



European
Commission



FEAD Network

Fund for

European Aid

to the Most Deprived

Meeting Report
'Monitoring and evaluation of FEAD'

18th FEAD Network Meeting

Brussels, 7–8 November 2019

Social Europe

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18th FEAD Network Meeting on 'Monitoring and Evaluation of FEAD'

On 7 and 8 November 2019, the European Commission hosted the 18th Network Meeting on 'Monitoring and Evaluation of FEAD'. The meeting, hosted in Brussels, brought together almost 96 delegates from 22 countries from across the EU-wide network of stakeholders, including FEAD Managing Authorities; partner organisations; European Commission representatives; EU-level partner organisations; and other local, regional and national actors.

DAY 1

Welcome and overview of the meeting



Leo Williams, Director, EAPN (European Antipoverty Network), lead moderator of the event, welcomed participants to the fifth and final meeting of 2019. He explained that the two-day meeting would explore inspiring practices in monitoring and evaluating food assistance and social exclusion interventions funded by FEAD from different stakeholders' perspectives. The meeting covered the overall monitoring and evaluation requirements of FEAD as

well as considerations about the challenges involved in monitoring and evaluating food and/or basic material assistance and social inclusion interventions. Participants heard about different case studies from Managing Authorities and partner organisations about their monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems at operational programme and project level, respectively. Ending the meeting, participants will have the opportunity to work on a practical exercise developing an M&E system based on a case study.

Welcome from the European Commission and update on ESF+

Maria-Anna Paraskeva, Senior Policy Officer, European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL), thanked participants for their continuous support to the FEAD Network throughout the years. She gave a brief update to the delegates on policy developments in the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), explaining that the ESF+ dialogues are due to start in November and conclude in 2020.



Regarding developments of the FEAD Network, she announced that the 2019 annual implementation reports have been launched and that the annual meeting with stakeholders

would take place on 22 November 2019. Following her introduction, participants had the opportunity to ask questions.



Jeannette Monier, Deputy Head of the Evaluation and Impact Assessment Unit, DG EMPL, European Commission, presented the importance of monitoring and evaluation for accountability and learning purposes in the context of FEAD. She reminded participants that, due to the urgent nature of the aid delivered under FEAD, reporting requirements are purposely less constraining for stakeholders compared to other types of funds such as ESF. She

presented the monitoring indicators and the different assessment tools that have been used for the FEAD mid-term evaluation (i.e. case studies, interviews, public consultations and surveys). Findings from evaluation exercises will be key to inform the ESF+ preparations, including the annual implementation reports and the recent FEAD mid-term evaluation. Monitoring and evaluation reports are important to help inform decision-making: by learning about the experience of partner organisations, M&E helps improve the quality of support and better respond to the needs of the recipients. Equally, it is an important tool to raise awareness among the wider public and ensure the EU action is transparent.

Session 1: Panel discussion on the challenges of monitoring and evaluating FEAD-funded actions

Leo Williams, EAPN, the lead moderator of the 18th FEAD Network Meeting, opened the first session of the meeting. The panel session outlined some of the challenges in monitoring and evaluating FEAD-funded actions from the perspectives of representatives of the European Commission and a partner organisation, as well as an academic expert in poverty and social inclusion.



Jeannette Monier, Deputy Head of the Evaluation and Impact Assessment Unit, DG EMPL, European Commission, highlighted the importance of the principle of dignity in FEAD monitoring and evaluation and its associated challenges. Another challenge encountered during the programming period has been 'gold plating', whereby Managing Authorities have been adding further M&E requirements on top of the EU requirements. There is a need to cut down on unnecessary red tape. The future merge of the fund into ESF+ could create additional challenges in monitoring and evaluation given the interaction between material deprivation within other support services provided by the ESF. For example, it might create the need to track people benefiting from different support systems. Another challenge raised related to the e-vouchers: while this tool has the real potential of being less stigmatising, there are still a number of questions about how it would work in practice.



Jan Vranken, an academic expert in poverty and social exclusion at the University of Antwerp, explained that when designing monitoring and evaluating practices, it is important to clearly define concepts in the context of FEAD and take into account the characteristics of the target group. This should be taken into account by the service providers, and it has an impact on the accessibility to the target group and quality of the data collected.

Elodie Charvat, Les Restos du Coeur, presented the monitoring and evaluation practices of Les Restos du Coeur, a FEAD partner organisation in France with more than 2,000 members. As part of their national strategy, the organisation has set up an observatory for monitoring and evaluation. The observatory is supported by a team of one employee and volunteers with knowledge in the field (retired sociologists and statisticians). In addition, the organisation has worked with an independent consultant to conduct studies. Data is collected by software tools developed by the organisation to register recipients (Ulysse) or manage stocks (Navision). The observatory has created a number of working groups to evaluate the services and develop solutions targeted to the needs of the end recipients (i.e. people living in hotels who do not have access to cooking facilities need different types of food assistance). With its monitoring and evaluation practices, the organisation aims to better understand the needs of people: currently 900,000 people are reached during the winter.



Following presentations from the speakers, there was a Q&A where participants discussed matters including: how to maintain the principle of dignity when asking questions to end recipients; how to involve end recipients in the planning and design stages of evaluation; examples of the benefits of using focus groups to understand the needs of end recipients; and the importance of designing focused monitoring and evaluation processes that are matched to the available resources in order to increase the effectiveness of M&E practices.

Session 2: Case studies on monitoring and evaluating FEAD at Operational Programme level

Marianna Georgallis, Ecorys, facilitated the second session of the event. She outlined the aims and format of the interactive session, during which participants had the opportunity to hear from three Managing Authorities from Estonia, Germany and Belgium. The speakers will present different country-specific monitoring and evaluation systems at Operational Programme (OP) level, across both OP I and OP II. Following each of the speakers' presentations, participants had the opportunity to reflect on and discuss M&E practices in their own countries, guided by a set of questions. A rapporteur at each table wrote down the main

points of the discussion on different flipcharts. A summary of the key points is presented in this report.

Ingrid Mangulson, Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs (Estonian Managing Authority), Department of Smart Development, presented the monitoring processes of FEAD end recipients in ESF funded measures in Estonia. She explained the ESF data collection cycle and the stakeholders involved, which include the national statistical office of Estonia. Looking at the future, Estonia is developing an action plan based on key learnings. The action plan is directed towards process improvement, aiming to reduce administrative burdens and decrease the margin of error in data collection. In addition, plans are being made to digitalise ESF data, with the introduction of tools such as an ID reader to automatise the collection of recipients' data.



Following the presentation, the facilitator invited participants to reflect on the following questions:

- How would a monitoring system similar to this be useful for FEAD implementation in your country?
- Do you have any examples of monitoring of FEAD in your country?



Participants discussed the potential challenges of using similar monitoring systems in different countries, for example, the introduction of GDPR and data management, administrative and budget constraints to cover evaluation costs, and the different composition of end recipients across projects and countries. In particular, participants discussed the case of Belgium as an example where coordination could be particularly challenging, given that the different

communities have individual governments, statistical offices and use different languages. In addition, participants discussed the monitoring practices in countries such as Croatia, Finland, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain. In particular, participants discussed data management practices in these countries, and the use of different IT information systems or software to support the reporting of FEAD monitoring data.

Johanna Greiss, University of Antwerp, presented the framework for the FEAD evaluation in Belgium. The Belgian FEAD Managing Authority has commissioned an evaluation of procurement processes and the distribution of foodstuffs. The evaluation is conducted in collaboration with the University of Antwerp and the Catholic University of Louvain. The evaluation uses interviews and discussion groups to collect data. She mentioned some of the challenges of conducting the evaluation, such as measuring the quality of products, or how to target the most vulnerable to participate in the evaluation discussions. With regard to the latter, she highlighted the importance of allowing time to build trust with participants and integrating them in the process in order to get better evaluation results.



Following the presentation, the facilitator invited participants to reflect on the following questions:

- **What are the key challenges in designing and implementing an evaluation like this one?**
- **Could this evaluation approach be transferred to FEAD in your country?**

Participants discussed some of the challenges to take into account when designing and implementing evaluations, such as: the importance of involving the correct experts to ensure



a scientific approach to evaluations; taking into consideration language barriers; and attracting recipients to maximise their participation and ensure representation. In addition, participants discussed potential improvements to FEAD evaluations, by way of establishing common indicators across the EU or by involving recipients in the design and implementation of evaluation frameworks. In reference to Belgium's evaluation approach, participants agreed on the importance of building trust with recipients as this can greatly enhance the quality of the data.

Gerd Walter, Institute for Socio-Economic Structural Analysis (SOESTRA), Germany,

presented the ongoing evaluation of the FEAD OP in Germany. In Germany, FEAD targets people affected by poverty with insufficient access to local or regional services, with the aim to provide a bridge into existing social services. The programme has been conducted in two phases; the second phase (2019–2020) is ongoing. The evaluation of the programme in Germany was important to get feedback from municipalities, as it was the first time such actions were implemented. The evaluation analysed monitoring data, programme documents, the results of two surveys and case studies (including 17 projects where site visits and interviews were conducted). The results of the evaluation showed that municipalities welcome FEAD as an urgently needed aid against poverty and provided recommendations for the future ESF+.



Following the presentation, the facilitator invited participants to reflect on the following questions:

- **What are the challenges in evaluating social inclusion measures?**
- **What can you take away from this presentation to help FEAD evaluations in your country?**

Participants discussed the potential challenges for evaluation in the framework of the new ESF+, given the wider scope of the new funding and potential difficulties in defining indicators. The parameters for the evaluation of social inclusion measures could be defined more clearly, to improve the comparability of results from different Member States conducting evaluations. The participants talked about the challenges involved in comparing and measuring data when there are different requirements for different cohorts of end recipients.

Following the previous table discussions, the facilitator, **Marianna Georgallis, Ecorys**, briefly summarised the key points highlighted on the flipcharts by rapporteurs during the three rounds of participants' discussions. Closing the session, the moderator, **Leo Williams, EAPN**, thanked the speakers and delegates for their contributions.

DAY 2

The moderator, **Leo Williams, EAPN**, welcomed delegates to the second day of the meeting and explained the agenda for the day. In the second day of the meeting, inspiring practices from France, Poland and Spain were showcased and, through an interactive workshop, participants were able to reflect on how they can set up the most relevant and effective monitoring and evaluation systems for their FEAD-funded interventions.

Session 3: Monitoring and evaluation at partner organisation level

Oliva Geymond, Ecorys, the facilitator for session 3, began by briefly outlining the aim and objectives of the session. The session showcased three case studies on M&E systems put in place by FEAD partner organisations in France, Poland and Spain. She introduced the speakers and outlined the format of the session. After each speaker's presentation, participants will have the opportunity to discuss a set of guiding questions.



José Luis Díez del Corral and Francisco Greciano Rodríguez, Spanish Federation of Food Banks (FESBAL), presented the plan implemented by FESBAL to monitor the performance of the partner organisations involved in FEAD delivery in Spain from 2014–2020. The intermediary body, the Spanish Agricultural Guarantee Fund (FEGA), designated FESBAL and the Spanish Red Cross as the two organisations responsible for

food distribution. Together, they work on the distribution of food aid and the coordination of the network of partner organisations. The control plan sets monitoring requirements for all partner organisations. In municipalities that have less than 40 partner organisations, monitoring visits are conducted for all charities. In municipalities with a larger number of partner organisations, at least 40% of the organisations must be monitored. Monitoring requirements include: checking that the provision of food is free; ensuring that accompanying measures are correctly implemented; monitoring the types of food delivered and the conditions of storage facilities; and conducting incident checks. The number of people receiving assistance is checked through evaluation reports prepared by the social workers. In 2018, the incident reports by partner organisations showed that many food items from previous phases of the programme were not used. As a way to overcome the issue, the intermediary body created a tool that makes it possible to calculate food product requirements based on family composition.

Next, **Przemysław Bartczak, Food Bank Foundation (Ciechanów)**, and **Marcin Fedoruk, Federation of Polish Food Banks**, presented the 'Little Helper' tool. Since 2017, the IT tool has helped Polish partner organisations involved in FEAD delivery to comply with their reporting obligations. The tool allows users to record different indicators (participants, NGOs, distribution of food parcels, prepared meals, etc.), and is available in three different versions. An



offline paper version is provided for partner organisations with scarce internet resources or limited expertise, and additional training is foreseen to support them with the transition to the online version. The use of the 'Little Helper' tool by partner organisations has increased from 21% to 63% in 2018. It is expected that it will be used by 70% of partner organisations by the

end of 2019. The tool helps reduce the time required to prepare reports, and decreases the margin of error on recording/tracking compared with traditional offline reporting methods. At the regional level, an additional tool was developed to support foodbanks. The 'Big Helper' tool is used by 100% of the foodbanks, helping them monitor at regional level and giving them online access to data. The tool has reduced errors and helps foodbanks to keep track of stock, which is useful for monitoring purposes.



Finally, **Marie-Françoise Thull, Secours Populaire Français**, presented the results of the recent evaluation 'Utilité sociale aide alimentaire' by the Secours Populaire Français and independent consultant FORS-Recherche Sociale. The aim of the survey was to evaluate the societal influence and effects of food aid to the most deprived in France. The evaluation analysed both recipients and volunteers through a qualitative approach (interviews and focus groups). The findings shed

light on the social role that FEAD plays beyond food aid, being a first step into accompanying measures.

Following each presentation, participants had the opportunity to discuss M&E experiences in their own FEAD context and hear from different partner organisations, guided by a set of questions. The table below presents a summary of the points raised by the delegates.

<p>How is the performance of partner organisations monitored?</p>	<p>The performance of partner organisations is monitored through visits to the partner organisations, annual reports, administration verification, control from the state ministries, among others. In Greece and Italy, an IT system is used to report different phases of the process (i.e. stock distribution). In Estonia, an IT system that collects data on food distribution is used by the foodbank.</p>
<p>Is information gathered about the partner organisation volunteers and staff involved in FEAD delivery? How is their satisfaction with the FEAD Operational Programme monitored?</p>	<p>Information is gathered, for example, thorough follow up meetings, information systems for FEAD, informal questions during Managing Authority audits. Some country-specific best practices were highlighted. For example, in Italy, a periodic roundtable at national level takes place between all stakeholders, with the aim of monitoring progress and improving the quality of the process.</p>
<p>How do you collect socio-demographic information about the end recipients of FEAD-funded interventions? How do you capture their level of satisfaction? How do you report on it?</p>	<p>Socio-demographic information about end recipients is collected through various means, such as information gathered by partner organisations during home visits, questionnaires, different IT systems for FEAD; volunteers feedback, and other reports. In some countries, collaboration takes place between Managing Authorities and statistical institutes to gather information. In relation to the latter, delegates discussed the benefits of adequate funding to ensure access to scientific experts for the development of scientific-based indicators to gather data.</p>
<p>What tools are used by partner organisations to monitor and</p>	<p>The tools used by partner organisations differ based on the needs and resources in each context. Tools range</p>

<p>evaluate their FEAD-funded interventions?</p>	<p>from a mobile app in Ireland, to Excel or paper files, IT systems, and other evaluation tools (surveys, interviews, case studies, etc.). Some delegates highlighted the need for a European level strategy to guide the development of tools beyond food aid, towards the inclusion of social inclusion dimensions.</p>
<p>How do you ensure the efficiency of monitoring and evaluation processes from the partner organisation all the way to the Managing Authority?</p>	<p>Delegates discussed different processes for M&E. Overall, establishing good channels of communication is important. The use of automatic documents and forms is useful to avoid errors, and IT systems ensure trusted information is reliable. In Estonia, efficient data collection of food distribution processes is set up, aiming to avoid food waste and disseminate the principles of FEAD.</p>
<p>How do you assess the impact of FEAD-funded activities on social inclusion?</p>	<p>Participants agreed that the impact of FEAD-funded activities on social inclusion is difficult to assess. It is currently conducted informally. Careful planning and a good definition of what is to be measured is needed when trying to assess the needs of the people. Some countries try to assess the impact by looking at the recipients' progression into employment and/or education. Overall, the impact is assessed based on direct interaction with end recipients. Data is gathered by different means (i.e. interviews, case studies, feedback from professionals, and sometimes through evaluations in collaboration with university partners or consultant agencies).</p>
<p>What type of activities and/or accompanying measures are the most effective to foster the social inclusion of end recipients? Conversely, what type of activities and/or accompanying measures are less effective in your experience?</p>	<p>Participants discussed the benefits of accompanying measures to foster social inclusion. For example, accompanying measures targeting children in Greece, educational measures in Estonia, or other basic levels of accompanying measures (orientation, counselling, basic needs assistance) in Italy. Many delegates mentioned the results of cooking lessons in fostering social inclusion. Other activities discussed were activities targeting the prevention of food waste, and family budget management.</p>

Session 4: Practical workshop on how to design and implement a monitoring and evaluation system at project level

The facilitator, **Olivia Geymond, Ecorys**, welcomed participants to the interactive workshop. Through a practical group exercise, the workshop aimed to raise awareness about the general principles and the key steps to follow when designing an M&E system at project level. Participants were given examples of existing FEAD-funded projects, and were asked to develop an M&E plan with guidance from the facilitator and support material. This interactive



exercise gave participants from diverse backgrounds a unique opportunity to take a step back and reflect on how to develop effective monitoring and evaluation plans for FEAD-funded

interventions. It was also a good opportunity for delegates to learn from colleagues with different stakeholder and country perspectives. At the end of the exercise, two delegates presented the outcomes of their teamwork: one team had developed an M&E plan for an OP I type of intervention and the other team had worked on an OP II type of intervention.

Closing of the meeting

Leo Williams, EAPN, closed the meeting, thanking all speakers and participants for their contributions during the two days of the event.

Jan Behrens, European Commission, DG EMPL, concluded the meeting alluding to the importance of M&E to ensure accountability, but also raising visibility and awareness on the topic at the political level and to the wider public. He remarked that the meeting had been an important reminder of the work being conducted at Member State level by partner organisations and volunteers in evaluating their interventions. In the context of the ESF+, work will continue to be done to reduce the indicators for reporting and to reduce the administrative burden for partner organisations in order to be able to increase engagement with different target groups.

Maria-Anna Paraskeva, European Commission, DG EMPL, closed the last FEAD Network Meeting of 2019 by thanking the delegates for their valuable contributions and participation. As part of her closing remarks, she encouraged participants to actively participate in the design of the new programming period to ensure the support role of FEAD continues to be pertinent in Europe for years to come.

References for consultation

[Link to downloadable catalogue of FEAD case studies 2018](#)

[Link to downloadable catalogue of FEAD case studies 2017](#)

[Link to downloadable catalogue of FEAD case studies 2016](#)



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