

Brussels, 30 November 2020

Have your say on reinforcing Social Europe

Contribution from the European Food Banks Federation (FEBA)

The European Commission published on January 2020 the Communication "[A strong social Europe for just transitions](#)" where it is set out how the Commission intends to respond in the area of social policy to the economic change, the demographic change and the challenges 2020 were presenting. The Communication already contains a list of initiatives at EU level aimed at supporting the implementation of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) (EPSR) in 2020 and 2021, and is simultaneously intended to prepare the way for setting out an Action Plan for future implementation of the EPSR at EU level and in the Member States, which is to be presented in early 2021.

Soon after the publication of this Communication, Europe and the entire world turned upside down for the outbreak of the Covid-19 and the social and economic crisis generated required a paradigm shift.

The EPSR is about delivering new and more effective rights for citizens and it has three main categories: *equal opportunities and access to the labour market, fair working conditions and social protection and inclusion*. In the last section, Principle 20 is dedicated to the access of "essential services of good quality, including water, sanitation, energy, transport, financial services and digital communications". However, there is no punctual reference to food as an essential service.

The crisis generated by Covid-19 has not only socio-economic effects but has generated a new food insecurity, especially in the most disadvantaged parts of the population. Before the current crisis, in 2018 in the European Union 33 million people were not able to afford a quality meal every second day (Eurostat, 2018). According to the survey conducted among the members of the European Food Banks Federation in September 2020, European Food Banks are recording an **increased food demand of around 30%**¹, with a range from 6% to 90% in the different countries. Furthermore, most of the respondents declared that their affiliated charities are experiencing a sharp increase in the number of final beneficiaries. The social and economic consequences are emerging, and these results can be clear warning signals. There is a **new kind**

¹ FEBA, [European Food Banks today: commitment, creativity, and openness to change](#), September 2020.

of poverty: almost 90% of the respondents declared that these new poor are people who have lost the job due to the COVID-19, more than 60% declared that they are families with children who relied mainly on school meals and elderly people living alone².

The daily activity of Food Banks belonging to the **European Food Banks Federation (FEBA) contributes to food insecurity reduction through food waste prevention**. Indeed, Food Banks recover safe and good food from the food supply chain that otherwise would become food waste. In addition to surplus food from the food supply chain, FEBA members also redistribute food from the Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived (FEAD) and the Fruits and Vegetables withdrawal scheme, as well as from individual donations. The food is then sorted, stocked, and redistributed to a network of affiliated charitable organizations – such as food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, communities, etc. – that help people in need. In 2019 FEBA network redistributed **768,000 tons of food to 45,283 charities assisting 9.5 million deprived people in Europe**.

As underlined by the EPSR (*Chapter 3 on Social protection and inclusion - Childcare and support to children*), children from disadvantaged backgrounds have the right to specific measures to enhance equal opportunities. In the crisis generated by COVID-19, children in need are more likely to suffer from undernutrition, micronutrient-related malnutrition and overweight, obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases. The proportion of children living in households lacking one meal with meat, chicken, or fish (or vegetarian equivalent) at least once a day is 21.4% in Hungary and 40% in Bulgaria³.

It is also important to underline that food is an essential service and, furthermore, food aid can activate activities leading to social inclusion (sociality, training, job search, etc.). The provision of food is a real way of access to paths for the sustainable reintegration of people and prerequisite for social inclusion. For instance, thanks to the current FEAD, starting from food aid, accompanying measures implemented by Partner Organizations are developed in a holistic approach for addressing the multiple needs of the most deprived. This fund is proving to be a key instrument that can effectively integrate national policies against extreme poverty, building partnerships and territorial networks, sharing knowledge among operators, and raising awareness about the situation of extreme marginality.

² FEBA, [European Food Banks today: commitment, creativity, and openness to change](#), September 2020.

³ European Commission, *Understanding the housing conditions experienced by children in the EU*, March 2020.

In this challenging and complex situation Europe is passing through, the European Food Banks Federation welcomes the European Union's commitment to support the economy and the society and urge the European Commission to include the support to the most deprived and the material deprivation in their policy actions and legal initiatives at EU level to pledge concrete commitments towards the EPSR's implementation and foster its application an national, regional and local level supporting all aspects of precarity.

Not only does the activity of members belonging to the European Food Banks Federation address the immediate challenge of providing food and promoting food security, but it also provides huge benefits to wider society, the environment, the economy, and food chain resilience. Food redistribution is good for people and the planet, it is aligned with many EU policies such as the Circular Economy Package and the Farm to Fork Strategy. It provides a multitude of support to individuals by not just providing food assistance but providing community-based food programs through local charities. Through the collaboration with charities, it accesses a wide network of people who are often hidden such as the most deprived. It introduces more food into the food chain, increasing food chain resilience during times of shocks and crises.

Food redistribution, which is the best destination when surplus food occurs since it ensures the highest value use of edible food resources,⁴ is proven to be the most effective approach not only to contribute to food insecurity and manage surplus food but especially for preventing food losses and waste at source and shifting from a linear to a circular economy.

The European Food Banks Federations is willing to give its strong and active contribution and to collaborate with the European Commission and all the organizations and stakeholders involved to support the implementation of the EPSR and the upcoming EPSR's Action Plan.

To have more information on the current context and the impact of COVID-19 on European Food Banks, please learn more on FEBA Report [European Food Banks today: commitment, creativity, and openness to change](#) published on the occasion of the 1st International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste (29 September 2020).

⁴ European Commission, [EU guidelines on food donation](#), 2017/C 361/01, 25 October 2017.



About FEBA

The European Food Banks Federation (FEBA) is a European non-profit organization and works in collaboration with 24 Full Members and 5 Associate Members in European countries. For 35 years, FEBA mission has consisted in representing its membership at European and international level, supporting, and strengthening Food Banks in Europe by providing training, sharing best practice and knowledge, and developing partnerships, and fostering the creation of new Food Banks. FEBA brings together 430 Food Banks which are committed to fight against food waste and to feed the most deprived. Our members provide 4.2 million meals each day to 9.5 million most deprived people through 45,283 charitable organizations thanks to the professionalism of 32,280 co-workers (84% volunteers). In addition to surplus food from the food supply chain, FEBA members also redistribute food from the Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived (FEAD) and the Fruits and Vegetables withdrawal scheme, as well as from individual donations.

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