



Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived

Supporting a diverse population through FEAD initiatives:

Thematic Dossier 2

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Reaching out to the “hardest-to-reach” individuals in Europe

Launched in 2014, the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) is a tool to support the alleviation of the worst forms of poverty and material deprivation across the European Union (EU). With € 3.8 billion earmarked, Member States are able to offer a variety of non-financial assistance to the most vulnerable individuals living across the continent.

Notably, FEAD was introduced by the European Commission as a flexible fund whereby Member States have the discretion to choose the kinds of assistance that they wish to provide (i.e. material or non-material assistance) as well as their own approaches to the delivery of support. They are also given the freedom to decide which target groups to support, as the fund recognises the diversity of populations and the differences in existing social support systems across the EU. All in all, FEAD is intended as a tool to reach the “hardest-to-reach” vulnerable people. These individuals generally do not benefit from the services provided by their national social services, and therefore are in need of additional targeted support, tailored to their specific needs.

Due to the flexibility of the FEAD regulation, Member States are able to employ a variety of strategies to identify and reach out to the most deprived individuals in their respective societies. In Austria, for example, FEAD funding is used to support families that have trouble purchasing school materials at the beginning of the school year by providing them with “school starter packs.” Denmark and the Netherlands, on the other hand, have opted to dedicate their FEAD funding to social inclusion initiatives – but with notably different target groups. In Denmark, homeless people that have no or limited contact with public social services are the focus while the Netherlands has identified elderly individuals living in isolation as those most in need of support.

Member States are able to adopt a more universal approach to support, for example by providing food assistance to all individuals living under the poverty threshold and on welfare benefits. They can also dedicate funds to the organisation of additional “accompanying measures” through which they go beyond the distribution of food in order to support end recipients in their transition out of poverty. In Slovenia, for instance, specific workshops are organised for female recipients of food parcels, allowing them to overcome their social isolation as well as learn some practical new skills¹. Similarly, in Poland, a range of accompanying initiatives are organised to support various target groups, such as homeless people, families with children or people with disabilities.

With the fund’s ability to support a range of target groups, Member States have adopted various identification and outreach strategies depending on their local contexts and operational programmes. The intricacies of these different strategies were at the heart of discussions between the stakeholders involved with the fund, the ‘FEAD Network’, in 2017

¹ For more information on the Srečevalnica initiative, see here: <http://www.ljubljana.ozrk.si/sl/SRECEVALNICA/>

1.2 Purpose of the thematic dossier

The FEAD Network² explored the manner in which FEAD could be used to support a variety of target groups through discussions at the face-to-face 'Network meetings', as well as through exchanges on the designated online Yammer platform³.

Network members discussed the manner in which effective outreach practices and strategies could be employed in order to identify and support the target group. Discussions touched upon the advantages and disadvantages of targeted and universal approaches to social support, as well as the manner in which distrust in public institutions can be overcome by building trusting relationships with end recipients. It was underlined that strong partnerships between organisations are imperative to ensure that sustainable, multifaceted support is given to end recipients, allowing them to receive support at each step of their transition out of poverty.

It was also recommended that once contact is made with the target group, social workers and volunteers should take a holistic approach to support as the target group is generally faced with multiple problems and barriers to social inclusion.

This thematic dossier presents the key outcomes of FEAD Network discussions in 2017 on supporting a variety of target groups through FEAD-funded initiatives. In chapter two, to set the scene, the multi-dimensional nature of poverty and social exclusion is explored. Chapter three subsequently focuses on the outreach activities that FEAD partner organisations have implemented in order to effectively reach out to the "hardest-to-reach" individuals in their respective communities. Chapter four touches on the ways in which partner organisations take into account the varying needs of the target groups and attempt to employ a holistic or "whole person" approach to FEAD support. Lastly, chapter five presents the manner in which FEAD can be used as a tool to overcome discrimination and exclusion in the provision of social service support.



² The FEAD Network is a community that consists of actors involved in the management and delivery of activities funded through FEAD. These actors include representatives from the Managing Authorities across the participating EU Member States; partner organisations and EU-level NGOS, such as the Red Cross, Caritas, Salvation Army, Food Banks, Eurodiaconia, FEANTSA and FEBA; European Commission representatives; and other relevant stakeholders.

³ <https://www.yammer.com/feadnetwork/>



2. THE MULTI-DIMENSIONAL NATURE OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

2.1 Poverty and social exclusion in Europe

On average in 2015, about one in four people (almost 119 million) were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU-28⁴. While household income has a big impact on living standards, other aspects such as access to labour markets and/or material deprivation also prevent full participation in society. According to EU standards, being at risk of poverty or social exclusion refers to *'experiencing at least one of the following risks: monetary poverty, severe material deprivation and/or low work household intensity'*⁵.

Overall, monetary poverty was the most widespread of these risks in Europe in 2015 (affecting 17.3% of the EU-28 population⁶), followed by low work household intensity (10.6%) and severe material deprivation rate (8.1%). Yet, the structure of poverty differed widely from one Member State to another. For instance, while material deprivation was the predominant form of poverty in Hungary and Bulgaria, monetary poverty was the main concern in countries as diverse as Spain, Sweden, Estonia and Luxembourg.

People at risk of **monetary poverty** earn less than the poverty threshold (60% of their national median income after taxes and social security contributions). While most European countries have experienced an increase in the number of people below the monetary poverty line, rates varied from only 9.7% in the Czech Republic up to 25.4% in Romania in 2015. Households with very **low work intensity** are households where adults worked 20% or less of their potential during the previous 12 months. Again, a significant difference was noted across the EU from 5.7% of people experiencing low work intensity in Luxembourg to 16.8% in Greece⁷. Finally, **severe material deprivation** provides an estimate of the proportion of people who cannot afford at least four out of nine items including a meal with meat or fish every second day, a telephone and housing heating⁸. The share of those experiencing severe material deprivation also varied, ranging from 0.7% of individuals in Sweden to 34.2% of the population in Bulgaria.

It should be noted that these three dimensions of poverty tend to overlap. One reason for the multi-dimensional nature of poverty and social exclusion across Europe is the uneven impact of the economic crisis of 2008. Although many factors have influenced overall economic performance, much of the current divergence results from the way labour markets and social systems reacted to the severe global downturn and to fiscal consolidation packages implemented in most Member States. Differences have also resulted from the effectiveness of Member States' existing social policies and the extent of their efforts to adapt these according to contemporary challenges.

4 Eurostat (2017), Europe 2020 indicators - poverty and social exclusion. Eurostat. Published June 2017. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Europe_2020_indicators_-_poverty_and_social_exclusion

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Eurostat (2016), People at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Eurostat. Published July 2017. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/People_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion

8 Eurostat (2017), Material deprivation statistics – early results. Eurostat. Published April 2017. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Material_deprivation_statistics_-_early_results

2.3 How does FEAD contribute to social inclusion within the EU?

Poverty and social exclusion take many forms across Europe, but also affect a wide range of people. Those who are particularly at risk of poverty and social inclusion include women, children, young people, the unemployed, single-parent households and those living alone, people with lower educational attainment, people born in a different country than the one they reside in, people out of work, and those living in rural areas. The extent to which each group is at risk of poverty differs from one Member State to another and may evolve over time.

In 2015, **women** (24.4%) were more likely to experience poverty or social exclusion compared to men (23%) in all EU countries except Poland and Spain. The gender gaps were the highest in the Baltic States of Latvia and Estonia. It was furthermore estimated that in 2015, over a quarter (26.9%) of **children** (up to 17 years old) were at risk of poverty or social exclusion⁹. In contrast, **older people** (aged 65 or over) had the lowest rate of poverty or social exclusion (17.4%)¹⁰. This gap was especially large in the southern European countries such as Greece, Spain, Cyprus and Portugal. This could be explained by the fact that pensions and retirement benefits were not as severely reduced in these countries as the incomes of the younger people during the economic crisis¹¹.

Two-thirds of **unemployed people** were notably also at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU in 2015, although the national shares differed greatly from 53.3% in Luxembourg to 83.1% in Germany. Moreover, people with **low educational attainment** were three times more likely to be at risk compared with those with the higher educational attainment¹².

When looking at household composition, **single parents** faced the highest risk of poverty or social exclusion, at 47.9%. Additionally, **people residing in the EU but born in non-EU countries** were generally worse off than people living in their home country, with the greatest difference in rate being in Greece (34.3%), Belgium and Spain, and the smallest rates in the Czech Republic and Malta. Finally, in the majority of Member States, **people in rural areas** were more at risk of poverty or social exclusion (25.5% compared to 24% in urban areas). This was especially true in Romania and Bulgaria. However, in countries such as Denmark, Austria, Belgium, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Germany, the opposite was true as larger shares of urban residents lived in poverty or social exclusion compared to rural residents¹³.

In addition to those traditionally vulnerable groups, poverty has reached **new categories of the population** in recent years. Employment was previously seen as key to prevention against poverty; however, 7.7% of the working population was at risk of poverty in 2015 despite working full-time (with shares ranging from 2.9% in Finland to 14.7% in Romania). Furthermore, it can also be stipulated that better education is no longer a solution for preventing poverty and deprivation as between 2010 and 2015, 14 Member States experienced a rise in the rate of people at risk among those with the highest educational degrees¹⁴.

9 Eurostat (2016), People at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Eurostat. Published July 2017. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/People_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion
http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Europe_2020_indicators_-_poverty_and_social_exclusion

10 Ibid.

11 Bertelsmann Stiftung (2015), Social Justice in the EU - Index Report 2015. Social Inclusion Monitor Europe, (p.10) as quoted in ESTAT (2017), Europe 2020 indicators - poverty and social exclusion. Eurostat. Published June 2017. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Europe_2020_indicators_-_poverty_and_social_exclusion

12 Eurostat (2017), Europe 2020 indicators - poverty and social exclusion. Eurostat. Published June 2017. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Europe_2020_indicators_-_poverty_and_social_exclusion

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

Because poverty and social exclusion take many different forms and affect many different groups across Europe, it is understandable that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' policy action that can be taken to support Europe's most deprived. The flexibility of FEAD is therefore crucial as it allows Member States to offer tailored support to the most vulnerable groups of people in their respective national contexts. The ways in which partner organisations across Europe adopt outreach strategies to identify and reach out to potential end recipients of FEAD support will be explored in the next chapter.



3. EFFECTIVE OUTREACH TO A VARIETY OF TARGET GROUPS

3.1 Identifying target groups: adopting a universal vs. a targeted approach

There are two main approaches to the identification of target groups to be supported through FEAD-funded initiatives: the **universal approach** and a **targeted approach**. Several Member States have adopted a universal definition of beneficiaries whereby all people living under the poverty threshold are eligible for support. Conversely, other Member States have opted for their FEAD funds to be specifically channelled to support selected target groups. Examples of such specific groups include homeless people, EU mobile citizens or ethnic minorities such as Roma people.

Both approaches have their advantages and disadvantages. By adopting a universal approach, partner organisations prevent the discrimination or stigmatisation of end recipients other than on economic grounds. However, there is a risk that the **'hardest-to-reach'** (e.g. homeless people) would not be supported due to the fact that they are not registered with the public administrative services. Additional efforts can therefore be needed to reach out to those groups that fall outside the regular welfare system.

In contrast, the targeted approach focuses on particularly vulnerable individuals and enables the assistance to be tailored. In doing so, however, there is a higher risk of stigmatisation. This can increase the distance between end recipients and social workers¹⁵ and decrease the take-up of social benefits¹⁶. Furthermore, limiting benefits to a narrow group disqualifies other individuals who could be equally, if not more, vulnerable.

An example of the universal approach can be seen in Latvia, a Member State that has adopted Operational Programme I (OP I)¹⁷. FEAD funding in Latvia is used to support individuals or families with or without children, with a per capita income of less than € 128.06 per month, and/or individuals or families with or without children in a crisis situation (e.g. hit by a natural disaster). In order to be eligible for the receipt of food parcels, individuals and families need to be registered with the Latvian social services as a resident of the local community. The Latvian Ministry of Welfare, Managing Authority for the FEAD programme, acknowledged that this requirement would prevent particular groups (e.g. irregular migrants or homeless people) from accessing FEAD support, which is one of the identified challenges that it is looking to overcome. One way in which the ministry does this is by offering free hot meals in soup kitchens to these vulnerable groups.

In the Czech Republic, also an OP I country, a more targeted approach to providing material assistance can be seen. Authorities identify the target group when they register with job centres, and parents are able to opt in to a programme where their children are provided with free school meals. FEAD funds are provided directly to the schools, avoiding the need for those children that are receiving the meals to be openly identified.

15 EX NOTA Consortium (2005), Exit from and non-take-up of public services. A comparative analysis: France, Greece, Spain, Germany, Netherlands and Hungary. Coord. Ph. Warin, EXNOTA, DG Research, p.54.

16 Kayser, H. and Frick, R. (2000), "Take it or leave it: (Non-) Take-up behaviour of Social Assistance in Germany", DIW Discussion Paper Nr. 210.

17 For more information, please see the report of the fifth FEAD Network meeting at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=17650&langId=en>

Notably, all four Member States that have adopted OP II have a targeted approach to fostering the reintegration and social inclusion of the most deprived individuals into society. In order to effectively reach this objective, the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark and Germany have opted to focus their resources on supporting specific target groups: **elderly people with low disposable income** (the Netherlands), **newly arrived EU citizens and their children** (Sweden and Germany), and/or **homeless people** (Sweden, Denmark and Germany).

3.2 Outreach practices to support the ‘hardest-to-reach’ individuals

Whether the FEAD beneficiaries group is universal or specific, reaching out to potential aid recipients generally occurs in three phases: (1) making contact, (2) initiating social change processes and (3) providing social support. To that end, outreach organisations use a broad range of outreach activities ranging from word-of-mouth to more formal activities.

The initial stage of identification and making first contact is the most sensitive in the process because outreach workers need to **build a good relationship** with end recipients in order for them to open up. Making contact is either proactively undertaken by partner organisations or relies on a ‘wait and see’ strategy whereby eligible recipients are expected or encouraged to take the first step. An example of an initiative whereby potential end recipients are encouraged to make initial contact is the Solidarity Reception Centre of Secours Populaire Français. The organisation runs permanent reception centres where individuals can socialise as well as receive support from trained volunteers. Simultaneously, the organisation has a mobile outreach service through which it actively seeks to respond to the needs of homeless people and those living in rural areas.

Similarly, in Germany, as part of the project Amaro Foro carried out in Berlin¹⁸, social counsellors periodically visit places that are known to be meeting points for their target beneficiaries (namely EU migrants from Romania and Bulgaria, and individuals with a Roma background). They approach potential end recipients directly in the languages the recipients most commonly speak and inform them about the benefits they are eligible to claim. Moreover, in the rural area of Kuhmo in Finland¹⁹, social workers rely on their extended network in the community to identify and approach potential beneficiaries in an informal way to offer them food support. This proves very successful, as target group members do not always identify themselves as in need since the region has historically been living in deprivation and inhabitants do not always appreciate that their living conditions are abnormal.

Further down the support process, when it comes to the process of initiating social change, social workers need to assess the individuals’ situation to determine how to best help them escape poverty. Providing counselling services in the recipients’ native languages proves particularly effective at this stage as it **facilitates communication**, helps beneficiaries’ cultural backgrounds to be understood and helps linguistic and cultural barriers to be overcome. One of the main challenges at this stage is that establishing contact and **gaining the trust of end recipients** takes a lot of time, especially in the case of newly arrived citizens.

At the stage of providing social support, a crucial factor for success is the **availability of a strong supporting network** around the organisation initiating the social process. Once a needs assessment has been carried out, end recipients can be directed towards specific support services (e.g. entering the job market, psychological support, free medical assistance, homeless shelters and temporary housing). In order to effectively do so, partner organisations need to have strong partnerships with other local organisations in place. This will allow them to focus their resources on specific elements of the support process such as the distribution of food, the provision of healthcare services, the allocation of housing support, etc.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Some of the key challenges and solutions identified through FEAD Network discussions are presented in the following overview table.

| Challenges | Solutions |
|--|---|
| <i>At initial contact stage</i> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target group members do not always identify themselves as in need; • Risk of discrimination and stigmatisation of FEAD recipients; • Lack of awareness about the scheme among potential end recipients; • Distrust of support service providers; • Difficulty in locating potential end recipients due to geographical barriers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilise the network of social workers amongst the community and approach potential beneficiaries informally; • Proactively reach out to potential beneficiaries (e.g. by visiting places they are likely to frequent); • Protect the anonymity of the recipients; • Consider mobile logistics options for social workers to reach out to remote areas. |
| <i>During the engagement stage</i> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linguistic and cultural barriers between the recipients and social workers; • Multiple issues preventing end recipients' re-entry into social life. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide services in the beneficiaries' mother tongues; • Carry out a comprehensive needs assessment in order to determine the kinds of support needed. |
| <i>During the support stage</i> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessing people in remote areas; • Project implementers do not always have the capacity to provide the relevant social support themselves. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider mobile logistics options for social workers to reach out to remote areas; • Link up with other organisations to set up a comprehensive support network. |

Effectively identifying and reaching out to end recipients is a complex process as it is imperative that support reaches the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach individuals across Europe, while avoiding discrimination and stigmatisation. Following initial contact and engagement however, partner organisations are also tasked with adopting the most effective approach to supporting individuals in their transition out of poverty. One strategy identified by FEAD Network members as being particularly valuable is adopting a holistic or 'whole person' approach to support services. The complexities of adopting such an approach will be further explored in the next chapter.

4. ADOPTING A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO FEAD INTERVENTIONS

4.1 Understanding the ‘whole-person approach’

Understanding that in order to address issues of poverty and social exclusion it is necessary to pay attention to the ‘whole person’ is not a recent revelation^{20,21}. Indeed, development theorists have recognised since the 1970s that people do not just need resources, but also need the means to use them in order to live a life they consider valuable. It has been acknowledged that there are several factors that affect an individual’s capacity to use their commodities: individual physical conditions, local environment characteristics, public service availability, community relationships, conventions and customs, distribution patterns within the family and so on²².

In the social policy field, this approach highlights the importance of addressing the multiple needs of deprived people to ensure their health and wellbeing, as well as ensuring a sustainable path out of poverty and social exclusion. In this context, whole-person care is understood as “*the coordination of health, behavioural health, and social services in a patient-centred manner with the goals of improved health outcomes and more efficient and effective use of resources*”²³.

This is particularly relevant for organisations working with FEAD funds, as the whole-person approach can be used to address the causes and consequences of specific forms of material deprivation (e.g. food insecurity²⁴ or homelessness²⁵) on the physical and mental health and well-being of vulnerable individuals. Consequently, there are myriad examples of Member States that have adopted a **holistic approach** to FEAD initiatives

4.2 Adopting a holistic approach in FEAD interventions

In order to effectively adopt a holistic approach to support services, partner organisations have the opportunity to implement accompanying measures alongside the provision of material aid. When distributing food parcels, for instance, social workers or volunteers can assess the end recipients’ needs by engaging in conversations with them. Once **mutual trust** is established, guidance and advice can be provided about the various possibilities available to support individuals and address their needs. While the budget for the provision of such accompanying measures is limited to 5 %, FEAD Network members established that the creation of strong partnerships between service providers is essential.

The provision of food and other material assistance is therefore seen as an **entry point to further social inclusion**, as social workers and volunteers can build the bridge to appropriate professionals within their networks or other service providers (e.g. housing authorities, social security services, labour market intermediaries, education pathways, childcare facilities, after school programmes). An example of a FEAD-

²⁰ Maslow, A.H. (1942), A Theory of Human Motivation. *Psychological Review* 50 (3) pp. 370-396.

²¹ Sen, A. (1985), *Commodities and Capabilities*. North-Holland: Amsterdam.

²² Sen, A. (1999), *Development as Freedom*. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

²³ JSI. (2014), National Approaches to Whole-Person Care in the Safety Net: http://www.jsi.com/JSIInternet/Inc/Common/_download_pub.cfm?id=14261&lid=3

²⁴ Compton, M.T. (2015), *The Social Determinants of Mental Health*, APA: https://www.appi.org/Social_Determinants_of_Mental_Health

²⁵ FEANTSA. (2017), *Good practice guidance for working with people who are homeless and use drugs*: <http://www.feantsa.org/en/feantsa-position/2017/02/28/good-practice-guidance-for-working-with-people-who-are-homeless-and-use-drugs>

funded initiative where this is done is the 'LEAP project' in Malta²⁶. Volunteers carry out SWOT analyses of families during home visits, following which a **personalised care plan** is drawn up. A designated social mentor subsequently supports the family throughout the process and helps them to make contact with other support services.

It is deemed similarly important to adopt a holistic approach to FEAD-funded support across Member States that have adopted OP II. In Sweden, for example, 'Digniti Omnia - Better Life for All' supports vulnerable, mobile EU citizens across various areas. The project focuses on personal empowerment, digital communication, preventive healthcare and awareness-raising of participants' rights and obligations as EU citizens. The whole-person approach is therefore implemented to try and integrate a specific vulnerable target group by approaching their needs from four different angles.

In order to be successful, FEAD interventions should aim to be embedded in a wider network of social support. It is therefore important to integrate collaborative efforts between Managing Authorities, partner organisations and end recipients themselves. A good example of **end recipient involvement** is the 'Srečevalnica project' in Slovenia, where the Red Cross offers a range of activities that give individuals the chance to develop particular skills in their areas of interest, such as sewing and cooking classes. This project is predominantly (but not exclusively) aimed at isolated women. End recipients are encouraged to run workshops, as well as share their ideas on the kinds of activities they would like to undertake. One result of this has been the organisation of a social garden by the Red Cross, where end recipients can learn about growing their own fruits and vegetables.

A number of challenges and lessons have emerged through discussions within the FEAD Network when considering how to adopt a whole-person approach in assisting the most deprived. These are presented below.

| Challenges | Solutions |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the multitude problems faced by potential end recipients; • A lack of trust between end recipients and social/workers/volunteers; • Avoiding possible duplication of funding as well as overlaps with the ESF; • Getting recipients involved in the process of changing their lives; • Building stable and effective partnerships with alternative social services (e.g. health and social services); • Identifying and reaching out to end recipients in a geographically challenging environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge that food assistance can be seen as an entry point to access potential end recipients and allows signposting; • Utilise the flexibility provided by FEAD in supporting a range of target groups as well as implementing accompanying measures; • Emphasise complementarity with ESF approaches; • Gain an in-depth understanding of the individual and their specific needs by carrying out a needs assessment; • Build a relationship of trust with end recipients through regular contact; • Include end recipients in determining their needs during the support process; • Set tangible and realistic targets for and with end recipients; • Use an integrated approach to assistance in coordination with other social services. |

²⁶ For more information, please see the FEAD 2016 case study catalogue at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7947&furtherPubs=yes>

Delving deeper, one of the key challenges when it comes to implementing a holistic approach relates to how FEAD can integrate the whole-person approach when funding is predominantly used for the provision of food and material assistance. Network members underlined that the provision of food and basic material assistance should be seen as an **entry point and gateway to further social inclusion** and that the implementation of a variety of accompanying measures was essential. However, one issue raised was that the **5 % flat rate** to cover the accompanying measures was insufficient. To overcome this issue, partner organisations underlined the importance of **strengthening the networks** of social services providers in their communities in order to create better synergies between them. As a result, partner organisations will be able to work closely together in providing specialised support tailored to the distinct needs of end recipients.

In establishing and mobilising such networks, FEAD Network members additionally touched on the issue of establishing **better synergies with initiatives funded through the European Social Fund (ESF)**. As a result, partner organisations using FEAD funding could identify and support the most vulnerable individuals across Europe and subsequently link them to ESF initiatives that could offer further social inclusion support.

Another identified challenge is the range of needs that individual end recipients have. Most FEAD partner organisations rely heavily on their volunteer networks rather than trained professionals, therefore it is a challenge to ensure that their **volunteers are fully prepared** to support end recipients with all their needs. It was deemed important that volunteers and social workers were aware of gender and cultural factors when supporting end recipients, discarding the assumption that 'a general approach fits all'. In order to prepare volunteers, training should be offered by partner organisations on the intricacies of offering support to such a diverse group of vulnerable individuals.

A final identified challenge related to ensuring that support services sustainably helped individuals out of poverty and social exclusion. In order to do so, it was noted that it was essential to **build relationships of trust** with end recipients and continuously support them throughout the process, as well as fully **include end recipients** in various aspects of the support. It was recommended that in order to achieve tangible results, realistic targets needed to be set in collaboration and agreement with the end recipients.

The following chapter will summarise the main conclusions of the FEAD Network discussions on issues related to supporting a diverse population through FEAD initiatives as well as touching upon the potential of FEAD being utilised as a tool to tackle discrimination and social exclusion.



5. CONCLUSION

Tackling poverty and deprivation entails addressing the multiple needs of deprived people. As explored in this thematic dossier, poverty is multi-dimensional and can affect various social groups across Europe. As a result, adopting a holistic approach to support is seen as one of the most efficient ways of supporting individuals' transitions out of poverty. The FEAD Network acknowledged that the offering of basic assistance in the form of food or other material support is the crucial first step towards social inclusion, and that the best way to help Europe's most deprived is to offer additional accompanying measures alongside food support.

However, there are various challenges in adopting a holistic approach to support. Firstly, if partner organisations single out particular vulnerable groups in an attempt to tailor support specifically to their needs this may be perceived as discriminatory and cause a feeling of stigmatisation. Conversely, if a universal 'one-size-fits-all' approach is adopted, the specialised needs of particular target groups may not be met, hindering their journey out of poverty and social exclusion. A universal approach may even lead to the exclusion of particular target groups entirely.

In order to overcome these challenges, FEAD Network members established that it was crucial to create better synergies between social service providers operating in the field. This would allow volunteers and social workers operating both under OP I and OP II to refer individuals to organisations that specialised in particular support services. This would ensure that each individuals' specialised needs were met, which in turn would increase the likelihood of succeeding in the journey out of poverty and social exclusion. It was furthermore concluded that it was important to include end recipients in the dialogue surrounding their support process, as relationships of mutual trust were seen as key in order to overcome the issues related to poverty and social exclusion.

Looking forward, the FEAD Network plans to explore the manner in which FEAD can be used as a tool to overcome discrimination and exclusion, and ultimately ensure that the support offered leads to individuals' sustainable transition out of poverty. Strategies surrounding the building of effective partnerships and networks will be touched upon going forward, as well as the manner in which end recipients can become more involved in determining their own paths to social inclusion.

