



# **FEAD Community Thematic Seminar on “Monitoring and outreach of FEAD-funded measures for the most deprived people”**

**Online, 6-7 September 2021**

**Synthesis report**

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**FEAD Community  
Thematic Seminar on  
“Monitoring and outreach of  
FEAD-funded measures for the  
most deprived people”**

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*Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion*

*FEAD Community: Thematic Seminar on "New beneficiaries of FEAD-funded measures  
and new practices implemented during the Covid-19 crisis"*

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## **1 Introduction**

The Thematic Seminar on 'Monitoring and outreach of FEAD-funded measures for the most deprived people' was the third mutual learning event<sup>1</sup> of a cycle of capacity-building activities planned within the FEAD Community 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 Seminar, hosted by the Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs, 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 Seminar focused on practices related to monitoring and outreach of FEAD-funded measures for the most deprived people. It provided a space where participants could share their experiences in relation to the challenges faced while carrying out monitoring and outreach activities and discuss innovative, promising or good practices.

This report reflects on the discussions held during the plenary sessions and the parallel break-out groups, focusing on identifying and responding to the main challenges for monitoring the impact of FEAD measures on the end recipients, the role of volunteers in outreach practices, and how these practices can be applied in the context of the European Social Fund (ESF+). It also outlines examples of effective monitoring and evaluation, as well as outreach practices that could be transferred or inspire actors in other countries.

## **2 Background and purpose of the Seminar**

The FEAD supports EU countries' actions to provide food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived people. This includes food, clothing and other essential items for personal use (e.g. shoes, soap and shampoo). Material assistance needs to be accompanied by inclusion measures, such as guidance and support to help people out of poverty.

Monitoring and outreach can play an important role to enable FEAD to meet its ambition to assist the most deprived; however, this relies on consistent, comparable and good quality data collected by the national authorities. The European Commission provides guidance to assist the Member States in meeting their responsibilities in this regard. Monitoring practices and tools, in particular IT tools, are being developed within Member States to assess the efficiency of FEAD-funded activities.

At the same time, outreach is key to ensure that those that are most at risk of experiencing deprivation and poverty are reached and engaged in FEAD-funded programmes. Various outreach practices have been developed to secure the inclusion of people experiencing severe deprivation and poverty.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about the FEAD Thematic Seminar on monitoring and outreach of FEAD-funded measures:

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1207&eventsId=1891&furtherEvents=yes>

In the funding period 2021-2027, the FEAD has been integrated into the ESF+, with the aim to enable a better coordination between the food and material aid that could be provided through the FEAD and the social inclusion measures that were funded under the ESF.

As the Seminar was hosted by the Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs, particular attention was paid to the monitoring system used in Estonia and to the outreach practices of the Estonian Foodbank. Moreover, the European Commission presented the Open Data Portal for European Structural and Investment Funds, a tool that gives access to data on financing and achievements under the ESI Funds 2014-2020.

The Seminar's agenda included also an overview of the thematic background paper aimed at identifying practices related to monitoring and outreach across the EU, discussing possible challenges and suggesting a way forward. Participants also looked ahead towards the new programming period and the ESF+ and discussed the importance to maintain the clear focus on people and communities experiencing poverty and deprivation while widening the scope of the measures that could be provided to assist with their social inclusion.

### **3 The situation in Estonia**

In Estonia, the Ministry of Social Affairs has been designated as the Managing Authority of the FEAD for the programming period 2014-2020. While this current FEAD programme will run until 2023, Estonia is also preparing for the funding period 2021-2027 and for the integration of FEAD into the ESF+, with a view to support the links between food aid and accompanying measures to foster social inclusion.

#### **3.1 Monitoring in Estonia**

In Estonia, the main monitoring tool used to evaluate the impact of FEAD-funded measures is a structured survey, outsourced to the research agency Kantar Emor. This type of survey was conducted in 2017 and will be conducted again in 2022. In 2017, 1,109 FEAD households participated in the survey. Participants reported that FEAD measures had a positive impact on their situation (93%) and considered the help to be very useful (56%). Some participants reported having difficulties in receiving aid (17%), because of the weight of the food package (i.e. 12-14 kilos per package) and the travel needed to collect it. The limited budget allocated for the programme hinders the Managing Authority's ability to arrange for more frequent food distribution, however in 2018, Estonia established more food distribution points throughout the country.

The Estonian Managing Authority works in close cooperation with the Estonian Statistics Office. Together, they have developed an IT system to monitor ESF project beneficiaries in the country. When registering their project, the partner organisations need to register only their ID code. All other data is gathered from different digital registers, including the employment register, the unemployment insurance fund's register, and the education system. All data received from the Estonian Statistics Office is anonymous and it is not possible to link it to any particular individual. In 2016, Estonia set up an additional system to cross-check whether FEAD end recipients participate in ESF and/or programmes for people experiencing unemployment.

Between 2016 and 2020, Estonia has collected information about whether and how the target group participates in the accompanying measures. The result was that over 70% of the FEAD target group attended education or participated in programmes funded by ESF or unemployment insurance fund.

#### **3.2 Outreach in Estonia**

In Estonia, outreach activities are mainly carried out by social workers from local municipalities, as they are the ones implementing most of the support measures. The

extent of the cooperation between local municipalities and non-governmental organisation (NGOs) varies across the country. While in small towns social workers have an extensive knowledge of the local situation and of the target group, in big cities the outreach is more difficult and need more efforts.

The delivery of FEAD relies on end recipients getting in touch with FEAD partner organisations and asking for help. However, the reluctance of individuals living in households experiencing poverty to come forward to social workers, due to the prevailing social stigma around receiving aid, is one of the main challenges.

The food aid distribution is managed by the Estonian Food Bank, mainly through the work of volunteers. Volunteers play also a key role in building a trust-based relationship with FEAD end recipients. The Estonian Food Bank has developed further services to widen its outreach – these include social restaurants, food delivery in rural areas, and providing ready-made food for people who are unable to cook.

In the context of ESF+, Estonia seeks to encourage further cooperation among local organisations, local municipalities, and food aid distributors to establish local outreach networks. For this purpose, Estonia intends to involve more actors in the food distribution to widen the outreach network and facilitate access to FEAD-funded aid for the most deprived.

## **4 Monitoring and evaluation of FEAD-funded measures**

The requirements for monitoring and evaluation are set out in the FEAD Regulation<sup>2</sup> (articles 11,12 and 13), which specifies also that the content of the annual and final implementation reports is laid down in the Delegate Act (EU) 1255/2014. In addition, the European Commission provides the 'Guidance Fiche Monitoring under FEAD'<sup>3</sup> for this monitoring process.

This section presents the practices identified and discussed during the Thematic Seminar.

### **4.1 Monitoring requirements in the European Social Fund Plus for most deprived people**

With the integration of FEAD into ESF+, the minimum monitoring requirements have been simplified and streamlined, with a lower number of common output indicators. While the general objectives of FEAD (i.e. food provision and basic material assistance, as well as social inclusion for the most deprived people) have been maintained, Member States have a greater discretion to define the specific rules (e.g. target group, type of intervention). Hence, the variety of activities and indicators might be challenging to aggregate and compare. Informed estimates, including representative samples, can be used, as well as registers or equivalent sources. In the new programming period annual implementation report will be replaced by data to be transmitted through the System for Fund Management in the European Union (SFC). For operations targeting the most deprived through food and/or basic material assistance and providing accompanying measures supporting their social inclusion, carrying out a survey for the end recipients is mandatory at least twice in the

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<sup>2</sup> Regulation (EU), 2014/223 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 on the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived. Accessed at:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2014:072:0001:0041:EN:PDF> (05/10/2021).

<sup>3</sup> 5 European Commission, Guidance Fiche 'Monitoring under FEAD', 2015. Accessed at:

[2015\\_05\\_12\\_FEAD\\_06\\_Guidance\\_note\\_on\\_monitoring\\_and\\_indicators\\_under\\_FEAD-final1.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eafsa/docs/default-source/food-safety/monitoring/2015_05_12_FEAD_06_Guidance_note_on_monitoring_and_indicators_under_FEAD-final1.pdf) (europa.eu) (26/07/2021)

programming period. At the same time, evaluations need to be performed for all specific objectives.

As regards the specific objective (l) 'targeting the most deprived', there are two types of output indicators: those referring to the total number of participants and their breakdown by age, for which data are collected individually along the lines of the 2014-2020 programming period. The other type refers to sensitive data (participants with disabilities, third-country nationals, participants with a foreign background, minorities, homeless people) for which data needs to be collected only when applicable and in relevant cases. Moreover, at least one programme specific result indicator has to be established to provide an overview of the results achieved. As regards the output indicators for the specific objective (m) 'targeting the most deprived through food and/or basic material assistance and providing accompanying measures supporting their social inclusion', several simplifications have taken place, compared to the corresponding objective in the previous programming period. For the output indicators, the distinction between the quantity of meals and food packages distributed and the obligation to report which types of goods have been purchased, have been eliminated. A breakdown of financing towards broad target groups (e.g. children, homeless people) was introduced. For the results indicators some adjustments to the breakdowns are foreseen, e.g. now counting end recipients up to 18 years of age and an additional indicator on youths (aged 18-29 years). Reference values should be established for some result indicators. Programme specific indicators may also be used.

Another important step that the European Commission took to increase the transparency about the implementation of the funds, was the launch of the Open data portal for European Structural and Investment Funds in 2016 (please see box below).

#### **Open data portal for European Structural and Investment Funds**

The [open data portal for European Structural and Investment Funds](https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/)<sup>4</sup> was launched in 2016 by the European Commission, under the coordination of the Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy. Its aim is to increase transparency about the implementation of the funds and thereby contributing to higher levels of accountability.

Data for each fund includes charts on the financial implementation and on the achievements, broken down by country. The main achievements of each fund are also described in terms of output and result indicators.

The charts displayed on the portal are built on datasets that can be accessed in the data catalogue, which is fed by SFC data (i.e. the data reported by Member States in their annual implementation report).

The portal features also a 'data stories' section, combining narrative, data, charts and examples.

## **4.2 Objectives and main methodologies used for monitoring and evaluation**

Monitoring and evaluations are mostly used to ensure the efficiency of the interventions in place, identify possible challenges and introduce improvements. Selecting clear objectives for the monitoring and evaluation is crucial to choose relevant indicators and relevant methodologies.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/>

The most common ways to gather data on the impact of FEAD-funded measures are surveys targeting the end recipients, which should be designed in order to be user-friendly and in plain language to ease the reading for respondents, as well as as face-to-face interviews. In some cases (e.g. Portugal), during the entire period of the support, regular personal interactions with the end recipients take place to progressively check the impact of the food aid on them. In some cases, end recipients are also systematically asked to provide feedback on the support received (e.g. quality of the food package, quantity, etc). This type of feedback can be collected by telephone, e-mail, or face-to-face interviews. Focus groups and participative methodologies engaging end recipients are also useful ways to obtain information.

In some countries (e.g. Denmark), data collection and analysis are carried out through internal monitoring systems or through the exchanges between different registers and databases used for other social inclusion services/programmes.

In other cases (e.g. Spain), the monitoring is done mainly by the intermediate bodies distributing the food and by the partner organisations. Partner organisations can collect important qualitative information from the grassroots' level based on the exchanges that they have with end recipients or volunteers and staff that are close to the end recipients. Moreover they can contribute to the preparation of surveys, or help the managing authorities in approaching the target group for monitoring purposes. For instance in France, the observatory of 'Les Restos du Coeur' conducts qualitative and quantitative surveys and interviews with end users and other specialised agencies in the sector.

#### **PEVS – The electronic project management system – Society Integration Foundation, Latvia**

The PEVS is used to collect and store the data necessary to monitor FEAD measures in Latvia. It has different modules corresponding to the different institutions involved in the management of FEAD. It gathers data from the 27 partner organisations, including NGOs, religious institutions, municipalities, municipal institutions delivering food packages or organising accompanying measures.

The PEVS gathers:

- The information related to the contract, namely the information on contractors, indicators, results, finances, outcome indicators and possible irregularities;
- The data related to monitoring and evaluation activities, namely evaluations and structured surveys on end recipients, quarterly progress reports, annual implementation reports and risk analysis.

For ESF+, a new information system is being developed, in cooperation with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development to ensure the transparency throughout the life cycle of projects and collect historical data from all the projects.

### **4.3 Main challenges and possible improvements**

One of the main challenges related to monitoring and evaluation of FEAD measures is the lack of the use of qualitative indicators (e.g. the reasons for leaving a programme) that could provide a deeper understanding of the situation, as well as of the lack of qualitative data. Qualitative data (in particular disaggregated) might be difficult to gather because of restrictive privacy regulations and because of the end users' reluctance to share information about their situation. This is often related to the perception of stigmatisation accompanying the reception of food aid. Normalising the assistance could contribute to achieving more general acceptance of FEAD support and encourage end users to share information that can be relevant for monitoring and

evaluation. Additionally, it is important to convey to end users that their feedback can have an impact for the follow-up phase and contribute to adapting the services they receive to their needs.

It might be difficult to engage with some particularly vulnerable groups of end recipients in the monitoring and evaluation process (i.e. those who do not speak the language, those who live in remote areas or have health issues or disabilities). It is important to make sure that people that are in most vulnerable situations are reached out to during the monitoring, so that their experience is captured in the evaluation. Possible language barriers can be overcome by involving people from the communities needing aid, even creating dedicated roles in the organisations. Involving people that have been part of the target groups or that speak the same language as the end recipients can provide useful insights to further develop the monitoring activity and help overcoming language barriers.

People working with end recipients on the ground (e.g. volunteers, social workers) and who have managed to build a trust-based relationship with them, can provide an important source of information on the impact of FEAD-funded measures. Therefore, including them systematically in the process can enrich monitoring and evaluation with relevant data.

The shortage of resources for comprehensive and high-quality monitoring and evaluations is a common problem across the EU. The internal staff might not have the critical skills or enough capacity in terms of time for carrying out monitoring activities. On the other hand, contracting an external specialised company can be expensive and exceed the budget available.

Building evaluation and monitoring capacities in partner organisations by developing appropriate tools and delivering training sessions for volunteers is also considered a useful investment.

While the cooperation between different organisations and agencies and the creation of links between available databases can provide a more complete overview of the situation of the beneficiaries, strict data protection requirements might make the exchange of information between different agencies/organisations quite challenging.

Another challenge related to monitoring and evaluation is related to the distinction of the effects that are related to the support received from FEAD and other measures that are often combined together. The use of historical data could be used to replace the data from a control group (that cannot be used for ethical reasons in the case of evaluation of FEAD measures) and contribute to isolate the specific effect of FEAD measures.

## **5 Outreach to the most deprived people**

Outreach is essential to get in contact with those who are in a situation vulnerability - usually also the most difficult to reach (e.g. those with no phone, no internet connection or no fixed residence) - and ensure that they are not left behind. Thus, some people belonging to the target groups can be off the radar of the partner organisations delivering FEAD.

In many cases, potential end recipients are unaware of the existence of support or do not know that they are eligible for the service. In other cases, they may lack trust in these services and be reluctant to ask for help. Literacy issues and health/mobility problems can also represent a challenge to receiving aid. Additionally, many people belonging to the target group are reticent in coming forward and asking for help to the outreach teams for fear of social stigmatisation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has generated a new wave and types of end recipients who have new and different needs. These as well as the already existing target groups

should not be forgotten in the new ESF+. For this purpose, national anti-poverty strategies including outreach can be an effective approach to the incorporation of FEAD measures in ESF+ in the 2021-2027 period.

Developing an outreach strategy is important to inform the target group about the services available and their right to access them. It requires the identification of the specific people in need, and the development of adapted outreach approaches to ensure their engagement in the available programmes. This section presents the outreach practices identified and discussed during the Thematic Seminar.

## **5.1 Main outreach practices**

Outreach practices shared at the Thematic Seminar showed that most countries involve intermediary actors – local authorities, healthcare workers, civil society organisations, and volunteers – who are closer to the target group and can foster and strengthen trust with end recipients. These actors can help identifying the target group, as well as disseminate information to the local community and carry out awareness-raising activities. As there is no one-size fits all model, it is necessary to tailor the outreach strategy to the needs of the target group.

The identification of people to reach out to can also be facilitated by creating links with other registries. For instance in Malta, potential FEAD beneficiaries are identified directly through the registry of receivers of other social benefits.

In order to widen the scope of their outreach, organisations implementing FEAD have established different measures. Target groups living in rural and remote areas are often reached by mobile units. One example of this type of practice was provided by Restos du Cœur (see box below), which has travelling centres providing food aid to people living in remote and isolated rural areas.

### **Travelling centres – Restos du Cœur, France**

Restos du Cœur uses mobile trucks (travelling centres) that provide food, social interaction, and counselling to people in various rural locations. Restos du Cœur has 30 travelling centres that work in 20 different locations with more than 50 itineraries. The travelling centres target people living in remote and isolated rural areas under precarious conditions with little material and financial resources, including elderly people, persons with disabilities, and families with young children. As well as food aid, Restos du Cœur also aims at creating personal bonds and trust with end recipients. Additionally, the team provides activities, including counselling and budgetary or legal support (e.g. potential microcredits), rooms with clothes and books, providing electrical appliances, and supporting people to go on holiday. When the Restos du Cœur team cannot meet end recipients' needs, the team provides guidance to other associations that can support them.

Another interesting examples of outreach activities where the social workers and volunteers go 'where the target group lives' are provided by the street counselling mobile units of Kompasset and by the Pentru Tine information services (see boxes below). The presence of relevant language and cultural skills among these outreach teams are important assets to get in contact with the target groups.

### **Street counselling mobile units – Kompasset Kirkens Korshær, Denmark**

Kompasset targets unregistered homeless migrants who live in the streets of Copenhagen from 54 different nationalities; 85% of which are EU citizens and 54% of all end recipients are Romanian. For outreach, Kompasset employs mobile counselling units composed of two Kompasset staff members and an intern who talk to end recipients in the street and provide them with a warm drink as an ice breaker. Outreach also takes place through observation rounds where the team walks through different areas of Copenhagen and through cooperation with local

social services. Information about the mobile units' work is spread through telephone and word of mouth, which enables potential end recipients to seek out the mobile team.

Services provided by the mobile unit include:

- Providing information about their rights in Denmark and services available to them;
- Bridge-building between migrants and relevant authorities and NGOs in Copenhagen;
- Accompaniment to health providers, police stations, and lawyers;
- Liaising with the homeless magazine *Strada* sold on the Copenhagen streets; and
- Acting as contact persons for the end recipients.

The mobile unit team found that their outreach work empowered end recipients to feel heard and valued. Additionally, the team also identified the importance of establishing networks with other local services and organisations to provide further support to end recipients that is tailored to their needs.

### ***Pentru Tine* information services – Stockholm Stadmission, Sweden**

The project *Pentru Tine* (meaning 'for you' in Romanian) provided health and social information to the target group – EU citizens living in vulnerable conditions in Sweden – with a focus on their rights and obligation in Sweden, their home country, and the EU. *Pentru Tine* aimed to empower and strengthen social inclusion of end recipients, improve their health, and reduce their risks of exploitation and hate crimes.

Most end recipients were identified as Romanian and Bulgarian with a Roma background living in poor conditions and facing discrimination in Sweden and their home countries. End recipients did not have access to food, shelter, and sanitation, which contributed to their compromised health condition. Additionally, most had little to no knowledge about health and their rights.

The project team conducted outreach work on the streets and in public transportation in groups where one team member spoke the native language of the target group. Materials on accessing care centres were provided to the target group in accordance to their needs. Moreover, the team acted as links to relevant local actors, including healthcare services, social services, police, and shelters where the target group could receive further support. Stockholm Stadmission also organised interactive group activities including the use of pictures and videos to provide information to the target group on dental care, COVID-19, gender equality, sexual health, and migration procedures in Sweden.

Information on the services available for the target group can be made accessible via different channels (e.g. social media, telephone calls, radio, in the street), depending on the target group and on which channels are mainly used in each specific country. Social media are also playing an increasingly important role as information channels to reach out to the target group. Informative material should be translated to the language of the target group and adapted to their level of literacy.

## **5.2 Role of volunteers in reaching out to the most deprived people**

The work of volunteers is particularly relevant in a context where partner organisations often experience staff and resource shortages. Volunteers are often the

first point of contact with FEAD end recipients, thus acting as a bridge between the organisations delivering FEAD-funded support and the target group. Their close connection with end recipients means that volunteers can help identifying communities and individuals experiencing poverty and exclusion and provide valuable insights on how to better reach out to the target group.

Relying on volunteers can also present some disadvantages: such as the possible lack of skills and professionalism, especially when it comes to matters of confidentiality, and the difficulty to keep volunteers for a long period of time, which can bring some discontinuity in the services provided.

It is important to train volunteers in order to ensure their professionalism in working with the most vulnerable and deprived people and to provide an adequate budget for the equipment to be used in the outreach activities (e.g. IT equipment, a vehicle if needed). As a possible way forward and to ensure the consistency of FEAD volunteers, the model of the European Solidarity Corps could be used as a source of inspiration. This entails the volunteers undergoing a process of verification, training, contract signing, and receiving an allowance. Following this approach, Member States could host volunteers from other EU countries to support with language barriers and staff shortages.

## **6 Conclusions**

There are different examples of monitoring and evaluation tools that have been developed across Member States to assess the efficiency of the FEAD measures and their impact on the end recipients. However, measuring the added value of both food aid and social inclusion measures, as well as the achievements in terms of integration (for OP II countries<sup>5</sup>), remain challenging. The main obstacles are related to the difficulties of gathering (especially qualitative) data and of tracking the situation of the end recipients over time. In this context, volunteers can play an important role, as they are closer to the target group and can bring relevant quantitative and qualitative information. NGOs, which have a better understanding of the local situation, can also provide useful insights and contribute to the preparation of relevant surveys and questionnaire for the end recipients.

In terms of outreach of the most deprived people, there is no one-size-fits-all model. It is necessary to mobilise the volunteers, social workers, skilled staff, as well as individual citizens. These actors can help identifying and reaching out to groups that are difficult to get in touch with. Building a wide partnership, including municipalities, volunteers, local organisations and all the other actors involved, is necessary in order to achieve good results.

Tools and methodologies to reach out to the people most in need include the use of mobile units that can travel to remote and rural areas, outreach activities in the street, and the use of different channels of communication (to be adapted depending on the specific target audience), such text messages, radio, television and online and social media.

The lack of information in terms of the needs of the end recipients is an important challenge, in particular in relation to the new types of end recipients that have emerged following the COVID-19 crisis.

The integration of FEAD into ESF+ brings new rules for the implementation of FEAD-type support actions. This can represent a challenge for Member States to apply for funding under ESF+, but can also bring new opportunities. For instance, the

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<sup>5</sup> Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden.

accompanying measures need to be supported by ESF+ specific objectives thus contributing to enhancing the inclusion perspective and promoting the social integration of the current end recipients of FEAD.

