



FEAD Community

Thematic Seminar on 'An integrated approach to support beneficiaries towards their social inclusion. Creating synergies between FEAD and other funds'

Online, 29-30 April 2021

Executive Summary

The Thematic Seminar was the third mutual learning event of a cycle of capacity-building activities planned during the transition period (2020-2021), and aiming at improving the delivery of the [Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived \(FEAD\)](#) at national, regional and local level.

The event, hosted by the Spanish Ministry of Employment and Social Economy, brought together local, regional and national stakeholders involved in the implementation of the FEAD, including: managing authorities, intermediate bodies, beneficiaries and partner organisations providing support, members of advisory or monitoring committees, independent experts, civil society organisations and representatives from the European Commission.

The Thematic Seminar focused on how to design and implement integrated approaches¹ to support the social inclusion of end recipients, maximising potential synergies with other initiatives and funding sources and exploring examples of effective partnerships working between public, private and third sector organisations.

The Action Plan of the European Pillar of Social Rights presented by the European Commission in March 2021 emphasises the need of further developing an 'integrated approach' to support individuals during all stages of their life and to address multiple causes of poverty and social exclusion. Ultimately, this will also contribute to reaching the three headline targets of the Action Plan.² The 'integrated approach' was also recommended by the Europe 2020 Strategy to address existing inequalities, high rates of severe poverty, and material deprivation that existed prior to the Covid-19 crisis. Additionally, within the European Semester, several Country-Specific Recommendations to Member States stressed the need of implementing an 'integrated approach'.³

¹ In the context of this seminar, two aspects of the 'integrated approach' were considered, as a policy response and the way it is operationalised. A key element is the adoption of an 'integrated approach', which starts from a multidimensional concept of poverty and therefore addresses people's needs from a broad perspective.

² The Action Plan comprises EU actions as well as setting 3 headline targets for the EU to be achieved by 2030: 1) At least 78% of people aged 20 to 64 should be in employment 2) At least 60% of all adults should participate in training every year; 3) The number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion should be reduced by at least 15 million. European Commission (2021), **The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan**. Page 5. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/european-pillar-social-rights-action-plan_en

³ The European Semester will be temporarily adapted to coordinate it with the Recovery and Resilience Facility. Source: https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/recovery-coronavirus/recovery-and-resilience-facility_en.

The European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) will provide resources to Member States for the social and economic recovery after the Covid-19 crisis and to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights. In particular, the specific objectives of the ESF+ is to support Member States in the policy areas of employment, education and social inclusion to contributing to achieving a more social Europe. Focus is placed on improving and promoting equal access to employment and activation measures for all jobseekers and furthering social integration of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion.⁴The Thematic Seminar focused on the capacity of relevant stakeholders across Europe to build partnerships with other public and private (non-profit) organisations to meet the various needs of end recipients. Existing challenges, such as lacking resources, lacking leadership, top-down approaches, insufficient skills of professionals or the risk of duplication of tasks or competition for funds, highlight the need to further develop personalised approaches during the programming period of the ESF+.

Particular attention was paid to the measures introduced in Spain to offer a more integrated and personalised provision of services to end recipients, namely the Personalised Assistance Model implemented by the Spanish Red Cross, the 'Social-labour Inclusion Project' from BANCOSOL and the FEAD Roundtable for coordination of the Local Authority of Fuenlabrada. Participants had also the opportunity to identify and discuss innovative, promising or good practices from other Member States⁵, and also to look ahead towards the new programming period 2021-2027 and the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+).

The key messages from the Seminar can be summarised as follows:

Person-centred interventions

- Successful approaches are very much centred on listening and responding to the individual needs of the end recipient. Through accompanying measures, FEAD projects can complement and lead to other types of support that a service user may need. People who are socially excluded may face many different barriers, such as material deprivation, health problems or no access to care services. A personalised needs assessment of the individual (and his/her household) is key to develop the right trajectory or pathway to properly targeted interventions. When assessing needs, end recipients should co-design and determine the support they need. Involving the target group allows for a more efficient design of support, builds trust with the end recipients and helps them to take control over their own lives. For instance, the Personalised Intervention Plan implemented by the Spanish Red Cross, directly involves the individual in designing their own intervention plan, based on the following aspects of everyday life: employment, social life, health, environment, family, economic situation and personal aspects.
- Integrated approaches then need to be implemented via targeted interventions. Here, local public services, non-governmental organisations or other stakeholders such as community groups can help to identify to which groups to reach out to. Inclusive partnership planning on the ground helps to develop suitable solutions and reduces the risk of fragmented or duplicated services. Increasingly, managing authorities have worked with NGOs to design tailored support because of their local knowledge and the trust they gain from communities. FEAD projects can be involved in getting a thorough

⁴ Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), Article 4, Source: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/docs_autres_institutions/commission_europeenne/com/2018/0382/COM_COM\(2018\)0382_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/docs_autres_institutions/commission_europeenne/com/2018/0382/COM_COM(2018)0382_EN.pdf)

⁵ Thematic Background paper: Towards a comprehensive, personalised, timely and continuous intervention, supported by a constructive cooperation with all the relevant stakeholders involved, Graciela Malgesini Rey, 2021.

and deep understanding of the recipients and the challenges they face in order to design and implement appropriate and well-targeted intervention policies. For example, in Sweden FEAD projects made it possible for the organisation Rescue Mission and the city of Gothenburg to cooperate and network. This facilitated a jointly and coordinated response which allowed for flexibility and adaptation needed to identify and reach the target group (homeless people).

Designing and providing successful integrated approaches

- In order to be successful, approaches and activities must be flexible, comprehensive and applied over a continuous period of time. Poverty and social exclusion have multidimensional aspects, which also change over the life course. So far, many FEAD-funded projects have focused on addressing material assistance to the most deprived, for example distributing food or clothing to help people take their first steps out of poverty and social exclusion by addressing their most basic needs. However, in the next funding period, the ESF+ offers the possibility to strengthen accompanying measures that address wider aspects, such as social and health support, in order to promote social inclusion. The ESF+ also provides a broader framework to better integrate accompanying support measures, including through referrals and advice on the relevant public services and other ESF+ projects in view of the social and, where possible, employment integration of end recipients.
- Particular attention was also devoted to One-Stop-Shops as an example of a user-focused approach where assessment and services are offered to end recipients under one single roof. In Malta, for example, the 'LEAP Centres' offer multiple services, including the provision of information, professional advice, support on housing, education and other services in collaboration with major stakeholders (such as the Water and Energy Agency, Malta Enterprise, Education and Employment institutions, the Social Security Department, the Housing Authority, the national Literacy Agency). On the other hand, One-Stop-Shops need to be combined with outreach measures in order to provide adequate and appropriate support, in particular, in terms of reaching out to the most vulnerable groups. The ESF-funded LEAP project, which is now mainstreamed into a new fully nationally funded Agency, reaches out to the most deprived through FEAD projects: "the food package is the first contact, the follow-up (the accompanying measures) is what greatly matters". For accompanying measures to be effective and better targeted, it is essential to put in place a system of profiling (i.e. "knowing clients as much as possible") that can help to identify the actual causes of poverty to be tackled at individual level.
- Furthermore, successful social inclusion policies and programmes require a long-term planning as they are dealing with very vulnerable groups, for which sufficient and reliable funding is needed. In this regard, a multiannual framework, providing the correct background for these policies and programmes, is crucial.

Social inclusion and activation require the collaboration of multiple stakeholders

- All stakeholders concerned must have a shared commitment, be transparent and share relevant information. In order to ensure a beneficial cooperation that can lead to productive activities, it is fundamental to have inclusive partnerships supported by regular communication and meetings. For example, the FEAD roundtable set up by the Local Authority of Fuenlabrada in Spain offers a coordination space with quarterly meetings between social services and the FEAD distribution organisations. Stakeholders need to be involved from the start, have clear roles and responsibilities to carry out their tasks in a complementary and harmonising manner. Partnerships could also be built on an informal basis as this can increase trust and promote cooperation at different levels and areas. A main challenge for partners to overcome

is cooperating in one project while competing in other grant opportunities to secure financial sustainability. Having seed funds under the authority of a public organisation (e.g. Ministry) that can allocate equally funds and foster connections between the stakeholders can help overcoming such competition and ensure that all kind of organisations (e.g. small scale organisations) get access to the available funds.

- Bringing together a range of actors from the public, private and civil society organisations can lead to more effective approaches being developed. Nevertheless, it takes time and effort to build an effective relationship. Some of the challenges identified include a prevalence of 'top-down' approaches, limited links with other ongoing initiatives and barriers to sharing data. Attention should also be given to the skills and capacity required by established partnerships to work effectively. Partnering can play an important role in preventing the duplication of efforts and avoiding working in silos. In Spain, the 'Social-Labour Inclusion Project' implemented by Bancosol (Food Bank of the Costa del Sol in Spain) has created synergies with other initiatives and funding sources to develop the project and promote labour activation of FEAD beneficiaries receiving food aid. Crucially, partnering contributes to the identification and provision of services that cannot be delivered by an organisation working alone.
- Collaboration is crucial in building effective partnerships between public bodies and private organisations. To this end, building the capacity of the stakeholders involved and making the necessary resources available is crucial. Similarly, the provision of infrastructure is key to reinforce networks at local level. For example, in Sweden, the municipality of Gothenburg has developed a successful cooperation with the municipality social services and the Rescue Mission organisation sharing a common location to provide information about health measures due to the pandemic and facilitate access to shelters to their target group (i.e. newly-arrived EU citizens facing social exclusion). Furthermore, to consider how to overcome bottlenecks in regulation that may hamper partnership is crucial.

Looking ahead to the 2021-2027 period (integrating FEAD into ESF+)

- ESF+ merges the previous European Social Fund (ESF), the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI)⁶, the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD)⁷ and the EaSI programme⁸. This merger is expected to streamline and simplify existing rules across the different funds and contribute to increased opportunities for synergies between the components of the new programme. This new architecture can also be expected to make it easier for beneficiaries to access funding, combine different types of measures and simplify funding management.
- By integrating FEAD and the ESF a stronger focus on social inclusion will be provided. That should facilitate the combination of provision of food and material assistance with accompanying measures to support social inclusion and possibly labour market integration

⁶<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1176>

⁷<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1089>

⁸<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1081&langId=en>