procurement processes and audit controls, whilst partner organisations tend to have limited capacity and resources. • Lack of trust, and/or lack of appreciation from the target group. • Food waste. 	
<p>Key improvements to be considered for the future</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing the simplification of the public procurement procedures. • Reducing administrative burdens on partner organisations, in particular through the digitalisation of some processes. • Establishing a greater focus on social inclusion measures. • Improving food waste management. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Striving for a higher quality of products and food items. • Further incorporating the views of end-recipients in the design of FEAD-funded interventions.
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Marketplace: FEAD achievements on the ground

Bulgaria: How to best support older people

Evelina Milusheva, Red Cross Bulgaria, gave a presentation about the accompanying measures designed by the Red Cross. In Bulgaria, the Red Cross targets 330,000 end-recipients across the country through its 28 regional branches. Among the end-recipients, 35.3% is aged over 65. In order to address the particular and unique issues associated with this target group, accompanying measures have been designed such as family budget planning, counselling for the provision of social services and social support, prevention of telephone fraud, first aid training, prevention of disease and communications to provide information about healthy lifestyle.

Over the years, the Red Cross adapted its projects to the needs of the target group. In doing so, they have introduced more accompanying measures such as blood pressure and weight measuring at all distribution points. In general, the accompanying measures show positive results for the target group, improving their psychological well-being. The Red Cross started more consultations and group exchange programmes among the target group in order to include them in the design of the activities.



The Red Cross organises different activities that further promote the social inclusion of the elderly. For instance, on the International Day of Older People on 1 October, the Red Cross launched a unique competition to promote the rights of the elderly. The activity, now on its fifth year, brings together participants from different regional offices and gathers around 100 participants. The competition has been a success for the promotion of experiences exchange. Also, on 29 April Solidarity Day of Generations, the Red Cross organises a tree-planting activity involving both young and old participants, whereby intergenerational exchange and solidarity is promoted. This has had positive results, as it is an occasion for the older generation to include their friends and family, further enhancing their social inclusion.

On a wider level, **Evelina Milusheva** noted that the FEAD programme has promoted stronger collaborations between partner organisations and the Bulgarian Managing Authority. The collaboration has led to better knowledge about the social economic situation of the target group. The programme has also extended the database with end-recipients living in hard to access rural areas accounting 10% of end-recipients in Bulgaria.

Czech Republic: Successes and challenges of FEAD in the Czech Republic: Reflections and lessons learnt from five years of implementation of the Czech Operational Programme

For their marketplace presentation to delegates, **Andrea Lešková and Marta Mlejnková, Czech Republic Managing Authority**, covered key achievements and statistics in their work with FEAD. They focused on three main initiatives – Lunches for Schools (SOI), Food Assistance (SOII) and Material Assistance (SOIII). These three initiatives aim to provide short term and long term assistance to end-recipients through cooperating with local organisations and providing assistance for those in need at the ground level.



SOI has proven to be a substantial initiative with national reach. In 2016, only two regions of the Czech Republic had taken up the initiative. By 2019, all 12 regions had become engaged and nearly 10,000 children are being supported. By partnering directly with schools, SOI has been able to create a national presence that directly implements FEAD activities in lower education. SOII and SOIII have proven equally successful. By forming a network with partner and sub-partner organisations, they have been able to meet the needs of end-recipients and deal with them on an individual basis. This network continues to produce a wide variety of commodities that can help individuals in different circumstances, thereby covering a considerable number of social and economic backgrounds in the Czech Republic. Along with these, they also provide a number of ways to achieve long-term goals such as economic independence or education. Delegates were shown a cookbook that included the FEAD food packages, aiming to educate end-recipients about healthy eating habits.

Denmark: How to best support the homeless people with OPII

Frederik Hyllested, FEAD Managing Authority, gave a presentation on the Danish Operational Programme II, combining social outreach and counselling for socially vulnerable homeless people. Two successful projects run under this programme - UNDEFOR and DanChurchSocial - which together have helped 4,500 people each year since mid-2016.



The two projects differ in the intensity of their work with the most socially vulnerable homeless people. One project offers outreach to people on the streets in the form of counselling and short-term shelter for a small selected group. The other project offers more intensive counselling, outreach and the possibility for the participants to use a so-called locker room in Copenhagen. In Århus, the project offers community-building activities such as giving the homeless the

possibility to build their own home. FEAD covers the costs of personnel and training, while materials are donated from building sites and the like.

One of the main challenges in implementing the Danish programme has been to ensure that the participants are unique. Among the lessons learnt, although it poses extra administrative challenges, the Managing Authority found that it is imperative to inform and assist the projects with methods of registration of the participants.

Ireland: School Kits Project, building on the learning from the pilot phase

Susan McGowan, FEAD Managing Authority, presented the **School Kits project**. The project is run by the Managing Authority for FEAD in Ireland and aims at providing FEAD food recipients with school kits for children attending school. The pilot was initially ran through Mid-West Simon in 2017 with the distribution of 4,000 kits. After the regional success, it was agreed to extend the project nationally for 2018 and 2019. So far, 85,000 children have received school stationery kits at a cost of over EUR 2 million.



There are three different kits as the composition of the pack is determined by the age of the child. Every kit contains over 15 items such as twistable crayons, copybooks and triangular pencils for the junior children, but also hardback science notebooks, USB sticks or maths sets for older children. An important aspect was to provide a generic brand, without an EU logo, to prevent discrimination or bullying. The

packs are distributed through the local partner organisations who distribute FEAD food products throughout the year. The project is very well received, and kids are happy to have the same supplies as their friends.

One of the biggest challenges is the method of delivery. There are large amounts of school materials contained in the kits and delivery pallets that are bulky. Therefore, it is important to contact the charities beforehand to ensure they have sufficient space and help to move the pallets. Each year the programme is reviewed following the feedback from the charities and the supply company. For example, the way they deliver the product and the content of the pack have changed following feedback from the charities.

Malta: Adapting food packages following home visits (lessons learnt from tailoring FEAD assistance and adapting food packages following home visits)

Stephen Christopher Vella, Foundation for Social Welfare Services, Malta, presented the “2Get There Together” initiative in Malta. This initiative aims to bring end-recipients together through innovative activities, such as teambuilding scuba diving, in order to build a strong community of partners and encourage innovative approaches to service delivery. The foundation believes that collaboration with different organisations is the key to a strategic approach to tackling poverty and meeting end-recipients’ needs.



In order to uncover the needs of the end-recipients, Mr Vella explained that the foundation offers home visits to those collecting FEAD parcels, in which an analysis of the individual needs of the end-recipient can be recorded, creating a profile and assessing what additional support the person may need. Through collaboration with their partners, the foundation are then able to offer a range of support services tailored to the end-recipient. These include working with

the National Literacy Agency to donate children's books, working with the Housing Authority to promote social loans and working with the local government to replace costly and polluting white goods for deprived families, among other schemes.

The initiative has had a positive impact on end-recipients, as the foundation is able to offer a wider variety of support than simply food. Participants discussed that FEAD should be used as a stepping-stone to independence and inclusion and the real key to this is engaging with end-recipients on a personal level.

Spain: Key findings from the impact assessment of the Spanish FEAD operational programme

Susana Gende Feely and M^a Jesús Gil Meneses, Spanish Red Cross, presented the FEAD Impact Assessment in Spain, conducted in 2018 by the Spanish Red Cross together with FESBAL. The objectives of the evaluation carried out were to examine the situation of FEAD aid end-recipients and the implementation of FEAD-funded interventions. The evaluation collected the views of end-recipients, through almost 30,000 interviews and six working groups. Furthermore, an online survey collected feedback from delivery and food aid organisations, staff and volunteers.



The research showed that FEAD have met the objective of alleviating people from poverty and providing them with necessary food aid. However, poverty and social inclusion are a multidimensional phenomenon requiring comprehensive support. FEAD recipients have higher levels of unemployment and precarious working conditions, live in households with low work intensity, have limited education and suffer from health issues. Women with

children and in single parent families are especially at risk of poverty, in addition to asylum seekers and vulnerably older people. The evaluation showed positive elements of FEAD to end-recipients, who outlined kindness of volunteers and staff, the overall importance of FEAD aid in their daily lives and easy access to FEAD support. Delivery organisations acknowledged the excellent coordination with partner organisations and development of their capacities and networks as success factors. Packages that are better tailored to regional and cultural contexts

and products corresponding to family needs are defined as areas for improvement. It is also important to increase accompanying measures and provide more training on home administration and diet in order to substantially support the recipients' social inclusion and future. In her concluding remarks, **Susana Gende** noted the new ESF+ should aim to improve its social inclusion capacities. Participants agreed that this type of exercise has a strong added value, as it gives a voice to supported individuals and goes beyond the general EU evaluation by portraying the recipients and sharing their personal stories.

Closing of the meeting

The moderator closed the event by thanking participants for their contributions to a successful meeting. He invited them to end the meeting with a celebratory toast the last five years of FEAD. **Marie-Anne Paraskevas, Senior Policy Officer, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion**, thanked the Network members for their dedication over the last five years. She called for continuous support from participants to work towards making social inclusion higher on the European agenda and a word of caution to continue efforts to maintain social inclusion and material support under the new ESF+. To conclude, she congratulated the Network for their impact in supporting the most deprived, as highlighted by their achievements helping to reduce child poverty.



Keep in touch! Join the FEAD Network

The FEAD Network is an active community of practice, with a lively exchange of experiences and shared learning. It allows the sharing of tools, ideas and resources that can help to 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 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 will be able to interact with people who do similar work to you in different European countries – wherever you are.

To join the online network and stay up to date with news, sign up [here!](#)

To learn more about the FEAD Network and find related articles and documents, [visit the European Commission webpage](#).

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The FEAD Network has a Facebook group! The FEAD Network online community is ideal for sharing content and referring colleagues to the group. Keep an eye out for new content including Facebook Live, vlogs and prizes. We will be using Facebook as an interactive tool for future events, so sign up now to take part!



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We look forward to hearing from you!

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